

# Constructing Success: Public Acclaim and Personal Reflection

This exhibition focuses on Percy Grainger's involvement in the 1912 Balfour Gardiner concerts. Drawing on archival materials, including programmes, media reviews, manuscript scores, and personal letters, it explores how success is constructed, negotiated, and sustained across different forms of discourse and social relationships. Unlike traditional views that treat success as the natural result of individual talent, our exhibition focuses on the social processes and the cultural systems that shape how success is produced.

The exhibition brings together sixteen archival materials of different types, displayed across two cases that present two distinct narratives of success. The first case takes a public perspective, showing how media reviews construct a coherent and persuasive model of success through praise and evaluation. These voices not only record the performances, but also shape the artist's public image, allowing success to be recognized and circulated as a cultural idea.

The second case presents a more complex individual perspective. In private expression, success is no longer stable or clearly defined, but instead becomes uncertain and complex, understood as a process shaped by overlapping experiences. The differences between these two perspectives reveal the tension between public narratives and personal reflection in understanding success.

Through these interwoven threads, this exhibition invites you to consider: when success is continuously recorded and represented, is it a fixed outcome, or an ongoing cultural process?

Curated by Han Wang, Xinyun Wu, Xue Jiang and Yuchen Li

# Case 1

## 1. Romeike & Curtice

### 'Mr Balfour Gardiner's Concert', *The Times*, 28 March 1912

28 March 1912

printed ink on paper

2018/4/3

This press cutting from *The Times* records how Balfour Gardiner's concert was received in London. The review specifically mentions Percy Grainger's *Mock Morris*, describing it as reflecting a traditional English style and highlighting its lively and engaging quality. As an important newspaper at the time, *The Times* influenced how people understood and evaluated both the concert and the musicians. In this display, the cutting also suggests Grainger's high level of musical skill and his popularity with the public.

## 2. Chappell & Co., Ltd.

### **The Balfour Gardiner Choral and Orchestral Concerts Programme, 13 March 1912**

13 March 1912

printed ink on paper

2018/7/5

This programme from 13 March 1912 records the first concert in Balfour Gardiner's series. It includes several works by Percy Grainger, such as *Father and Daughter* and *Tiger! Tiger!*. Grainger's works are consistently placed in the middle section of the programme, which highlights their importance within the concert. As an official programme, it reflects how the performance was organised and also suggests that Grainger's music was recognised and valued by the audience.

### 3. Chappell & Co., Ltd.

## The Balfour Gardiner Choral and Orchestral Concerts Programme, 17 April 1912

1912

printed ink on paper

2018/7/5

This programme from 17 April 1912 records the third concert in Balfour Gardiner's series. In this programme, Percy Grainger's *Mock Morris* is included as part of the orchestral section. Compared with the earlier programme, the selection of works is different, suggesting that the concert was not fixed but changed over time. This indicates that the programme may have been adjusted in response to artistic ideas and audience reception. Grainger's work is presented alongside a wider range of composers, making the programme more varied and allowing the audience to experience his music in different ways within the concert.

## 4. Romeike & Curtice

### 'Balfour Gardiner Concert', *Manchester Courier*, 18 April 1912

1912

printed ink on paper

2018/4/3.

This press cutting from the *Manchester Courier* records the audience response to Balfour Gardiner's concert. The review specifically mentions Percy Grainger's *Mock Morris*, highlighting its lively and engaging quality and noting how it cleverly reflects traditional English musical style. This suggests that the work was not only technically expressive, but also able to connect with the audience in a more direct way. The report reflects the recognition of Grainger's music by the media at the time and, to some extent, helped strengthen his artistic reputation among the public.

## 5. Romeike & Curtice

### Balfour Gardiner Concerts, 28 March 1912

1912

printed ink on paper

2018/4/3.

This review from *The Daily Telegraph* records the public and critical response following the Balfour Gardiner concert, and specifically notes that Percy Grainger was the only soloist that evening. The article highly praised his performance, describing it as energetic and brilliant, and suggesting that it added a bright and pleasant atmosphere to the whole concert. The review also mentions the audience's enthusiastic response, which led Grainger to perform an encore. In this exhibition, this material shows how Grainger gained wider public recognition in 1912 through performances and commentary.

