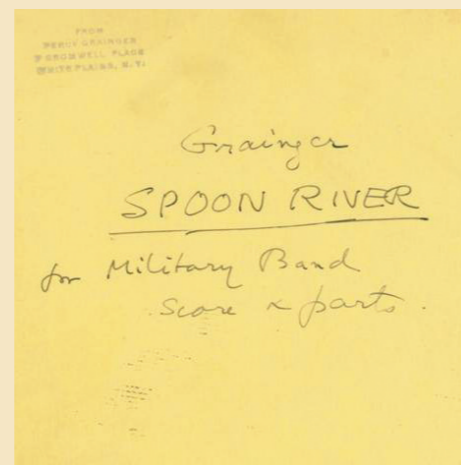




*Ella and Percy Grainger playing metal marimba and staff bells, 1934.*

Photo by Henry Krischock (1875–1940), Adelaide

*Grainger's hand-written cover (with his return address stamp) for the manuscript parts of the band version of 'Spoon River'.*



## Grainger's 'Spoon River' for Band

The history of Percy Grainger's band version of 'Spoon River' is full of twists and turns, much like the Illinois river it depicts. In 1857, Charles Robinson heard 'a rustic fiddler' play the tune at a dance in Illinois. The publication of Edgar Lee Masters' 'Spoon River Anthology', in 1915, prompted Robinson, by then 90-years-old, to send the tune to Masters. In 1919, Masters forwarded it to Grainger, who completed his orchestral version in 1929. The piece became widely popular, and Grainger travelled around the United States, performing the flashy piano part with many different orchestras.

By the late 1920s, Grainger was widely admired by band musicians, having published oft-performed band versions of his 'Irish Tune from County Derry', 'Children's March', and 'Molly on the Shore'. Grainger's 1919 band arrangement of 'Colonial Song' had been created for Edwin Franko Goldman, leader of a highly-respected professional band in New York City. When Goldman learned, in February 1933, that Grainger was preparing a band version of 'Spoon River', he wrote to the composer, suggesting that he would 'be very glad indeed to use this number frequently' with the Goldman Band during the 1933 summer season.

Grainger and the Goldman Band premiered the new version of 'Spoon River' on June 22 at New York University and June 23 in Central Park. Although this band version of 'Spoon River' was performed a few times after the premiere, it was never published, and by the 1980s, the parts were nowhere to be found; not included in the inventories of the Grainger House at White Plains, New York, nor at the Grainger Museum in Melbourne.

In 1992, while organising the band library of Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA, I found a dusty old folder with Percy Grainger's return address stamp on it, Grainger's last name in a familiar script, and the label of 'Spoon River — for Military Band — Score & Parts'.

Inside was a complete set of original parts and some photostatic duplicates. Could this be the 1933 version? After years of preparatory work, in 2007 I travelled to Australia to visit the Grainger Museum at the

University of Melbourne, where I found numerous clues that contributed to my conclusion that these were, indeed, the long-lost 1933 parts.

Correspondence from Goldman to Grainger helped flesh out the details of the creation of the parts, as did some of the voluminous correspondence between Grainger and his wife, Ella. The original orchestral version also provided indications that the band version was for Grainger's use. The percussion parts in both versions specified instruments that were extremely rare, and nearly unique to Grainger. The steel marimba, for example, was an instrument which Grainger had helped develop. Grainger owned one of these rare instruments, which I was able to see at the *Facing Percy Grainger* exhibition, co-sponsored by the Grainger Museum. Grainger's letters indicated that he often supplied the steel marimba himself, and the instrument at the exhibition was clearly designed to be collapsible.

Equally telling was the fact that the percussion parts specified staff bells. This rare instrument, basically a set of handbells mounted on a staff and struck with mallets, was almost exclusive to Grainger. Ella Grainger was the best-known staff bell player, and Grainger often brought her (and her instrument) along to perform the parts. As I pored over the letters from Percy to Ella, I ran across several notes admonishing Ella to practice her parts with a metronome! It seems unlikely that anyone other than Grainger would have specified staff bells in a band transcription, since only Grainger could be sure of having such an instrument, or a player, available.

After my return from Australia, Al Naylor (Coe College professor of trumpet) spent countless hours computerising the parts and helping me prepare a historical performance edition, soon to be published by Southern Music of San Antonio, Texas. Before long, musicians around the world will again be able to hear Grainger's 'Spoon River' performed as it was by Grainger and the Goldman Band in 1933.

