

Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER MUSEUM

From Friends to Members: the future of the Friends of the Grainger Museum

The Friends of the Grainger Museum began life as the Friends of Percy Grainger at a meeting on Friday 3 April 1992, 'held under the auspices of the University of Melbourne with generous support from the School of Music'. The archives of the Friends show that for the next dozen years the group supported the Museum in many ways, including the provision of funds for the restoration of items connected with Grainger, including the metal marimba in 1994, the dulcitone in 1996, Percy Grainger's childhood piano in 1999 and, in 2000, Rose Grainger's London guitar. For several years, until 2004, the Friends ran performance and composition competitions. As a result, some wonderful performances and original compositions were produced, giving many young people an insight into Grainger's creativity.

Of equal importance was the Friends' role in promoting the Museum and its collections.

Dozens of exhibitions, concerts, tours and lectures were held over the years, initiated and run both by the Museum and the Friends, bringing countless people into the building, while other support was concerned with the trials and tribulations of the Museum. One of these was the proposal by the University to cease funding the position of curator at the end of 1996. Letters of protest were forwarded to the University administration and these, with a grant from the Faculty of Music of 50% of a year's salary, helped to keep the position in existence.

Earlier this year, on Tuesday 15 May 2007, the Friends formally dissolved the organisation at a gathering that began with a tour of the empty Museum, a rare experience that allowed everyone to appreciate the original design and unique spaces. We then heard Peter Lovell from Lovell Chen architects and heritage consultants outline plans for the restoration of the Grainger Museum. Through a wonderful presentation we were



Metal marimba, R.H. Mayland and Son, New York, c.1930. Grainger Museum
Photo by Lee McRae

informed of the work that will be undertaken over the next year to bring the Museum to a new state-of-the-art facility for displaying this priceless collection in a unique building.

The dissolution of the Friends group, while sounding dramatic, will actually see its work continued with the University establishing a Members group, similar to that of the Ian Potter Museum of Art. Former Friends of the Grainger Museum are currently receiving all previous benefits, including invitations to events such as the current 'Facing Percy Grainger' exhibition and copies of *Hoard House*.

Information on the establishment of a Members group will be

available shortly.

There is much about which to be confident in regard to the future, in particular the University's commitment to re-establishing the Museum as a significant aspect of its cultural collections. Professor Warren Bebbington, in his role as Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Relations), has shown enthusiastic support for the Museum and the work of its staff, noting that 'Grainger's place in our musical history is increasingly understood' and that he is 'optimistic about the future of [Grainger's] gift to the University'.

Dr Ros McMillan
Immediate Past President
Friends of the Grainger Museum

Rose Grainger at the National Gallery of Victoria

The esteem in which Percy Grainger held his mother Rose, and the influence she had over his life and career, is evidenced by the way he chose to represent her through the Grainger Museum's collection. The costume collection is of particular significance in this respect as its content neatly encapsulates Rose's aesthetic taste, social attitudes and cultural interests. It contains many important examples of late 19th and early 20th century *haute couture* such as Worth and Chanel — as well as a selection of items that reflect her interest in the arts of the Pacific islands, Asia and native America.

In her 2003 article on the Rose Grainger Costume Collection, Amelia Peachment observed that while a fashionable piece of clothing can be considered a symbol of social status, it can also be a vehicle through which the wearer projects his or her social aspirations.¹ Indeed, Rose was very well aware of this concept and stressed the importance of appearance from the moment she and Percy arrived in London in 1901. Though the Graingers were not especially well-off, through an innate sense of style and an adroit use of costume, Rose was able to ensure their

acceptance within those social circles that had the power to promote and further her son's burgeoning musical career.

One of the more striking outfits in the collection, a 1920 jacket and dress by Chanel, was selected for display in a forthcoming exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). Titled *Black in Fashion: Mourning to Night*, the exhibition will examine the changing significance of black in fashion through a unique and exciting combination of garments and paintings. Gabrielle Chanel is the designer most closely associated with advocating the use of black in fashion, creating many modern classics such as the day suit and the 'Little Black Dress'.

Black in Fashion: Mourning to Night will be displayed over both the NGV buildings — NGV International on St Kilda Road and NGV Australia at Federation Square — from February until August 2008. For further information about this exhibition, please contact the NGV on +61 3 8620 2222 or visit their website at www.ngv.vic.gov.au

Astrid Britt Krautschneider
Curator, Collections and Research



Rose Grainger's black silk jacket and dress, designed by Gabrielle Chanel in 1920. Grainger Museum collection

¹ Amelia Peachment, 'Rose Grainger evening gown', in Chris McAuliffe and Peter Yule (Eds), *Treasures: Highlights of the Cultural Collections of the University of Melbourne*, 2003, p. 122.