## 6. Percy Grainger

### Father and daughter, choral parts

c. 1908-09

ink on paper

MG3/25-3

The choral parts for *Father and Daughter* show the material form of Percy Grainger's work before performance. Compared with newspaper reviews, this object does not directly record audience response, but instead reveals how music entered public space through rehearsal, musical notation, and live performance. It suggests that Grainger's public recognition in 1912 came not only from reviews after the event, but also from the process through which his work was prepared, presented, and heard. In this exhibition, this object helps audiences understand that artistic success was not an abstract result, but something gradually shaped through specific musical practice.

## 7. Romeike & Curtice

### **British Australasian, 25 April 1912**

1912

printed ink on paper

2018/4/3

This review, published in *British Australasian*, records the media response to Percy Grainger after the Balfour Gardiner concert and highlights the positive reception of his work and performance. Compared with local British newspapers, this material also shows that Grainger's reputation was not limited to a single performance venue, but was further circulated to a wider readership through print media. It suggests that Grainger's public recognition in 1912 came not only from the concert itself, but also from the ways his artistic image was shaped through critical writing. In this exhibition, this material helps audiences understand that artistic success was closely connected to processes of circulation and reception.

## 8. Romeike & Curtice

### Mr Balfour Gardiner's Concert, 28 March 1912

1912

printed ink on paper

2018/4/3

This review, published in the *Westminster Gazette*, records the critical response following the Balfour Gardiner concert and specifically notes that Percy Grainger's performance was one of the most striking parts of the evening. The article highly praises his performance and emphasises the vitality and appeal of his playing. As a newspaper review, this material not only reflects evaluation after the concert, but also shows how critical writing helped shape Grainger's public image. In this exhibition, this object helps audiences understand that Grainger's public recognition in 1912 was shaped not only by live performance itself, but also by the positive response of critics.

## 9. Percy Grainger

### Mock Morris

1910

ink on paper

MG3/63

This manuscript of *Mock Morris* displays a detailed insight into Percy Grainger's compositional process, including handwritten notation, revisions, and printing instructions. The annotations reveal that the score is not the final version, suggesting that this manuscript represents a transitional stage between composition and publication, and forms part of an ongoing process of revision and preparation. This manuscript emphasizes that Grainger's music exists not only as a performable work, but also as a material object shaped through drafting, revision, and practical considerations before ultimately being presented on stage.

## Case 2

### 1. Percy Grainger

#### Percy Grainger to Balfour Gardiner 2 May 1912

1912

ink on paper

2017/10/1/1

This handwritten letter from Percy Grainger to Balfour Gardiner, dated 2 May 1912, provides insight into the successful outcomes of the concert series as well as the composer's private reflections following his public success. In contrast to the generally positive reception reported by the public and the media, Percy Grainger adopts the experience in a more ambivalent tone, framing the concerts as comprising "successes, failures, and ¼-successes." The letter underscores the tension between public acclaim and private reflection, suggesting that artistic success is not a fixed state, but rather partial and unstable.

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Transcription

Dear good old Balfour.

I want to thank you, with a real happiness, for all your motherly-kind & dangerously-socialistic goodness about my "English Dance". Your unworthy moral support & orchestrational hints for that work turned it from a rather boring failure into a deeply instructive almost respectable  $\frac{1}{4}$ -success. What I learnt & what I enjoyed by that piece was that & I accept the whole boiling of it as a delightful gift from you, nobley & artistically given, without taint of generosity or much friendship) a free gift nowise called for by the "exigencies" of your concert scheme. (which the work in nowise helped & certainly hampered).

otherwise than my former practical & possibly useful groups) & to be laid at the door of only some not needed-to-be-explained queer niceness & loftiness in you. I want you to know that your orchestration hints were one of the jolliest plums in an all-through sumptuous pie: I lapped up those knowledges with a sharp relish, there is nothing I like better than giving or taking a good lesson in something, & I should go to cremation at this moment knowing more through you in several ways than I would without.