Dr William S. Carson, Coe College,  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA

Issue 8, June 2008

# Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER MUSEUM

## News from the Curator's desk

As many of our readers may already be aware, during recent months the University of Melbourne received a large number of comments from Grainger Museum staff and supporters concerning a series of proposed options under consideration for the Museum's refurbishment. I am delighted to announce that the University has now reaffirmed its commitment to preserve the building as a dedicated museum when the building is eventually reopened, and to rejuvenate it as a vibrant, inviting space that respects the design intentions of both Percy Grainger and the building's architect John Gawler. The University has also asserted that it is mindful of the need to promote a more vigorous engagement by the University and wider community with the Grainger Museum and its exhibits. Accordingly, additional funds are to be allocated to ensure the environmental conditions of the expanded gallery space, design, fit out and IT infrastructure are all to international standard.

The Museum layout will include six discrete exhibition galleries, one of which will be a temporary exhibitions gallery. The other five galleries will house permanent exhibitions (with rotating material) — each highlighting a different aspect of the Museum's collection. Additionally, space is to be allocated as a multipurpose venue for seminars, intimate performances, meetings and all related purposes focussing on Percy Grainger's life and works. Lovell Chen, the heritage architects heading up the restoration project, have consulted with Museum staff and stakeholders to refine the particulars of space allocation. Likewise, Professor Warren Bebbington has consulted further with the University's Cultural Collections Committee to ensure an open



*Edison Phonograph, used by Percy Grainger to record folk songs on wax cylinders, n.d. (after 1903).*

Photo by Lee McRae

communication in moving forward. Grateful thanks are extended to all our members and supporters who made time to voice their valuable thoughts and concerns about the role of the Grainger Museum throughout this process. I am also deeply thankful to those generous individuals who made financial contributions during this time.

In 2007, the Hugh Williamson Foundation undertook to financially support a major project at the Grainger Museum — a project that will see the creation of a multimedia resource aimed at bringing about a better understanding of Percy Grainger as a man of wide-ranging interests and accomplishments.

To help us realise this vision, we have now engaged the (international award winning) Australian company, Megafun, who provide dedicated creative and technical support to the museum, arts and entertainment sectors. In essence, we will be working with Megafun to develop a computer-based interactive research tool through which visitors to the museum and scholars alike may delve into Grainger's world from a multiplicity of perspectives. The applications will range from a dedicated display based in the Museum, with the capacity to act as a guide through the exhibition space as well as Grainger's life, through to a DVD-ROM able to be used as an off-site resource for schools, libraries, and scholarly presentations.

Over the past year the Grainger Museum has fielded an increasing number of enquiries from local and international researchers interested in Grainger's folksong collecting. These have ranged from members of the public requesting to view correspondence between Grainger and their forebears to academics investigating early recording techniques (see article by Dr Colin Symes in this issue). As a result of this trend, we are currently in the midst of creating a register of folksong resources in the collection in order to better aid researchers in locating appropriate information — the listing will eventually be available through the Museum's website. The Grainger Museum is also collaborating with the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) in an exciting venture aimed at making the folksong recordings in the collection more accessible. To this end the NFSA is currently transferring the wax cylinder recordings of Maori and Rarotongan folksong to CD.

Astrid Britt Krautschneider  
Curator, Collections and Research



## 'Barstow, where we were happy'

The sleepy town of Barstow lies in California's Mojave Desert along Route 66. In 1920 however, when Rose and Percy Grainger holidayed there, it was a bustling rail centre rather than a stop on the rock 'n' roll highway.

During their short stay in Barstow, Rose studied Spanish in preparation for a possible trip to Cuba whilst Percy took his customary long walks, worked at his compositions and sketched the landscape. Together they drove through the desert which they likened fondly to South Australia.

When Percy departed to resume his tour Rose wrote to thank him, for they had 'not had such happy days for many years'. Percy agreed, replying that he cried a little when he left as they were so utterly happy. He asked Rose to collect 'typical Barstow wildflowers ... to keep with our other Barstow remembrancers' [sic]. Indeed the Museum has in its collection four pieces of a deep red rock with a descriptive tag: 'Stones from Barstow Cal. Given to mother Spring 1920'. The holiday prompted Grainger to reassess his working pace, promising Rose that he would 'make a continual enjoyment of life as much a part of our career as anything else from now on'. The town and its surroundings would remain an important touchstone for Grainger, representing a time of ease and contentment for he and Rose.

The Graingers stayed at the Casa Del Desierto, one of a chain of hotels along the Santa Fe railroad known for their distinctive architecture and prim 'Harvey Girl' waitresses. They were the brainchild of Fred Harvey, an entrepreneur who used savvy marketing to advertise isolated outposts as perfect destinations for even unadventurous travellers. Harvey built a hotel every 200 miles along the railroad. When you stepped off the train and into a Harvey Hotel you could expect linen tablecloths, fine china, crystal glasses and gourmet food. The Casa Del Desierto had a turquoise-tiled ballroom and wide, oak-trimmed staircases.



