

The Life and Work of Percy Aldridge Grainger

The Life and Work of Percy Aldridge Grainger:

Till Life Become Fire

By

Teresa R. Balough

With an essay on Free Music by Burnett Cross

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



The Life and Work of Percy Aldridge Grainger: Till Life Become Fire

By Teresa R. Balough

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2023 by Teresa R. Balough

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0504-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0504-9

For Gregor Balough and Owen Peagler
who loved Percy Grainger
and for Kirin Peagler
who made this work possible

CONTENTS

Musical Examples.....	ix
List of Illustrations	xii
Foreword	xiv
Penelope Thwaites	
Preface	xv
Acknowledgments	xxii
A note on the language of this text	xxiv

Percy Grainger's Life in Music

Part 1: George Percy Grainger.....	4
Part 2: The Boy Percy.....	8
Part 3: Frankfurt am Main	36
Part 4: London: 1901–1906	57
Part 5: London: 1907–1914	90
Part 6: America.....	122
Part 7: <i>Marching Song of Democracy</i>	140
Part 8: Interlude	169
Part 9: Return to America	188
Part 10: Marriage.....	208
Part 11: Impressions of Europe.....	222
Part 12: In Search of the Perfect Note	231
Part 13: The Academic Life.....	237
Part 14: The Grainger Museum	252
Part 15: A Force for Progress	264
Part 16: Unconventional.....	275
Part 17: The Allied Cause in Music.....	291
Part 18: Return to White Plains	309
Part 19: “Free Music”	319
Part 20: Gliding Chords.....	339
Part 21: Distant Dreams.....	350

Percy Grainger's Work

Part 22: Folk-Music Settings	370
Part 23: Kipling and Grainger.....	401
Part 24: <i>English Gothic Music</i>	439
Part 25: "Free Music"	448
Part 26: Choral Works	460
Part 27: Band and Winds	498
Part 28: Orchestration.....	518
Part 29: Pianism.....	545
Part 30: Art Is a Meeting Place: Percy Grainger's Philosophy of Life and Art.....	567
 Percy Grainger Chronology.....	 586
 Bibliography.....	 608
 Index.....	 622

MUSICAL EXAMPLES

- Ex. 3-1: Klavier Concerto, mm. 1–10.
Ex. 3-2: *Thora von Rimol*, mm. 1–8.
Ex. 3-3: *The Men of the Sea*, mm. 1–4.
Ex. 3-4: *O'er the Moor* from *Scotch Folksongs from "Songs of the North."*
Ex. 3-5: *Eastern Intermezzo*, mm. 48–53.
Ex. 3-6: *Love Verses* from "*The Song of Solomon*," mm. 1–7.
Ex. 4-1: *Dedication*, mm. 1–6.
Ex. 4-2: *The Inuit*, mm. 15–17.
Ex. 4-3: *Zanzibar Boat Song*, mm. 35–38.
Ex. 4-4: *Brigg Fair* as notated by Percy Grainger.
Ex. 4-5: *The Sprig of Thyme* as notated by Percy Grainger.
Ex. 4-6: *Brigg Fair* as set by Percy Grainger.
Ex. 4-7: *Brigg Fair* as set by Frederick Delius.
Ex. 5-1: *Sea Songs* (regularly barred version), mm. 1–6.
Ex. 5-2: *Sea Songs*, (irregularly barred version), mm. 1–6.
Ex. 5-3: *Soldier, Soldier*, mm. 1–4.
Ex. 5-4: *Arrival Platform Humlet*, mm. 1–8.
Ex. 5-5: *Father and Daughter*, mm. 120–23.
Ex. 5-6: *Mock Morris*, mm. 1–8.
Ex. 5-7: *Shallow Brown* (piano score), mm. 1–5.
Ex. 5-8: *Random Round*, excerpt.
Ex. 5-9: *The Gum-Suckers March*, mm. 146–151.
Ex. 5-10: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 8–18.
Ex. 6-1: *The Warriors*, mm. 453–58.
Ex. 7-1: *Marching Song of Democracy*, mm. 1–8.
Ex. 7-2: "Little Sparrow" from *Lonesome Tunes* by Howard Brockway,
mm. 1–7.
Ex. 7-3: *Country Gardens*, mm. 1–4.
Ex. 7-4: *Edvard Grieg: Piano Concerto in A Minor*, mm. 1–6.
Ex. 8-1: Brahms-Grainger, *Cradle Song*, mm. 19–23.
Ex. 8-2: *The Power of Love*, mm. 32–42.
Ex. 10-1: *Ramble on Love*, mm. 1–3.
Ex. 10-2: *To a Nordic Princess*, mm. 1–4.
Ex. 12-1: *Blithe Bells*, mm. 1–9.
Ex. 16-1: *Free Music No. 1*, excerpt.
Ex. 16-2: *The Duke of Marlborough Fanfare*, mm. 1–16.