The Grainger Museum 'Opening': 10 December 1938

A copy of an address William A. Laver made at the original 'opening' of the Grainger Museum on Saturday 10 December 1938 was recently drawn to our attention by Reference Services Coordinator Jason Benjamin of the University of Melbourne Archives. While the Museum's own typescript of the document was located as a consequence, it is timely to reflect on that occasion — more accurately a 'handing over' of the Museum by Grainger to the University — as it approaches its 70th anniversary next year.

The ceremony was held in the Museum itself where Laver's role was to introduce Grainger to the assembled dignitaries and guests — a reported 250 of them — before handing over to Grainger for his address, then to the Chancellor, Sir James Barrett. Laver, aged 72 and long-retired as the University's third Ormond Professor of Music but acting again in that capacity during Bernard Heinze's sabbatical, gave a speech that was not in itself remarkable; indeed it was an uncritical paraphrase of material Grainger provided Laver with for a different purpose over four years before. It comprised information about Grainger's early life and inspirations, his connections with well-known composers and other artists, and a gloss on selected compositions, the latter chosen and described to present Grainger as an unacknowledged innovator — and emphatically an Australian one — at the very forefront of musical modernism.

Much of what we know of the opening ceremony, held near the end of the Graingers'

four-month visit to Australia, is provided by press coverage. There seem to be no photographs of the ceremony itself, but it was written up in some detail in the Monday editions of the major dailies. In descending order of column centimetres, the *Argus*, *Age* and *Sun News-Pictorial* each provided a report; the evening *Herald* had given advance notice the previous week. It was, in fact, a day of spectacular storms and high winds, but this goes un-noted in bland reportage that mostly quotes or paraphrases the three speakers.

Parochiality is not completely absent: the *Sun* devotes over a quarter of its tiny article to highlight Grainger's praise of the University Conservatorium of Music, something the *Argus* also noted. All three papers pick up on Grainger's curiously positivistic exhortations that the museum (or at least a division of it) 'should deal with facts of music as other technological museums dealt with the facts of their sciences' (*Sun*). Of the Chancellor's speech only his — in retrospect ill-advised — assurance that given Grainger's generous endowment the Museum 'would not cost the University a penny' is recorded. The *Argus* notes the presence of Miss Adelaide Burkitt — Grainger's piano teacher when he was 12 — and tells us that Grainger greeted her with a kiss during the actual ceremony; this undoubtedly spontaneous gesture and Grainger's remarks about her in his speech Laver rather quaintly described in a letter as 'your sweet gentle and thoughtful acknowledgement of gratitude'. The afternoon concluded with an inspection of the exhibits



Percy Grainger outside the Grainger Museum (detail), 1938. Photographer unknown. Grainger Museum

and afternoon tea with the Chancellor at Union House. A number of photographs taken that month survive, showing us at least some of the beautifully arranged if already slightly crowded cabinets and display areas the guests would have seen.

As also observed in the press, the Graingers' visit to Australia was nearly at an end; five days after the ceremony Percy and Ella took the overnight train to Sydney, boarding the *S.S. Aorangi* a week later to return to America. The Museum was closed to the public, though accessible by arrangement with the Conservatorium.

Jennifer Hill, Curatorial Assistant



Percy's Grainger's gifted father

John Harry Grainger (1854-1917) was a significant 19th century Australian architect and engineer. His story has been largely overshadowed by that of his genius son, Percy Aldridge Grainger. John Grainger was estranged from his wife Rose after he contracted syphilis early in their marriage, and as a result lived apart from his son for much of his life. It wasn't until Percy began to develop his autobiographical museum in the 1930s that he developed an interest in his father's achievements and wrote to John's surviving friends asking for written accounts of the architect's life and copies of any pertinent correspondence.

Very little is known about John Grainger's life prior to arriving in Australia in 1877 when he took up a post with the South Australian government as an assistant architect and engineer. He was born in Westminster on 30 November 1854. His parents are recorded as being a John Grainger, Master Tailor, and a Mary Ann Grainger, née Parsons.

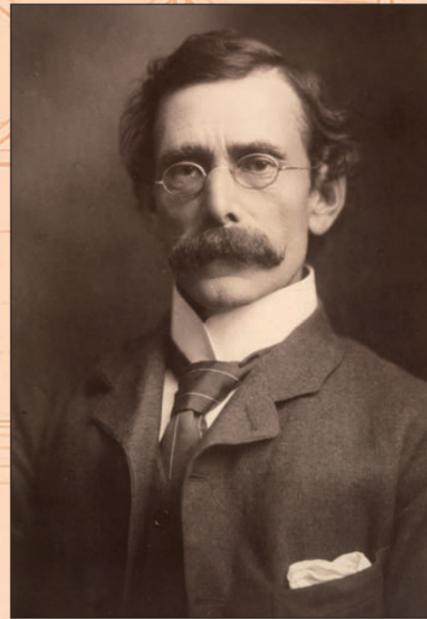
It is believed John Grainger was apprenticed to William Wilson (1822-1898), a well regarded English civil engineer who specialised in railway construction and bridge building. Where he received his training as an architect is a mystery. Percy believed that his father received some of his education at a monastery school in France at Yvetot between Le Harve and Paris. John Bird, Percy Grainger's biographer, states that J.H. Grainger claimed he was in Paris during the siege near the end of the Franco Prussian War (1870-