As soon as hopes thoughts feelings take on form they take on sadness also, of course. So also your "1st series, 1912" has its sadness for me. The successes,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -failures &  $\frac{1}{4}$ -successes that now people our consciousness of the various works instead of the vague affections approval enthusiasms repulsions that coloured all our views before the 1st note was sounded are a poor go-instead for these latter.

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Then for instance, you, a successful composer, have, in a bundle of works, made me a ditto, or a probable ditto. Something to be happy of on your side if you like me & think me worthy; & yet the very successfulness that you yourself evidently smelt ahead & were cute & fine enough to make for me may one day, we can't know, soon or late, be a fog & a nuisance between us, clouding the old real good issue. The hope of success & the chance of it makes a thing a career for one, & in so far as I or anyone gets drawn into a career so far is one banished from most of the maudlin human inspired artistic gaiety of attitude that formed our best stock-in-untrade. As the rehearsals near the concert day we each & all get horrible, (given-like you & me — we've got guts enough to feel, do, & realise anything whatsoever), more capable, higher strung, more momentary & less immortal at every turn. Therefore the weakness of the early amateurish rehearsals could not grow & the future may see them even dwindle, & why not? But as for me, what I have loved & am thankful for is to have been witness & companion to all this swelling-out of heart within you that has driven you to these broad & worthy-of-you undertakings. I hope neither of us will forget the real genuine jollity of these times, nor forget each others inclusion in that jollity, not whether the future joins us nearer in joys or whether it sunders us over jobs.

I want to dedicate some really decent work to you if you care for one. Not in any way in connection with these concerts, though maybe in memory of the form of them; but really only because I've always wanted to & never have, have forgot to ask you.

Till tomorrow at 6.30

Yours  
Perks

## 2. Fred J. Werner

### Set of conductors batons

c.1900

ink on paper

00.0024 - 00.0031

This set of batons highlights the embodied and performative dimensions of music-making in the early twentieth century. Unlike written materials such as scores, programmes, or letters, these objects do not directly record voices or critical response. Instead, they actively shape musical performance, translating abstract notation into coordinated action. The baton occupies a distinctive position within musical practice. As an extension of the conductor's body, it conveys authority through gesture, guiding tempo, dynamics, and ensemble cohesion. In this sense, it built a bridge between composition and performance.

### 3. Percy Grainger

#### Percy Grainger to Rose Grainger 1 July 1910

1910

ink on paper

MG3/63-2

This letter was written by Percy Grainger to his mother Rose Grainger, dated 1 July 1910, providing some significant insights derived from his individual musical practices and personal relationships. It is clear that the letter was written for a close family member as the tone is intimate and reflective. Percy Grainger conveyed to his mother the speed and spontaneity of his compositional process, while also acknowledging an accompanying sense of uncertainty. He believed that only parts of the work were truly inspired and expressed doubts about how it would be understood in the future. Meanwhile, the letter serves as key evidence demonstrating his mother's significant role in his artistic career, which shows that creative practice is not only influenced by the artist's career aspirations, but also affected by family relationship and emotional communication.

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Transcription

My darling merry bright mother!

I hope that the over eager happy haste (for with this birthday gift has gone, i dont know just why, an unwonted fulness of sonly love, impatience, & delight in doing it) with which this slight guarantee of "Arcadian" spirits has been jerried together (it was actually conceived in some few minutes [1½ hour ?] when you were from home, & worked out, partwritten & scored either nights after you had gone to bed [that's why you couldn't get me to bed some nights] or very early in the mornings, & the Plunkett Greenes also came in for their yearly share of watching me cook for your birthday) doesn't show too shabily in the workmanship of it.

From the moment when I caught the tune in bed that morning I was one itch to get it written in time to have it played here on the 3rd, & rather bundled it into the world, I fear.

If it sounds a job lot to you I must give it another doing later on.

I fear only 2 or 3 bars (bars 17-20) in the whole affair are really inspired, but alas, that is almost always so with compositions: Such a great coffin for such a little life!

It was secretly rehearsed on June 22, when we rehearsed for Lady Northcote's, & that was why Roger was along at that rehearsal.

It is a blessed boon for a composer son to have such a little mum to write for ½ yearly. I wonder will this be properly realized later on?