- Ex. 17-1: *The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart*, mm. 201–10.
- Ex. 18-1: Five-Part Fantasy No. 1 by John Jenkins, mm. 1–5.
- Ex. 21-1: *Mowgli's Song against People* from Kipling "*Jungle Book*" Cycle, mm. 1–9.
- Ex. 22-1: *The Three Ravens* from *25 Settings of Popular Old English Songs from Augener's "The Minstrelsy of England"* by Edmondstone Duncan, 1899.
- Ex. 22-2: *The Three Ravens* (1902), mm. 20–30.
- Ex. 22-3: *O, Willow, Willow* by Granville Bantock, mm. 17–24.
- Ex. 22-4: *Willow, Willow* by Percy Grainger, mm. 78–86.
- Ex. 22-5: *The Sprig of Thyme*, mm. 20–28.
- Ex. 22-6: *Irish Tune from County Derry*, mm. 1–9.
- Ex. 22-7: *Let's Dance Gay in Green Meadow*, mm. 15–40.
- Ex. 22-8: *Let's Dance Gay in Green Meadow*, mm. 129–42.
- Ex. 22-9: *Let's Dance Gay in Green Meadow*, mm. 181–92.
- Ex. 22-10: *Let's Dance Gay in Green Meadow*, mm. 269–80.
- Ex. 22-11: *Green Bushes*, mm. 162–94.
- Ex. 22-12: *Green Bushes*, mm. 362–77.
- Ex. 22-13: *Green Bushes*, mm. 474–90.
- Ex. 22-14: *Green Bushes*, mm. 618–41.
- Ex. 22-15: *Scotch Strathspey and Reel*, mm. 103–10.
- Ex. 22-16: "Lord Melbourne" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, opening.
- Ex. 23-1: *Love Verses* from "*The Song of Solomon*," mm. 69–74.
- Ex. 24-1: *Jubilemus omnes una*, mm. 1–3.
- Ex. 24-2: *Puellare gremium*, mm. 3–8.
- Ex. 24-3: *Fulget coelistis Curia*, mm. 10–18.
- Ex. 26-1: *Love Verses* from "*The Song of Solomon*," mm. 92–100.
- Ex. 26-2: *The Inuit*, mm. 8–16.
- Ex. 26-3: "Red Dog" from Kipling "*Jungle Book*" Cycle, mm. 16–19.
- Ex. 26-4: *Shallow Brown*, mm. 1–7.
- Ex. 26-5: *Shallow Brown*, mm. 43–48.
- Ex. 26-6: *The Beaches of Lukannon* from Kipling "*Jungle Book*" Cycle, mm. 16–26.
- Ex. 26-7: *The Lost Lady Found*, mm. 113–29.
- Ex. 26-8: *Marching Song of Democracy*, mm. 1–8.
- Ex. 26-9: *Marching Song of Democracy*, mm. 96–100.
- Ex. 26-10: *Marching Song of Democracy*, mm. 51–54.
- Ex. 26-11: *Marching Song of Democracy*, mm. 140–45.
- Ex. 26-12: *Father and Daughter*, mm. 99–102.
- Ex. 26-13: *Father and Daughter*, mm. 148–55.
- Ex. 26-14: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 8–16.