1871). The experience of French culture in his formative years left Grainger with a lifetime love of French architecture. At some juncture, early in his career, he made a very detailed study of French revival styles — particularly Renaissance revival architecture — a style he proved to be very proficient at designing in. If, as John Bird states, he was in Paris at age 16, conceivably he may have had an association with an architectural atelier where he could have received some training.

Grainger's most complex engineering project in Australia was the design for the celebrated Princes Bridge over the Yarra River in Melbourne, completed when he was 25-years-old. He also designed an innovative swing bridge over the Latrobe River near Sale in Victoria's Gippsland.

Grainger worked as an architect in a number of lucrative partnerships winning prestigious design prizes which included the 'Georges' building in Melbourne's Collins Street, the northern wing to Melbourne Town Hall and the impressive French Renaissance revival style art gallery and library in Auckland, New Zealand. Grainger also held the post of principal architect in the Public Works Department in Perth, Western Australia. By the end of his relatively short working life he had designed buildings in all states of Australia as well as in New Zealand and Colombo, Sri Lanka.

John Grainger suffered ill health for much of his adult life and he died in 1917, crippled and suffering the final stages of tertiary



Portrait of John Grainger, by Bartletto, 1901. Grainger Museum

syphilis. Sadly he was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Melbourne's Box Hill cemetery.

The Information Services Division at the University of Melbourne has recently published a book of essays that highlights the life and achievements of John Grainger. The publication is accompanied by an exhibition in the Leigh Scott Gallery in the University's Baillieu Library, titled *John Harry Grainger: Architect and Civil Engineer*.

Brian Allison
Curator, Exhibitions and Public Programs

The Legacy of Grieg

Edvard Grieg died on 4 September 1907. In recognition of the centenary of this event the International Grieg Society held its major conference in Bergen, Norway — Grieg's home — from 30 May to 2 June this year. The theme of this gathering was 'Beyond Grieg — Edvard Grieg and his Diverse Influences on Music of the 20th and 21st Centuries'. Suitably broad in scope, the theme attracted a rich assortment of papers, with speakers coming from over a dozen countries to take part in the conference. While Scandinavia and Germany were strongly represented, it was clear that Grieg studies cannot be dismissed as a 'niche' interest. British scholar Lionel Carley spoke on 'Grieg's impact on Britain and the British audience'. Carley's fellow-countryman Daniel Grimley challenged us with 'Taken into the Mountains: Grieg, Grainger and the Idea of Landscape', while Sylvia Reynolds Eckes from the United States gave an inspiring lecture/recital entitled 'Performing Grieg from the Outside Looking In'. This particular occasion was all the more meaningful to participants as it was held at Trolldhaugen, Grieg's house just on the outskirts of Bergen, and to which has been tastefully added a modest concert hall and lecture theatre. Younger scholars were well represented at the conference too. American Gregory Martin, for instance, addressed the issue of 'Grieg as a Storyteller: The Poetics on the Ballade in G Minor, Op. 24' in a lecture/performance which left many of us looking forward to seeing his paper in print.



Edvard Grieg, *Konzert für Klavier, Opus 16 in A Minor, 18—?*, published sheet music, heavily annotated by Percy Grainger. Grainger Museum

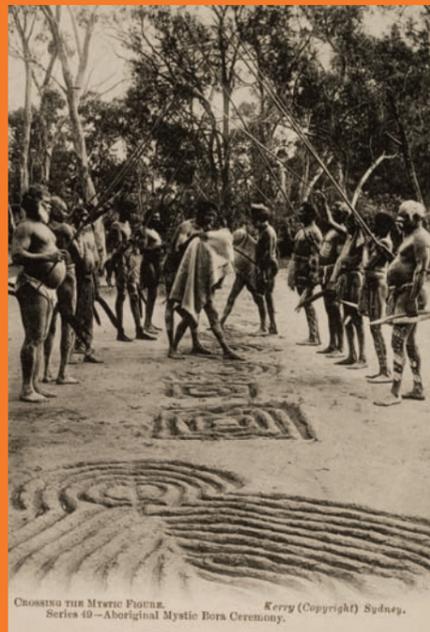
For those who are currently wondering how Grieg's legacy is cared for in Norway, I strongly recommend a visit to the Bergen Public Library, to which Grieg bequeathed his documentary legacy, and to which the staff made us warmly welcome during the conference. If you cannot go there in person, try the website, <http://nettbiblioteket.no/>

grieg-samlingen/grieg_samlingen_intro.html. This would perhaps be one of the most sophisticated music archive websites I have encountered. It is possible to see digital copies of all the archive contents. Perhaps it would be a suitable model for the Grainger Museum, if funding could be found to support the labour-intensive work necessary to establish such access?