Postcard sent by Rose to Percy from the Casa del Desierto in Barstow, California.

In 1901 the company created the Indian Department, which collected and dealt Native American traditional art through a network of dealers, anthropologists and institutions, including the Field Museum, the American Museum of Natural History and the US National Museum (now the Smithsonian Institution).

Thousands of items were purchased to be sold as souvenirs in elaborate hotel salesrooms that often included museum-quality displays and performances by artist-demonstrators. The Department transformed the practices of Native American artists through sheer buying power and their preference

for stocking smaller pieces such as baskets and jewellery.

There is evidence that on their trip to Barstow the Graingers encountered the particular version of the American west that the Harvey company so carefully presented. Percy wrote on a label attached to a beadwork bag: 'In memory of stop at Needles, at dusk, two years before, when mother was with me, we saw some fine old impressive Indians and bought some beadwork (that was the same day mother left Barstow with me ...).'

In 1922 Grainger was again travelling by rail on tour when he received distressing letters from Rose detailing her anguish over rumours being circulated that they had an inappropriate relationship. Before Percy could return to New York he was given the shattering news that she had killed herself. It was to be Rose's birthday just over a month later. In the collection is a sketch in which Grainger has stained one side of the page with the palette he used to capture the desert colours: burnt sienna, vermilion, sepia, viridian, Prussian blue ... In faint pencil he has added: 'In memory of my beloved mother birt[h]day gift July 3 1922. Barstow, where we were happy.'

Monica Syrette  
Curatorial Assistant

## Conservation report: *Tatanua* Mask from the Grainger Museum Collection

### Student Projects at the University of Melbourne

Students in the Master of Cultural Materials Conservation course, taught through the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, benefit from the opportunity to study and conserve significant items from the University's cultural collections. Students are able to investigate the history, materials used, fabrication techniques and deterioration processes of a wide range of object types. Following these investigations, the students develop and apply conservation treatments specifically chosen to improve the chemical and physical stability of the object, while respecting the object's cultural and historical values. Working with the Grainger Museum collection has benefits that flow both ways. Students have an authentic learning experience, and the research and conservation treatments they undertake help to increase our own understanding of the collection and to preserve the items in good condition into the future. The following is an account by Sarah Babister, a second year student, who spent many hours conserving a *malagan* headpiece, originating from New Ireland, Papua New Guinea.



Tatanua mask after conservation treatment. Photo by Sarah Babister

The avid interest of Percy Grainger in non-western cultures is reflected by the large number of ethnographic pieces in his collection, which includes musical instruments, clothing, weapons and jewellery. For my treatment subject I had the opportunity to work on a wonderful *malagan* headpiece from the province of New Ireland in Papua New Guinea. Headpieces of this type, known as *Tatanua* masks, were used in complex mortuary rites called *malagan*. The masks were constructed from wood, fibre and cloth and intricately decorated with natural pigment. Following their use in mortuary rites, the masks were usually ceremoniously destroyed. Therefore, the chance to work on one was extremely exciting, however it did make me nervous.

The conservation of ethnographic objects such as the *Tatanua* mask can present interesting ethical issues for the conservator. Often the condition of an object can provide significant anthropological information pertaining to its meaning, use and manufacture. As a result the introduction of new materials may be seen as changing what the object means culturally or spiritually. In the end, conservation of ethnographic objects requires an informed decision and if possible minimal intervention. In this case, conservation treatment was required to stop further loss of original white pigment thickly applied to the fibre sides of the mask. Visual examination showed the pigment was crumbling and lifting away from the surface. This was most likely due to the

traditional application of the pigment with little or no binding material. Even as I was examining the mask, new fragments loosened and detached, much to my dismay. In some places fragments of the pigment were precariously balanced and held in place simply by fine fibres. Without intervention it was apparent that more pigment would come loose. The mask also displayed dirt and dust, which can be damaging if not removed. Due to this it was decided to gently brush vacuum away loose dirt. The conservator's trusty trick of securing a piece of fine netting over the vacuum nozzle to catch fragments of pigments was definitely a must in this case. Areas of ingrained dirt were left because they represented the ceremonial history of the mask. Following the removal of the loose dirt, large fragments of

loose pigment were identified and carefully consolidated. Objects conservation often involves problem solving and this treatment was no different. In some areas cracking in the pigment was so fine that standard methods of application were not suitable. As a result, it was decided to carefully feed the consolidant into the cracks using small triangles cut from a thin polyester material. Small amounts of the consolidant were scooped up and carefully applied into the cracks. This system worked well and after many hours of patient application the loose fragments of pigment were firmly secured. In its treated condition the mask is now stable enough to go on display for all to enjoy.

