

Grainger and the String Quartet Medium



James Cuddeford, Natsuko Yoshimoto, Jeremy Williams and Patrick Murphy.
Photo courtesy of the Grainger Quartet

Grainger did not write a huge amount of music for the string quartet medium, although he did produce an early 'Theme and Variations', 'Molly on the Shore' and a version of 'Free Music' for 'four solo strings'.

Much of his music however is readily adaptable for string quartet (the Brodsky Quartet in England have made several Grainger arrangements). I took great pleasure in making a quartet version of 'Arrival Platform Humlet', a gem of a work with extraordinary modal juxtapositions cast in an unbroken melodic line. Grainger originally wrote it for solo (or massed) violas, but made a piano version and a full orchestration of it. Percussive elements from this orchestral scoring infiltrate my quartet arrangement, and we greatly enjoyed performing it around the country in the first Grainger Quartet subscription tour of the year.

I plan to make more quartet versions of various Grainger compositions over the coming months, and we have already unearthed and performed quartet works that Grainger himself loved, including works by Purcell, Delius and Henry Cowell.

James Cuddeford

Josef Holbrooke's Promotion of British Music and its Link to the Grainger Museum

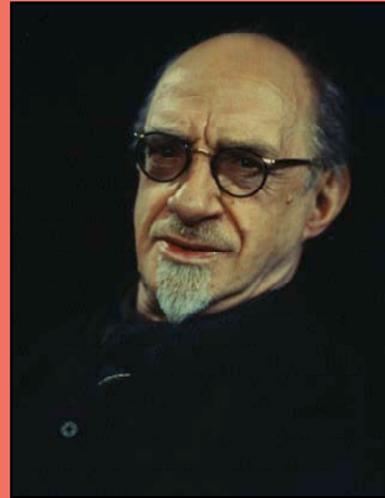
Josef (Joseph) Holbrooke (1878–1958) was a prominent composer, conductor, music critic and concert pianist, whose music and biography are little-known today. Yet one of Holbrooke's very public and well-known preoccupations was his promotion of British music. He fought long and hard for his music to gain a permanent place in the repertoire, especially at the BBC. In England he lost many friends over this campaign, which is documented in the composer's unpublished autobiography.

Over the years, Holbrooke had many allies, most notably Elgar, Granville Bantock and, for a time, Ernest Newman. But after losing much support in England, Holbrooke looked further afield and found a friend and confidante in Percy Grainger. Grainger approached Holbrooke in the 1950s to deposit some of his scores in the Grainger Museum just as Grainger had asked other composers to do the same. Some three dozen letters exchanged between Holbrooke and Grainger (with just two letters from Grainger to Holbrooke) are housed in the Grainger Museum and give a fascinating glimpse into Holbrooke's devotion to British music and the faith he put in Grainger in trying to get his music noticed in Australia.

After much discussion, including time taken for Grainger to decide which works he wanted, Holbrooke despatched approximately 12 parcels (and 9 piano rolls) of scores and manuscripts to the Museum. It was a significant donation: today the Grainger Museum houses an extensive collection of Holbrooke scores (around 115 works). The scores are possibly very rare, for their print runs were often short, but especially since a small number of them contain hand-written revisions by Holbrooke and annotations by Grainger.

My research on Holbrooke is at an early stage, but it is concerned with trying to account for why his music fell into obscurity, since during his early and mid-career it was often reviewed very favourably. My project endeavours to explore more of Holbrooke's biography, and his crusade — articulated in his autobiography, correspondence and musical criticism — to further the cause of British music both at home and abroad.