- Ex. 26-15: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 19–27.
 Ex. 26-16: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 38–40.
 Ex. 26-17: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 136–41.
 Ex. 26-18: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 155–62.
 Ex. 26-19: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 202–16.
 Ex. 26-20: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 221–30.
 Ex. 26-21: *The Bride's Tragedy*, mm. 252–63.
 Ex. 26-22: *Morning Song in the Jungle* from Kipling "Jungle Book" Cycle, mm. 13–17.
 Ex. 27-1: *Hill-Song No. 2*, mm. 1–4.
 Ex. 27-2: "Dublin Bay" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 1–20.
 Ex. 27-3: "Horkstow Grange" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 1–9.
 Ex. 27-4: "Rufford Park Poachers" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 19–33.
 Ex. 27-5: "The Brisk Young Sailor" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 17–25.
 Ex. 27-6: "Lord Melbourne" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 2–13.
 Ex. 27-7: "The Lost Lady Found" from *Lincolnshire Posy*, mm. 129–46.
 Ex. 27-8: Bach-Grainger: Five-Part Fugue No. IV from Book 1, *Das Wohltempierte Klavier*, mm. 1–15.
 Ex. 28-1: *Jutish Medley*, mm. 73–77.
 Ex. 28-2: *The Warriors*, mm. 211–15.
 Ex. 28-3: *The Warriors*, mm. 333–38.
 Ex. 28-4: Ravel-Grainger: *La Vallée des cloches*, mm. 14–22.
 Ex. 28-5: Bach-Grainger: *Blythe Bells*, mm. 1–19.
 Ex. 28-6: *Under en Bro*, mm. 49–59.
 Ex. 28-7: *Under en Bro*, mm. 66–81.
 Ex. 28-8: *Tribute to Foster*, mm. 77–86.
 Ex. 28-9: *My Robin Is to the Greenwood Gone*, mm. 1–25.
 Ex. 29-1: *Irish Tune from County Derry*, mm. 1–5.
 Ex. 29-2: *Country Gardens*, original version, mm. 33–36.
 Ex. 29-3: *Country Gardens*, easy version, mm. 17–20.
 Ex. 29-4: *Blythe Bells*, concert version, mm. 1–4.
 Ex. 29-5: *Blythe Bells*, easy version, mm. 1–4.
 Ex. 29-6: *Faeroe Island Dance* from *The Easy Grainger* arranged for three pianists at one piano.
 Ex. 29-7: Rachmaninoff-Grainger: third movement of Rachmaninoff Second Piano Concerto from *Concert Transcriptions of Favorite Concertos*, mm. 1–7.
 Ex. 29-8: *To a Nordic Princess*, mm. 80–81.
 Ex. 29-9: *Colonial Song*, mm. 67–69.
 Ex. 29-10: *Irish Tune from County Derry*, mm. 1–3.
 Ex. 29-11: *Colonial Song*, mm. 23–24.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1-1: John Harry Grainger (1854–1917), c. 1878.
Fig. 1-2: Rosa Annie Aldridge (1861–1922) in 1880.
Fig. 2-1: George Percy Grainger, c. 1885.
Fig. 2-2: Master Percy Grainger, Vanduck Studios, 1892.
Fig. 3-1: Rose and Percy Grainger, Frankfurt am Main, 1895.
Fig. 4-1: John Singer Sargent, charcoal drawing of Percy Grainger, 1908.
Fig. 5-1: Percy Grainger, 1915.
Fig. 6-1: Percy Grainger, New York, 1917.
Fig. 7-1: Percy Grainger in uniform, c. 1917.
Fig. 7-2: Percy Grainger at the piano, photographed by Frederick Morse, 1920.
Fig. 7-3: 7 Cromwell Place, White Plains, New York.
Fig. 8-1: Rose and Percy Grainger on the verandah, 7 Cromwell Place, White Plains, N.Y.
Fig. 8-2: Watercolor by Percy Grainger of Barstow, California, 1922.
Fig. 9-1: Percy Grainger, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, September 1923.
Fig. 10-1: Percy Grainger, 1926.
Fig. 10-2: Ella Viola Ström, 1927.
Fig. 10-3: Ella and Percy Grainger, White Plains, N.Y., 1928.
Fig. 11-1: Ella and Percy Grainger on horseback, Denmark, 1929.
Fig. 12-1: Self-portrait with staff bells by Ella Grainger.
Fig. 13-1: Percy Grainger at Aeolian Hall, 1933.
Fig. 14-1: Blueprints for the Grainger Museum, c. 1934.
Fig. 14-2: Percy Grainger in front of the Grainger Museum.
Fig. 15-1: Percy Grainger, c. 1937.
Fig. 16-1: Percy Grainger in towel clothes, 1940–41.
Fig. 17-1: Grainger, c. 1940.
Fig. 18-1: Ella and Percy Grainger, c. 1943.
Fig. 19-1: Ella and Percy Grainger with Burnett Cross aboard the vessel *Gripsholm*, 1950.
Fig. 19-2: Cross-Grainger Estey-Reed Tone-Tool.
Fig. 20-1: Grainger adjusting the Estey-Reed Tone-Tool.
Fig. 20-2: “Hills & Dales” Air-Blown Reeds Tone Tool No. 6.
Fig. 20-3: Oscillator-Playing Tone-Tool, 3rd Experiment.
Fig. 20-4: “Kangaroo Pouch” Tone-Tool, front view.

- Fig. 20-5: “Kangaroo Pouch” Tone-Tool, back view.
- Fig. 21-1: Percy and Ella Grainger at the Grainger Museum, 1956.
- Fig. 21-2: The last Free Music Machine: The Electric-Eye Tone-Tool
- Fig. 22-1: British Folk-Music Settings No. 24: *The Sprig of Thyme*.
- Fig. 23-1: Album Cover for the CD *Grainger Jungle Book* performed by Stephen Layton and Polyphony.
- Fig. 24-1: Cover for *Angelus ad virginem* from *English Gothic Music*, Schott & Co.
- Fig. 25-1: Drawing by Percy Grainger of Cross-Grainger Oscillator-playing Tone-Tool, 1st Experiment.
- Fig. 25-2: Drawing by Percy Grainger of Cross-Grainger Oscillator-Playing Tone-Tool, 2nd Experiment.
- Fig. 25-3: Drawing by Percy Grainger of “Kangaroo Pouch” Tone-Tool.
- Fig. 25-4: Reconstruction of the “Kangaroo Pouch” Tone-Tool at the Grainger Museum.
- Fig. 26-1: Life mask of Percy Grainger by Italian Plastercast, 1958.
- Fig. 27-1: Grainger scoring on the verandah, White Plains, 1950s. Photo by Burnett Cross.
- Fig. 28-1: Life mask of Percy Grainger by Italian Plastercast, 1958.
- Fig. 29-1: Advertisement for Steinway Pianos.
- Fig. 30-1: Bust of Percy Grainger by Kaare K. Nygaard.

FOREWORD

I am honoured to be invited to write a Foreword to Teresa Balough's important new book about Percy Grainger. In designating her work as a *Life in Music*, followed by a more detailed exploration of his extensive oeuvre, she is redressing what has become too often an unbalanced approach to Grainger. His remarkable Museum collection, his voluminous, often personal writings, and the sometimes misplaced but lucrative exploitation of his life story – all have, paradoxically, tended to draw attention away from where in fact the heart of Grainger lies: in the breadth, individuality and power of his music. Benjamin Britten recognised that in his seminal recording *Salute to Percy Grainger*. Many other fine recordings have followed suit, with the most comprehensive overview of his music on the Chandos label, now happily available online world-wide.