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How many of my now tidily turned out compos would still be lazily lounging in sketchbooks but for the steadily marching Julys & Yules that leave the junior partner age-marked only by a growing bulk of “birthday-”&”Yule-gifts”!

Perhaps you think the 3rd is *your* night off. I, on the other hand, selfishly look upon [it] as my particular “little sunbonnet”.

Your birthday is the day of the year I care most about. And indeed it is the day of all others that has had the greatest influence on my career, from 1st to last, rather unnaysayably.

“Percy to his mother said: ‘Never have I seen a mum I’d wish instead.’”

## 4. Percy Grainger

### Percy Grainger to Karen Holten 15 March 1912

1912

ink on paper

2016/7/1/21

This letter was written by Percy Grainger to his then girlfriend, Karen Holten, after the first concert in Mr Balfour Gardiner's Concert series. As Karen was Danish, the letter is written in Danish. In the letter, Percy Grainger mentions the praise from major media outlets for his work *Father and Daughter* and expresses his delight at the performance's success. However, faced with such sudden, worldly success, he feels not only joy but also a certain degree of confusion and bewilderment, as the closing line: 'I can't quite understand it.' This letter reflects the uncertainty and conflict Percy Grainger felt when confronted with worldly success; unlike the simplistic portrayal of success often found in the media, his experience was far more complex.

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Translation

Dearest little Karen,

God, it went well on Wednesday! I could never have thought it would act like that.

It was truly a victory, and “F[aðir] og D[óttir]” had to be repeated, and the papers splendid, and “Daily Telegraph” mad with praise!

You can imagine everything was fun and laughter; rehearsal and everything. Just imagine Gardiner at the rehearsals, not a bit nervous, but even and balanced and good-natured bis dorthinaus [sic German: to the last degree].

His sweetness, unselfishness and good-nature and depth of feeling move one to tears. The whole of this work has dug up everything that is big and human and tender in him. Cyril just the same; a sea of enthusiasm and fire.

When we meet you must hear by word of mouth some unforgettable funny things that happened during rehearsals, it is unbelievable that so much could happen in so short a time.

Now I am playing Tschaikowsky here 9 times in 6 days and then Amsterdam (24th), St Saëns with Mengelberg and then Tschaikowsky with Gard (27th) and Broadwood Concert (28th), and then I am more or less finished for the moment.

It is wonderful to have success, I can't quite understand it. It is remarkable that I have the same power over the audience (perhaps more?) as conductor as I do as pianist.

On the 25th March “I'm 17” will be performed in London. I can just manage to hear it.

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You are absolutely right, little friend, that I can't expect "the whole warmth" and so on. I have no right to it. But would appreciate it all the same.

You can imagine I am tired. Travelled here last night; and practised 5 hours today. I like Switzerland greatly.

If only Thuren was alive to hear what a success his songs had had! Can you give me his father's full name and address?

## 5. Percy Grainger

### Percy Grainger to Karen Holten, 4 May 1912

1912

ink on paper

2016/7/1/21

This is a letter written by Percy Grainger to Karen Holten following the third concert in Mr Balfour Gardiner's Concert series. The letter is written in Danish. In addition to expressing concern for Karen's daily life, Percy Grainger devotes a page to explaining that his performance of the *English Dance* at the concert was not perfect due to his excessive exertion, and that it did not elicit a particularly strong response from the audience. Nevertheless, he analyses the issue with great rationality and believes that this imperfect performance has brought him considerable benefit. Faced with a performance that was not entirely successful following his tremendous success, Percy Grainger expressed a complex and rational self-reflection. In his letter, success was not defined by applause or fame, but rather by self-validation, the accumulation of experience, and technical growth.

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Translation

Sweetest. How awful for you. It must have been a horrible business for you. I can scarcely think of anything that can hurt more than something with the ankles. I am so sorry for you. Does the doctor think it will leave any stiffness behind? For God's sake don't walk too soon on it, you know that doctors are never careful enough, and so often let people get up too soon in these cases.

Have they done anything with the broken tarsus bones, had they to be "set" or was that not necessary? It must be unpleasant to have massage after something like that.

Be very careful, little sweet Karen.