Paul Watt, School of Music Conservatorium, Monash University



Portrait of Josef Holbrooke, photographer unknown, 1950s. Grainger Museum

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Hoard House

NEWS FROM THE GRAINGER MUSEUM

From the Curator's Desk

In early February 2007, Grainger Museum staff, with the help of a team of relocation specialists, moved the collection material still being held in the Museum and in offsite repositories to a discrete space within a new, University-owned building located off campus. This space was specially designed and prepared by FPPV Architects to house our collection items. It features open-plan storage areas, shelving, a small office and an area for Museum staff and researchers to work *in situ* on a wide selection of Grainger material (note that researcher access to the Museum's archival collections continues to be facilitated through the Cultural Collections Reading Room on the 3rd floor of the Baillieu Library).

Lovell Chen, the consultant heritage architects working on the Museum's restoration project, have almost completed their master plan for renovations — according to the briefing provided to them by the University-appointed Grainger Renewal Steering Committee. A documentation and tender period will follow, with actual building scheduled to commence later this year. Once repaired, it is expected to be at least another 50 years before any further remediation work is required. Planning for exhibition reinstatement and other work to match the building upgrade is underway.

I am also delighted to announce that the Grainger Museum website is scheduled to receive a complete makeover this year. In the meantime, the recently launched University's Cultural Collections website is proving to be a fantastic resource for Grainger aficionados. Of particular appeal to those interested in Percy Grainger, or material held in the Grainger Museum, is the research and publications section of this site. The site link is: www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections

Our staff are currently providing intensive access for a number of scholars and postgraduate students using Museum collection material as a significant component of their respective research projects. These regular users come from a broad range of disciplines and represent a variety of highly-regarded educational institutions across the world — including the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Australian National University, the University of Queensland, the University of Nottingham (UK) and the University of Illinois (USA).

2007 is already a very busy year for the Museum. Planned highlights for the second half of the year include a special event at University House (the University of Melbourne's staff club) on 10 July to celebrate Percy Grainger's 125th birthday; an exhibition examining the life and work of architect John Harry Grainger, father to Percy, at the Baillieu Library from mid-October; and a version of *Facing Percy Grainger*, last year's highly successful exhibition held at the National Library in Canberra will be showing at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, from late October. Make sure you check your mailboxes (or the Grainger Museum website) in the coming weeks for further information regarding these exciting programs.

Astrid Britt Krautschneider, Acting Curator



A rare vision: inside the (empty) Grainger Museum building.
Photo by Lee McRae

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Grainger Labels His Memories

If you were to sift through items in the Grainger Museum with no prior knowledge of the man or his archival methods you could be forgiven for viewing it as non-discriminatory. However there was nothing random or ill-considered in Grainger's choices. Grainger saw all the items he collected for the museum as being connected to his musical creativity. There were no boundaries in his life; everything was linked.

This inter-connectedness can be seen in the hand-written labels Grainger attached to items prior to their transport from his residence in White Plains to Melbourne.

These labels, written on scraps of paper, old luggage tags, torn pieces of corrugated cardboard, old envelopes and the like, can provide both an interpretation of the objects and an insight into his cataloguing system.

Take the example of one of the suits selected by Grainger for museum display. On its own it could be judged on aesthetic grounds or as an example of the clothing of the time. When Grainger's tag description is added it is another matter entirely:

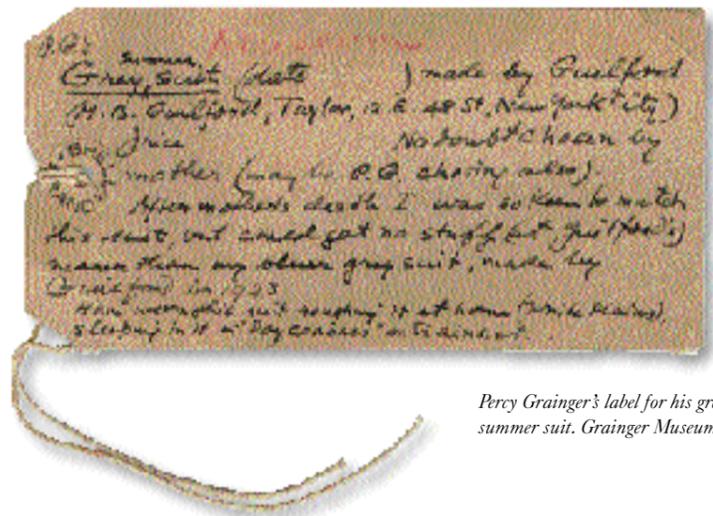
'PG's Yellow-brown summer suit (date about 1920) made by Guilford, New York. About the very 1st time I wore it I tore a trouser leg (near knee — see "invisible mend") on some wire while looking at the Harp stop on the (Wurlitzer?) Organ at the Capitol Theatre, New York, while fulfilling my first engagement there (1920) — the time I arranged Hillsongs for 2 pianos. The harpstop was Deagan (I think) & very like his steel marimbas.'