Dr Balough was a long-time friend and colleague of one of Grainger's closest musical associates, Burnett Cross. She produced an early catalogue of Grainger's music, and has already produced and collaborated on five books on aspects of his work. I was delighted that she agreed to contribute to *The New Percy Grainger Companion*, designed as a practical guide to the performance of his music. Now, along with a wealth of new material in her new volume, the more detailed discussion of individual works is a welcome further stage in musical discovery. Teresa Balough has for over fifty years been a leading light in the field of Grainger research, combining intellectual rigour with a passion for her subject and a rare personal modesty. I salute her, and wish her book all the success it so richly deserves.

Penelope Thwaites

PREFACE

The golden dew-drops of the dawn
Shine not forever on the grass;
Birds' matin music is withdrawn;
The smiles of sea and meadow pass.
For God found fittest for the earth
The law that life
Blends peace and strife,
And placed that blessing on its birth.

—Sveinbjorn Egilsson (1791–1852), *Vita Varis*

In “Epilogue” from *Spoon River Anthology*, Edgar Lee Masters wrote: “The sun is an eagle / Who broods o’er his young / The earth is his nursling / In whom he has flung / The life-flame in seed, / In blossom desire, / Till fire become life, / And life become fire.” Indeed, these words would make a fitting epitaph for Percy Grainger, who lived his life as he wrote his compositions “continually at a white-heat of melodic & harmonic inventiveness.”¹ Even as a young boy Grainger prized wildness and freeness in life and found ways of expressing it even though under the eye of a loving but domineering mother. He loved wild nature and found flowering weeds more attractive than garden flowers, hopped trams into the city when allowed, and played dangerous warrior games with bamboo “spears” and trash can lids. As a young concert pianist he brought an outdoor quality to his performance, playing with dash and sometimes abandon. His private life was no less filled with intensity and fervor, an antidote for the straight-jacket life he lived as a concert artist.

The first half of Grainger’s professional life was filled with praise and even adulation, while the second half, when he became more outspoken in his iconoclastic views on music, was greeted less warmly by critics, until by the time of his death he was considered to be at best a footnote to music history. When in the late 1940s Grainger chose to withdraw in the main

¹ Percy Grainger, “Percy Aldridge Grainger’s Remarks about His ‘Hill-Song No. 1,’” typescript dated September 1949, reprinted in Teresa Balough, *A Musical Genius from Australia: Selected Writings by and about Percy Grainger* (Perth: CIRCME, 1997), 82–91.

from performing in larger concert venues in favor of college and university settings, his accomplishments as a virtuoso pianist and innovative composer were largely forgotten by the public and it became popular in academic circles to denigrate this man who refused to conform to the mold and strove to increase in every respect human sensitivity to life and nature through music. In short, this musical “Pegasus,” this wonderfully creative champion of the beautiful and the free in music, was “put into pound.” For many years his work was either totally ignored or met with the most unfair and unjust criticism due to a lack of understanding of the total man and his objectives. His complete openness of character, his refusal to pose or compromise his feelings in any way was itself thought by many to be a “pose.” His universalist attitude toward music was considered to be eccentric in an age which hardly knew the word “ethnomusicology,” and his pioneering work in electronic music could hardly be understood in an era which had never heard of electronic music. Having no precedent by which to judge Grainger, the musical world seemed incapable for many years of judging him at all.

In 1955 Richard Franko Goldman wrote an article on “Percy Grainger's ‘Free Music’” which appeared in the *Juilliard Review*,² and understanding began to come Grainger's way for the first time in many years. Other responsible writers began to follow Goldman's lead in considering objectively the creative aspects of Grainger's art, resulting in a serious Grainger revival in the 1960s with extensive performance and recording of his works, as well as writings about the man and his music. Since that time there have been many scholarly books and articles written about Grainger and extensive recordings of his music. And yet, and yet even to this day it is his seemingly eccentric lifestyle that is more often considered by some writers than the importance of his words regarding the social and spiritual uses of music, in which he was a true pioneer.

The work that here follows is an endeavor to present an overview of Grainger's artistic life in the light of his own words and the words of those who knew him and to show the importance of his innovations in many different areas of music. The spheres in which he worked range widely, from creating a literature for the concert band that fully exploits its sonorities, treating the chorus as a culture-bearing tool and increasing its range of tonal effects, creating innovative forms of orchestration, promulgating the richness and complexity of authentic folk-music, presenting to the public little-known (at the time) masterpieces of early music, to experimenting with twentieth-century modernism and music freed

² Richard Franko Goldman, “Percy Grainger's ‘Free Music,’” *Juilliard Review* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1955): 37–47.

of the exacting constraints of fixed pitch and rhythm, and advancing new ideas in music education.