Malcolm Gillies and I gave an address entitled 'Percy Grainger: Grieg's Interpreter and Propagator'. Our paper was concerned with Grainger's relationship to Grieg: was it really of the kind that Grainger had originally hoped for? From the base of being the 'last visitor' of Grieg, Grainger had sought to draw to himself the role of 'greatest living exponent' of Grieg's piano music. He did this largely through making his name synonymous over the next five decades with Grieg's Piano Concerto, and cemented that relationship with his edition of the Concerto produced in 1919, the same year that his own most popular piece *Country Gardens* caught the public imagination. But Grainger believed that instead of becoming Grieg's prophet, Grieg became his prophet, and he, Grainger, the protégé. How this occurred is complex, but if you want to know more, look for our article in the autumn edition of *Musical Times*, to be published exactly 100 years after Grainger's first article about his hero appeared in that same journal.

Dr David Pear

Wish you were here: postcards in the Grainger Collection



Crossing the Mystic Figure. Series 49—Aboriginal Mystic Bora Ceremony. Kerry (Copyright) Sydney.

'Crossing the Mystic Figure' from the series 'Aboriginal Mystic Bora Ceremony', by Kerry & Co.

Percy Grainger's lifelong interest in non-Western culture extended far beyond music. He wrote with as much passion for South Sea island fabrics or African beadwork as he did for, say, the Maori hakas and Raratongan improvised singing which had such a profound impact on his performing life. Grainger collected a wide range of ethnographic material including costumes, masks, utensils, weapons and instruments. These items reflected for him an 'urge to express in art the mood of virgin nature, the spirit of wild races'.¹

Grainger also fed his fascination with primitivism through the collection of mass-produced postcards featuring Australian aboriginals, Maoris, Fijians and Samoans. A number of the postcard sets in the Grainger Collection were printed by Kerry & Co. Charles Kerry (1858—1928) built a highly successful photography business, partly from government commissions, before selling the approximately 8000 glass negatives to Tyrells' Bookshop in 1929. The Tyrell collection of glass plate negatives was donated to the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, in 1985.

The Grainger Museum's Kerry & Co. postcards range from depictions of rituals or fights, staged for the camera, to studio portraits. One of the most popular of the postcard series, no. 49 — 'Aboriginal Mystic Bora Ceremony', was said by Kerry to depict male initiation rites. He marketed the series as being 'of great value to ethnologists and others interested in studying this most fascinating prehistoric race'.² According to a presentation Kerry gave to the Royal Society of New South Wales in 1899 this was a difficult photographic assignment which required him to coax the participants into allowing access to the apparently secret ceremony. However Kerry had his suspicions about the shoot, admitting in the published account of the presentation that 'the final impression I gathered was that I was being wilfully misled or else that the ceremony itself was almost meaningless'.³

Another series in Grainger's collection is no. 50 — 'By Reef and Palm', named after a novel by Louis Becke. The Kerry studio made a practice of accumulating glass plate negatives from many sources, including missionaries who used the medium to accompany their lectures on the benefits of conversion by showing views of islanders before and after the introduction of Christianity. The postcards show life in a 'South Sea Arcadia', ranging from family groups posing in front of their homes to a 'Water carrier', a bare-breasted young woman walking through the palms, which would not look out of place in a Gauguin painting.

Grainger himself rejected the notion that his interest in primitive art was a case of seeking 'the charm of the exotic'.⁴ Rather, he saw 'civilised life and art on the one hand, and primitive life and art on the other hand [as] twin halves of a cultural whole'.⁵ Although Grainger believed that his was a sophisticated attitude, it shows inevitable traces of colonialism, which is reflected in the postcards he collected.

Monica Syrette, Curatorial Assistant

Notes

- 1 Copy of Paul Gauguin's 'Nevermore' picture by Jelka Delius. Grainger Museum Legend.
- 2 Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities*. London: Leicester University Press, 1999, p. 155.
- 3 Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions*.
- 4 Copy of Paul Gauguin's 'Nevermore' picture by Jelka Delius. Grainger Museum Legend.
- 5 Copy of Paul Gauguin's 'Nevermore' picture by Jelka Delius. Grainger Museum Legend.



Water Carriers. Series 50—By Reef and Palm. Kerry (Copyright) Sydney.

'Water Carriers' from the series 'By Reef and Palm', by Kerry & Co.