This succinct descriptive note is personal and evocative, written to act as a trigger for Grainger's memory by placing the suit at a specific time and place. The small details illustrate aspects of his personality to others: his pride in his thriftiness and practicality (the 'invisible mend') and inquisitiveness about musical instruments of all kinds (looking at the harp stop). The tag also provides an insight into Grainger's idiosyncratic cataloguing system which cross-referenced his personal relationships with the chronological events in his life.

Another item of clothing, a grey summer suit, was tagged as 'No doubt chosen by mother (maybe P.G. chosing [sic] also). After mother's death I was so keen to match this suit, but could get no stuff ... nearer than my bluer [sic] grey suit.' The balance of power between Percy and his mother Rose, as well as his sensitivity to how that relationship was perceived by others, may be read between his lines. It is also clear that Grainger's choices of clothing for display in the museum were not simply examples of what he wore but tangible links to important moments in his life.

Other tags pique the curiosity, as they describe seemingly innocuous items, providing no context. One such example is a 'hanger with which my towel was hung onto support on wall in I.M.A. Band (Decker's & Leopold's room) late 1918, early 1919'. There is no indication as to why the hanger was significant to Grainger. Perhaps he was more forthcoming on a label written specifically for Museum display or provides more information in his correspondence. Was the hanger a common household item that served as a reminder of that time and place? Or could it be his own invention, adapted from another object and kept as an example of his resourcefulness? With the knowledge that all manner of objects held emotional weight for Grainger, posing such questions could lead down some interesting paths.

Monica Syrette, Curatorial Assistant



Percy Grainger's label for his grey summer suit. Grainger Museum

The G.W.L. Marshall-Hall Collection and the 'Melba Gift'

In 1994, when Peter Liddelw undertook to manage the musical instrument collection at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, a few instruments in the collection caught his attention. No longer being played, they were kept in what appeared to be their original cases. Embossed on the front of the cases were the words, 'Melba Gift'.

The history of the 'Melba Gift' became the subject for my dissertation, *The 'Melba Gift': issues of pitch in Melbourne in the early twentieth century*. An important source of information on the 'Melba Gift' is the Grainger Museum's G.W.L. Marshall-Hall Collection. For whilst today the instruments of the 'Melba Gift' belong to the Faculty of Music, Nellie Melba originally presented them to Marshall-Hall and his own orchestra.