One of the most egregious areas of contention concerning Grainger has been the suggestion that he was an extreme racist, which serves in essence to negate or trivialize his many statements on the need for a universal outlook and democratic brotherhood in the arts. Grainger was an apologist for what he termed the “Nordic” race. His definition of “Nordic,” however, goes far beyond the periphery of the Scandinavian lands or those bordering the North Sea, including Nordic-influenced lands such as America and Australia. He saw in these lands a love of freedom, individualism and tolerance and in their music a desire to depict nature in its many moods.³ In 1921 he delivered a lecture at Yale University in which he went even further with his definition of “Nordic”: “When I say Nordic music I mean music showing in preponderance those characteristics that have come to us mainly in the music of Nordics. Thus, from this standpoint a great deal of Negro music is typically Nordic.”⁴ He feared that “Nordic” music was being overshadowed by music from other European countries (in his day it was certainly true that music emanating from Scandinavia, America, and the British Isles was far less frequently performed in concert than music from Germany, Italy, and France) and set about promoting and performing “Nordic” music as much as he could. He wrote in 1940, “I do not ask special favors for my race & its art. I only ask that music be universal & that Nordic art be given its just place in that universality.”⁵ The following year he wrote, “I have no thought of the Nordic being superior or inferior to any other race.”⁶ Twenty years previously he had declared at Yale, “I do not believe in special artistic privileges for any race; I do not believe in special artistic superiorities in any race; I do not believe in the special artistic favoring of any race.”⁷

Despite his championing of all things “Nordic,” Grainger was not a racist in the sense of believing that some races are inferior and require different treatment, although he was a racialist in being keenly interested in

³ For further explication see the partial transcript of Grainger’s WEVD broadcast “Characteristics of Nordic Music” delivered July 4, 1933, to be found in Part Thirteen of this work. Unless otherwise stated, all letters, transcripts and unpublished documents are held in the Grainger Museum, Melbourne, Australia.

⁴ Percy Grainger, “Nordic Characteristics in Music,” typescript dated March 5, 1921. Reprinted in *Grainger on Music*, ed. Malcolm Gillies and Bruce Clunies Ross (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132.

⁵ Percy Grainger, letter to Agnes, Eyvind and Storm Bull, October 26, 1940.

⁶ Percy Grainger, letter to Ellen Bull (wife of Storm Bull), October 23, 1941.

⁷ Percy Grainger, “Nordic Characteristics in Music,” 132.

the differences between races, a preoccupation which surfaces frequently in the private correspondence of his later years.⁸ From early childhood Grainger felt an affinity for non-Western musics, exemplified by his love of Chinese, African American, and Māori music, leading him to call himself upon leaving Australia for Germany in his twelfth year: “a steadless little boy to whom hints & messages of great alarm & joybringingness came from many races & many corners of the earth.”⁹ As he grew older, he fell under the spell of Rarotongan and Javanese music, which inspired him in his own compositions and in scoring for “tuneful” percussion instruments. In 1916 he wrote to D. C. Parker, “Just as I feel towards every class, so do I feel towards every race. I feel that I, as a modern composer, have just as much to learn from Chinese or Zulu music as from Schönberg or Scarlatti.”¹⁰ He enjoyed a special affinity for African American music. In 1915, a year after his arrival in America, he wrote to Margot Harrison: “When I get more powerful I wish to help Negro composers (such as W. M. Cook, Dett, Diton, etc.) forward & do for negro folk music what I’ve tried to do for British etc. Then I want to bring the beauty of native music (African, Polynesian, etc) home to the ear of all the world.”¹¹

It must be admitted that antisemitic remarks in Grainger’s personal writings are particularly problematic to a modern sensibility and an unfortunate blot on an otherwise liberal character. Although Grainger himself never made such statements publicly, nor have they appeared in his printed essays, lectures or live broadcasts, they cannot be lightly set aside as his personal writings become known. Taken together with his championing of “Nordic” music and literature, they have lent weight to the labelling of Grainger by some as an ardent racist, an emphasis that has worked against the wider promulgation of his ideas on the spiritualizing and universalizing aspects of music. Grainger wrote so much, and preserved it all, that it is easy to find contradictions. I have chosen to focus on the more positive aspects of his life and work in the hope and the belief that they can offer direction and encouragement to us all.

The Austrian philosopher, scientist and educator Rudolf Steiner wrote, “We fail to understand art if we do not find in it a yearning to experience the spirit. ... Art raises sensory reality into the sphere of the spirit. ... Music

⁸ See Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism, Histories and Controversies* (New York: Red Globe Press, 2002) for an in-depth discussion of these terms.

⁹ Percy Aldridge Grainger, “The Aldridge-Grainger-Ström Saga,” 154. 233-page manuscript, September 1933–January 1934, located in the Grainger Museum, Melbourne, Australia.

¹⁰ Percy Grainger, letter to D. C. Parker, August 28, 1916.