My "E.D." was **splendidly** played by the orchestra on Wednesday. I didn't hear **any mistakes**, I conducted by heart, and didn't forget a single "einsatz" [German: cue] as far as I know; on the contrary I was no doubt too vigorous, whereby the high points may have suffered, as "theatre" at any rate. I wasn't more than pleasantly nervous, although I think the piece is one of the most difficult there are for the conductor.

The piece was not really well received, which could never be expected either, at the end of a long programme, but it wasn't any fiasco either. Many individuals, who were disappointed with Beecham's performance are now satisfied with the new orchestration, but most of them were indifferent. As far as my "career" is concerned, the piece has neither damaged it, nor been of value to it, but as experience it has been indescribably profitable. On the whole I am very happy and grateful about the outcome.

Cyril's 2 pieces went splendidly. He conducted one himself, quite

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splendidly, and madly amusing to look at, the dear little chap.

The human pleasures and experiences that Gardiner's concerts brought with them have truly been a rich feast. I look forward to telling you by word of mouth about many things if you would like to hear about them in Svinkløv.

Tomorrow I must write about 18 pages of score — my "Robin is to the G-w. gone" which only exist in sketches, and must be written out (the parts) before the rehearsal on 13th May (2nd and last rehearsal is 19th May) On Friday I have rehearsal in Aachen (Tschaikowsky, soli, and conduct "G.B") Concert on Saturday.

Don't know how I will manage to learn the score by heart by that time.

Can you read much in bed?

I should be in Copenhagen now. Never is being together sweeter, it seems to me, than when one of the two is lying in bed, less rather than more ill.

How does a pain like that feel? - similar to a toothache, or worse?

Write soon.

It would amuse you to hear my piano playing in these days. My arms are just paralysed by the unusual violent movements. *When* I conduct I don't feel anything, but the piano playing muscles are still strongly affected. But it will disappear with time of course.

Best recovery and many tender thoughts.

from your loving

Percy.

## 6. Various

### Bow ties belonging to Percy Grainger

01.3311

These three white ties are all part of the 'Dress Cravats' collection by Horn of New York, and were all worn by Percy Grainger. They are highly symbolic, closely associated with his identity as a musician and conductor, while their slight yellowing and creases further emphasise the historical and commemorative value of these three artefacts.

## 7. Rose Grainger

### Rose Grainger to Percy Grainger 21 March 1912

1912

ink on paper

2016/8/2/12

This is a letter written to Percy Grainger by his mother, Rose Grainger, on 21 March 1912. In addition to expressing her usual concern for him, the letter acknowledged that Percy had been a real success at Mr Balfour Gardiner's Concert. 'More than 40 media outlets have published excellent reviews of the performance.' Faced with Percy's immense success, Rose not only praised him but also advised him to carefully plan the dates and arrangements for his upcoming solo concert in Berlin. Success is an ongoing process, and this letter marks the later stages of that journey. After moments of confusion and self-reflection, one must continue to build a future career, which requires a certain degree of social or family support; this letter serves as vital evidence of that.

Transcription

My Dearest,

Don't go to the Röntgen's house, dear, on any account. You must not get an illness now.

My best- Beloved, If good Critiques make you happy, then you ought to be superlatively happy, for there are now about 40 splendid ones. I enclose this latest one, but bring it back, dearest. I am longing for Monday, for you, & ' I'm 17" \_ Dear Mr. Rathbone is coming with us.

I am so glad you have liked Switzerland, & that they have been so enthusiastic about my darling. Speak with Augustin about Berlin Rec. the date must be a good one, and we must then work it up well. I spent some pleasant hours yesterday at Von Glehn's. He has done some fine new pictures. One can really enjoy them when they are alone (only his brother, dear sister & boy there) for they are real Socialists.

Isn't it lovely to think that there will be happy, happy times from now, to end of May - The concert will be real joy. I am sure (for us - anyway). The Langley has written such a lovely, Congrat. letter - in fact, these choruses of yours have been a real success.

Yr. fondly devoted Mother.

Little Mrs. K. sups with me tonight - Lady Quilter & Roger invited me to dine, but I am getting worn out with going out too much.