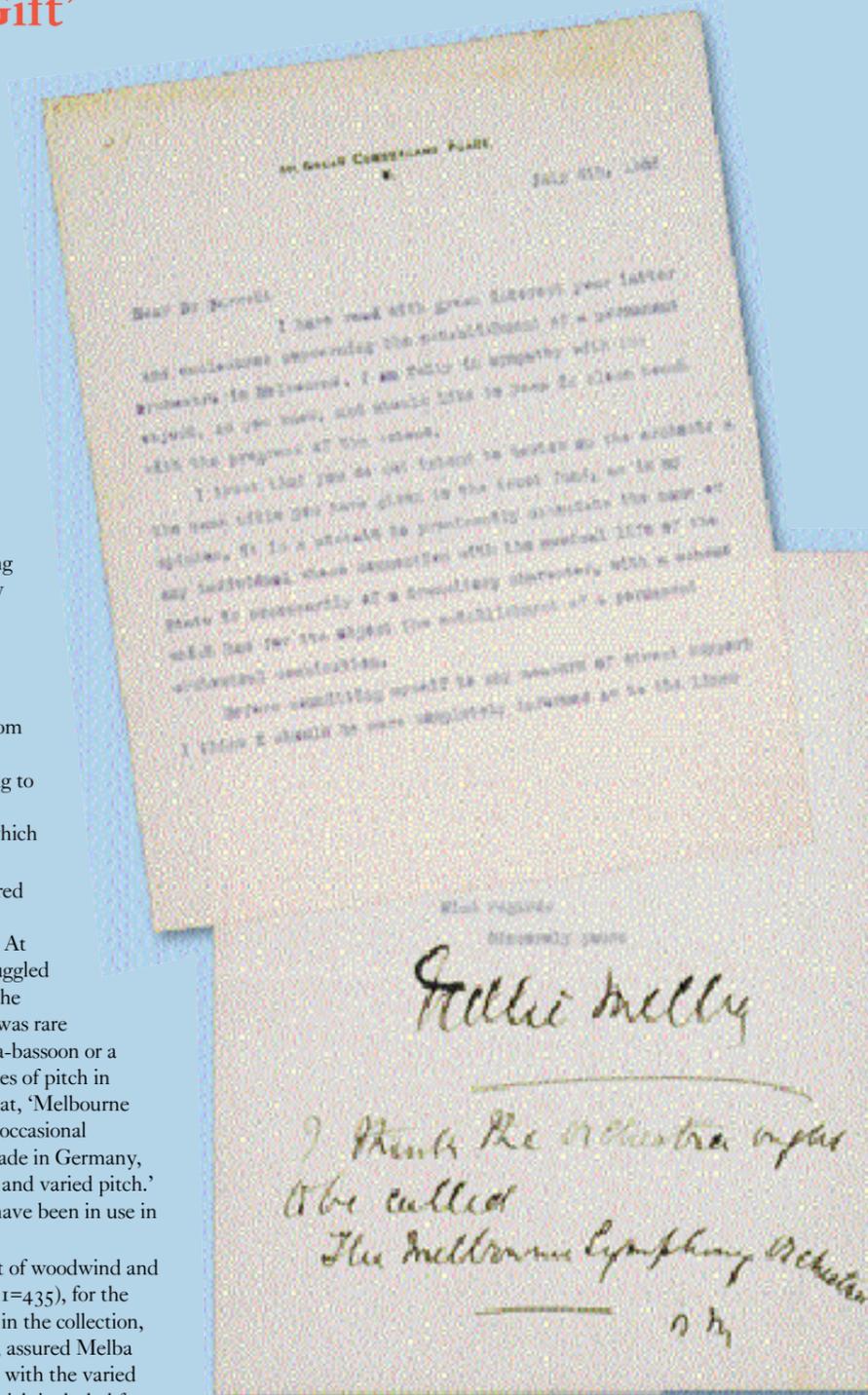
The Marshall-Hall Collection contains, amongst other things, scrapbooks of letters, concert programmes and newspaper cuttings from Melbourne in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These include correspondence relating to the 'Melba Gift' between Melba and the Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust Fund, which managed the Marshall-Hall Orchestra.

In one letter dated 4 July 1908, Melba offered to support, in some manner to be decided, the development of orchestral music in Melbourne. At this time, conductors such as Marshall-Hall struggled to find good orchestral players in Melbourne. The *Argus* music critic had recently reported that it was rare to hear an English horn, a bass clarinet, a contra-bassoon or a tuba in Melbourne. In addition, there were issues of pitch in Melbourne. In 1909, the *Bulletin* critic wrote that, 'Melbourne orchestras up to date have had to struggle with occasional fantastic sounds, produced from instruments made in Germany, Austria, London, or Timbuctoo, and of any old and varied pitch.' At least four different pitch standards seem to have been in use in Melbourne at this time.