Sarah Babister

## 'Mechanical notators': Percy Grainger and early voice recognition devices

Though Grainger saw the phonograph as a marvellous contraption for folksong collectors, there are hints in his writings that he was not altogether satisfied with its capabilities. What Grainger yearned for was a machine with the capacity to notate mechanically songs and which would remove the painstaking and time-consuming business of having to write them down. As the processes of notation, even from cylinders, were not entirely 'objective' ones, he was hopeful that such a machine would increase the scientific rigour associated with folksong analysis.

In 1907 Cecil Sharp from the English Folk Society (later to become the English Folk

Dance and Song Society) alerted Grainger to a chapter on musical ethnology by experimental psychologist Charles S. Myers. Its appendix dealt with the phonograph as a field instrument and its various injunctions guided Grainger's own phonographic practices. But what really excited him was its final section. Headed 'Graphic records', a device is described that 'allows the vibrations of the recording style to be written on a travelling sheet of smoked paper'. In the next two years, the existence of this device, with its potential to render manual transcription obsolete, assumed the proportions of an *idée fixe* for Grainger. Thus when Everard Fielding pointed him in the direction of an

article in *The Windsor Magazine* for January 1908, suggesting that his 'dream' machine existed, Grainger was more than a little interested.

Developed by French Parisian scientist Dr Marage, it was a device based on an existing one for telegraphing letters. By inserting a microphone where a transmitter was normally located, Marage was able to generate graphical impressions of voices. He thought they would be invaluable for teachers of diction and singing, who would be able to pinpoint a student's vocal flaws.

Indeed, such machines were *très chic* in 1908. An article in *The Daily Mail* for July 6th, which Grainger 'clipped' and included in a bundle of papers tagged 'Recording inventions', describes another French one with the capacity for 'photographing voices'. Called the Parolograph, it consisted of a microphone, oscillograph and photographic plate, and showed vocal sounds as a series of 'waves and

curves'. Its inventor M. Devaux Charbonnel held hopes that with practice individuals would be able to interpret them with the same proficiency as stenographers reading shorthand.

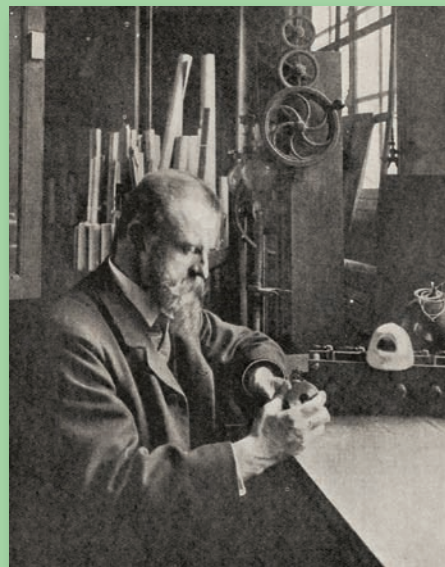
Fellow musician Harry Piggott soon dashed Grainger's hopes for the potential of these machines to act as 'mechanical notators'. In a letter dated July 23rd 1909, he suggests that while they had the capacity to reproduce the 'amplitude of the sound waves', they lacked what Grainger was after, the capacity to reproduce 'the periods of the waves'. Enclosed in this letter was also one from acoustician H.L. Strutt, who offered the additional observation that in order to extract the information Grainger was after, 'the complicated process of analysis of Fourier's theorem' would be required.

Still hopeful that he might find his 'notator', Grainger, in December 1909, wrote to Benjamin Ives Gilman, author of a book on Hopi songs and the inventor of a system of

'phonographic notation'. Gilman applauded Grainger's pursuit of a machine able to make 'diagrams in which horizontal direction would mean time and vertical tone' and urged him to make contact with the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv's E.M. von Hornbostel and Otto Abraham, who had begun to use a range of technical aids to analyse phonographic recordings. Whether Grainger ever did or not, is unclear. But by then, Grainger was more interested in recording his own performances than those of folk musicians.

Dr Colin Symes, Macquarie University

Colin Symes is the author of *Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004) and is currently researching the use of sound recording technologies in early ethnomusicology.



Dr Marage, French biological physicist, *The Windsor Magazine*, 1907. Photo by Messrs Laurence et Cie., Paris