¹¹ Percy Grainger, letter to Margot Harrison, December 25, 1915.

is humanity's artistic future."¹² Music for Grainger was a social force to be used to train the emotional susceptibilities of mankind in the ways of love, harmony, cooperation, and democracy. He saw it as a spiritualizing force which, when used correctly, could bring humanity to a cosmic level of love and understanding. He saw music through the eyes of nature which then rose in turn to the universal. Even his beloved "Free Music", so often misunderstood, bears not only an uncanny resemblance to the sounds of nature itself but to the extraterrestrial harmony of the planetary bodies in their orbits around the sun, the venerable "music of the spheres," as synthesized on computer by Willie Ruff and John Rodgers.¹³ For Grainger, music should make us both more aware of ourselves in relation not only to nature but to each other and of our responsibilities toward each other. These experiences obtained through music can then be used to help raise consciousness in both the performers and the audience. The titles of many of Grainger's original compositions, *Marching Song of Democracy*, *The Warriors* (conceived in homage to the fighting men of all nations), *The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart*, *Hill-Songs I and II*, *Kipling "Jungle Book" Cycle*, *Free Music No. 1* and *No. 2*, bear witness to his concern with nature and the human spirit.

This book has been written in the hope that a general overview of Grainger's work will demonstrate the importance of many of his pioneering concepts. So much has been written about Grainger in the past half-century that a detailed life and works would need to take up many volumes. This work is offered as an introduction to the life and the work of a man whose popular understanding has created, as Richard Franko Goldman once wrote, "the wrong kind of fame."¹⁴ It is an attempt to introduce a man whose life and ideas, as well as his music, offer so much to our modern sensibilities and the universal desire to bring about harmony in our world. It is presented not so much as an in-depth study of Grainger as a reintroduction to this universal human who attempted so much in his life and so often felt that he had failed.

Grainger's life is here considered only as it pertains to his art. Many personal details of Grainger's life will not be fully dealt with or only as they directly relate to his artistic work. As David Jacobs wrote in his biography of Charles Chaplin, "indeed, in the long view, the details of an artist's personal life are important only to the extent that they help to explain his

¹² Rudolf Steiner, *Music, Mystery, Art and the Human Being* ed. Michael Kurtz, trans. Matthew Barton (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2016), 83, 86, 87.

¹³ Willie Ruff and John Rodgers, *The Harmony of the World: a Realization for the Ear of Johannes Kepler's "Harmonices Mundi 1619"* (CD Baby 2003).

¹⁴ Goldman, "Percy Grainger's 'Free Music,'" 37.

art.”¹⁵ Grainger himself tended to view life as important primarily in its relation to art, as he wrote to his concert manager Antonia Sawyer: “I am incorrigibly fond of art and too often, I fear, look upon life as a mere ‘feeder’ to art, like the advocate of canals in England, nearly a hundred years ago, who when asked by an opponent what he thought God had made the rivers for, replied, ‘to feed navigable canals.’”¹⁶ When one does study Grainger’s personal life in great detail, one is immediately struck by the deep current of sadness pervading his life and filled with admiration for the great strength of character which enabled him not simply to overcome, but to live with complex psychological problems which would have of themselves overcome a lesser man. The strength of such a character can be a lesson to us all. Freud once wrote that the two groups of people who defy psychological knowledge are the artists and the saints; and, indeed, Grainger devoted a large amount of time to writing down his innermost feelings and desires in the hope that they might eventually be explained by an advanced and enlightened psychology and used to enhance the understanding of artists and the artistic process. Unfortunately, we have not yet reached that stage of enlightenment.

Grainger’s close friend and collaborator in “Free Music,” Burnett Cross, often remarked that no matter how strange or unusual anything Percy said or did was, it always turned out that he had a good reason for it. Grainger’s piano student Joseph Rezits echoed these words when he wrote, “He had a feeling for logic and reason, and every act had a purpose pianistically or otherwise. ... As one analyses every facet of his musical and personal endeavours, one finds a supreme logic behind every action, every musical thought or decision.”¹⁷

It was both Grainger’s tragedy and his splendour that the circumstances of his life as a concert artist prevented him from devoting his full energies to the compositional goals which he sought. The necessity for many years of supporting both his parents, the desire to make annual settlements on relatives and others, and his burning desire to have the financial means to present to the public the musics which he loved combined to hold him in thrall to the concert platform for nearly fifty years. And yet, because of this, Grainger lives for us in the real world, not in an isolated ivory tower of creativity: he is real and human. Even his human frailties bring him nearer

¹⁵ David Jacobs, *Chaplin, the Movies, & Charlie* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 5.

¹⁶ Percy Grainger, quoted by Antonia Sawyer in *Songs at Twilight* (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1939), vii.

¹⁷ Joseph Rezits, “Grainger the Pianist,” in *The Percy Grainger Companion*, ed. Lewis Foreman (London: Thames Publishing, 1981), 182, 184.

to us, make him more substantial and concrete to our inner sight. For Grainger there was so much to say and so little time to say it, so many people to reach with the message of unity, democracy and a return to the inner strength found in nature. This is the Grainger that deserves to be more well-known and appreciated.