So Melba agreed to purchase a complete set of woodwind and brass instruments, all tuned to 'normal pitch' (a1=435), for the Marshall-Hall Orchestra. In another letter held in the collection, Chairman of the Trust Fund, Sir James Barrett, assured Melba that her gift, 'will settle for all time the troubles with the varied pitches in Australia.' He attached a wish list, which included four clarinets, a bass clarinet, three bassoons, a double bassoon, three flutes, one piccolo, two oboes, four horns, three trombones, one tuba and one English horn.

The London instrument manufacturer, Rudall, Carte and Co., supplied the instruments and they arrived in Melbourne in early February 1909. Melba formally presented the instruments to the Marshall-Hall Orchestra at the Paris Café on Collins Street, on Saturday 6 March 1909. A copy of a prepared speech, which Barrett read on Melba's behalf at the presentation, is also kept in the collection.

The instruments were heard for the first time in public in concert with Melba herself at the Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday 11 March 1909. But, curiously, the Marshall-Hall Orchestra placed the new instruments aside after just two performances. The orchestra proceeded with its annual concert series without the instruments, and without adopting 'normal pitch'.



Letter from Dame Nellie Melba to Sir James Barrett, 4 July 1908. Marshall Hall Collection, Grainger Museum.

Photo by Lee McRae

According to the *Age* critic, Melba's set of uniformly pitched instruments was supposed to bring 'order where heretofore chaos has reigned supreme'. Yet whether Melbourne ever adopted 'normal pitch' as standard is unknown. So, from a search to find the story of the 'Melba Gift' has grown a much broader study of the history of pitch standards in Melbourne.

Simon Purtell

Simon Purtell completed his Honours thesis, *The 'Melba Gift': issues of pitch in Melbourne in the early twentieth century*, at the University of Melbourne Music Faculty in 2006.

Bunny Portrait on Tour to Queensland



Rupert Bunny (1864–1947), Percy Grainger, oil on canvas, c.1902. Grainger Museum

One of the Grainger Museum's most significant artworks, Rupert Bunny's portrait of Percy Grainger (c.1902), is currently on display as a part of Queensland's Rockhampton Art Gallery major exhibition for 2007, *Singing in the Heart: Music and the Art of Rupert Bunny*. Curated by Desmond and Bettina MacAuley, this exhibition — and its accompanying 120-page book — is the first to explore in detail what music meant to Rupert Bunny (1864–1947), the man, and to his artistic career.

Rupert Bunny, like Percy Grainger, was born in Melbourne but spent most of his life living outside of Australia as an expatriate. Both Bunny and Grainger received their professional training in Continental Europe. It is likely that the youthful Percy Grainger met Bunny soon after arriving in London through his acquaintance with Melba and her circle. Probably due in part to their mutual love of music, the two Australians soon formed a rapport, and Grainger commissioned Bunny to paint his likeness in approximately 1902.

Paintings in the exhibition depict the remarkable changes that the artist's work underwent throughout his career. As well as the Grainger portrait, it includes portraits of Dame Nellie Melba (who thought Bunny to be 'as great as Paderewski' and asked him to become her accompanist), and celebrity musicians and dancers from the first decade of the 20th century (including a portrait said to have inspired Puccini in writing *Madama Butterfly*). Also included are Symbolist, Idealist and *Belle Époque* era dance- and music-related works influenced by Greek mythology, the Bible and other painters and art movements. Some of the artworks have not been publicly exhibited for many years.

Singing in the Heart: Music and the Art of Rupert Bunny is now showing at the Rockhampton Art Gallery until 29 July. For further information about this exhibition, please contact the Gallery on +61 7 4927 7129.

Astrid Britt Krautschneider, Acting Curator