Teresa R. Balough
Old Lyme, Connecticut
January 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In a work of this nature acknowledgement is due to more people, living and dead, than can ever be mentioned. The main source of information for the biography section of the book is, of course, Grainger himself, followed closely by Cyril Scott, Rose Grainger, Frederick Delius, and other contemporaries. The essays on the various aspects of Grainger's art were to a large extent inspired by incisive and insightful comments made by Grainger's contemporaries: Cyril Scott's comment on Grainger's having developed an entirely new style of folk-song treatment opens the essay on "Folk-Music Settings"; Richard Franko Goldman's statement on Grainger's innovations in scoring for wind band led to a discussion of this aspect of Grainger's art; the essay on "Kipling and Grainger" could not have been written as such without reference to Bonamy Dobrée's marvelous book *Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist*. The late Dom Anselm Hughes is responsible, through invaluable correspondence, for much enlightenment on the subject of *English Gothic Music*. In preparing the original manuscript itself, the greatest debt is due to Burnett Cross, Grainger's colleague in "Free Music" and former science editor with Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, who carefully read and edited every word of the original text. Thanks are also due to Ella Grainger-Manville, Kay Dreyfus as curator of the Grainger Museum and as advisor and friend, and Keith Brion for providing copies of Grainger's music and other pertinent information. Many thanks also to Barry Ould, music publisher and former president of the Percy Grainger Society, Sir Frank Callaway of The University of Western Australia, Rachel Lowe-Dugmore of the Delius Society, Stewart Manville in his capacity as Archivist of the Percy Grainger Library Society, Scottish composer Ronald Stevenson and his wife Marjorie, John Bird, Richard Franko Goldman, Charles Hughes, Gustave Reese and Kaare K. Nygaard, personal friend and physician of Grainger, for their support and encouragement of this work. Many thanks to my wonderful copy editor and indexer Suzanne Robinson and to Adam Rummens and the typesetting and design team of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Photographic and musical illustrations are reproduced by permission of the estate of Percy Aldridge Grainger, with thanks to the administrator, Barry Peter Ould. Photographs of Grainger taken during his later years by

Burnett Cross are reproduced by permission of Doug Cross for the estate of William Burnett Cross.

Grainger often stated that one of his musical goals was to help unite the North Sea and English-speaking countries artistically; and, in terms of his own music, he has succeeded in a very real sense, for one cannot do research on Grainger's music without coming in contact with authorities on and enthusiasts for his music in countries as widely divergent as Australia and Denmark, England, Scotland, and America.

A NOTE ON THE LANGUAGE OF THIS TEXT

In the 1930s Grainger began compiling a glossary of pure English words still alive in the language today, which he frequently used in private correspondence and unpublished essays. The English language has run so far astray from its origins that he often found it necessary to explain or define these pure English words in their modern “mixed” English form by the use of brackets next to the pure English comparative. As much of the text of this work is drawn from letters and writings by Grainger, these pure English words will frequently be met with. In most cases the commonly accepted English form of the word (which is usually a mixture of French, Latin, and Greek) is supplied in brackets next to the pure English word by Grainger himself.

Old English was a very flexible language, capable of forming a great number of compounds through the use of two simple devices: the addition of prefixes and suffixes to a word root and the combination of two or more native words into self-explaining compounds. In his Nordic English, Grainger made use of these two devices of word-formation to compile a glossary of words based on English word roots alive in the language today. Of the 1500-plus words, approximately one-third are formed by the addition of Old English prefixes or suffixes to an English word root, over 900 are self-explaining compounds, and around 45 are reversions to Old English words which have been commonly replaced in Modern English by words of foreign derivation. Among the prefixes which occur with greatest frequency in Old English are “be,” “fore,” “mis,” “on,” “an,” and “under.” Grainger makes use of these and seven other common prefixes from Old English to form 130 words in the prescribed manner. As in Old English, “inner awareness” or “conscience” becomes “inwit,” and in Nordic English “instincts” becomes “in-stirs.” The suffixes from Old English found most commonly in Nordic English are “ness,” “some,” and “ing,” used approximately 100, 89, and 62 times respectively. In Nordic English “generous” becomes “give-willing,” “sympathy” becomes “feelingfulness,” “negative” becomes “nay-some.” The bulk of Nordic English consists of self-explaining compounds, compounds of two or more words whose meaning in combination is self-evident: “postscript” becomes “after-writ”; “advertisement,” “trade-cryth”; “even-weight” stands for “balance.” Many of the words thus formed in Nordic English present an amusing appearance

to our “sophisticated” eyes, but is the Nordic English “guest-take” (“entertain”) any more amusing (or obvious) than the Old English “ale-knight” (“tippler”)? A further discussion of Grainger’s use of pure English, or “Nordic English,” will be published in the *Grainger Journal* (issued by the Percy Grainger Society) vol. 19, no. 1 (July 2023) and a glossary of these words drawn from Grainger’s writings found on the website of the Percy Grainger Society (<https://percygrainger.org>).

Grainger’s spellings have not been corrected nor has the rather derogatory term “sic” been used in this text. He was proficient in many languages, notably Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian, but was less concerned with precise spellings; and the meanings are clear.

NB The word “Part” has been substituted for “Chapter” to divide sections of this book out of respect for Grainger’s long-held aversion to the Old French-derived “Chapter”.

Pegasus in Pound

Once into a quiet village,
Without haste and without heed,
In the golden prime of morning,
Strayed the poet's winged steed.

It was Autumn, and incessant
Piped the quails from shocks and sheaves,
And, like living coals, the apples
Burned among the withering leaves.

Loud the clamorous bell was ringing
From its belfry gaunt and grim;
'T was the daily call to labor,
Not a triumph meant for him.

Not the less he saw the landscape,
In its gleaming vapor veiled;
Not the less he breathed the odors
That the dying leaves exhaled.

Thus, upon the village common,
By the school-boys he was found;
And the wise men, in their wisdom,
Put him straightway into pound.

Then the sombre village crier,
Ringing loud his brazen bell,
Wandered down the street proclaiming
There was an estray to sell.

And the curious country people,
Rich and poor, and young and old,
Came in haste to see this wondrous
Winged steed, with mane of gold.

Thus the day passed, and the evening
Fell, with vapors cold and dim;
But it brought no food nor shelter,
Brought no straw nor stall, for him.

Patiently, and still expectant,
Looked he through the wooden bars,
Saw the moon rise o'er the landscape,
Saw the tranquil, patient stars;

Till at length the bell at midnight
Sounded from its dark abode,
And, from out a neighboring farmyard,
Loud the cock Alectryon crowed.

Then, with nostrils wide distended,
Breaking from his iron chain,
And unfolding far his pinions,
To those stars he soared again.

On the morrow, when the village
Woke to all its toil and care,
Lo! the strange steed had departed,
And they knew not when nor where.

But they found, upon the greensward
Where his struggling hoofs had trod,
Pure and bright, a fountain flowing
From the hoof-marks in the sod.

From that hour, the fount unfailing
Gladdens the whole region round,
Strengthening all who drink its waters,
While it soothes them with its sound.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

PERCY GRAINGER'S LIFE IN MUSIC

The work of a man is the explanation of the man.
... I am strong because I make what is in me.

—Paul Gauguin

Art can really be nothing else than a reflection of what human beings feel in relation to the universe. ... a work of art will only be genuine if we get the feeling that it opens up our soul to the secrets of the universe.¹

—Rudolf Steiner

Prelude

When Percy Grainger was born on July 8, 1882, the Romantic era was just coming to a close. Claude Debussy was almost twenty years old and was a student at the Paris Conservatoire, Richard Strauss was eighteen and had just completed his first symphony, Arnold Schoenberg and Charles Ives were both eight years old, Maurice Ravel was seven, Béla Bartók was one, and Igor Stravinsky was twenty-one days old. Wagner's *Parsifal*, his sacred festival drama dealing with the redemption of mankind, would receive its premiere at Bayreuth in a little over two weeks. The English Folk-Song Society would not be founded for sixteen years; and "ethnomusicology" had never been heard of.

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Four Seasons and the Archangels* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1947, 68, 84, 96), 14.

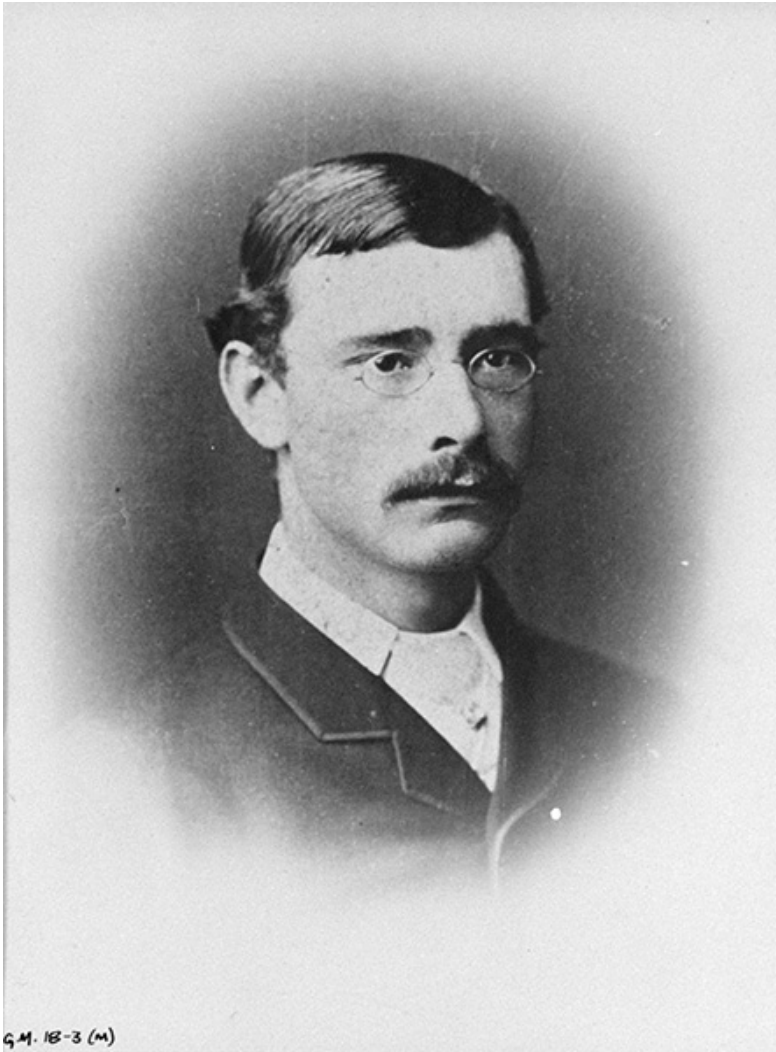


Fig. 1-1: John Harry Grainger (1854–1917), c. 1878.