

“GRAINGER REIMAGINED” THROUGH ARRANGEMENT

A VIRTUAL MEETING CELEBRATING HOW PERCY GRAINGER HAS
INFLUENCED MUSIC BEYOND HIS TIME

A Presentation for The
Members of the Percy
Grainger Society

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PERCY GRAINGER WAS:

- ❖ One of the top pianists of the first half of the 20th century.
- ❖ The most important English folk song collector of his time.
- ❖ One of the greatest “setters” of folksongs of any time.
- ❖ A musical innovator on par with Charles Ives, Igor Stravinsky or John Cage.
- ❖ A brilliant and innovative orchestrator.
- ❖ An important thinker in the area of Music Education.
- ❖ A promoter of the Wind Band, contemporary music and “pre-Bach” music.

HYPOTHESIS: PERCY GRAINGER'S DISPARATE INTERESTS ARE BOUND BY:

- ❖ A desire for freedom for both the creative artist (composer) and executive artist (performer).
- ❖ A musical world devoid of striation (“democratic polyphony”).
- ❖ Promotion of the under-served and under-respected.
- ❖ An eagerness to challenge conventional wisdom.

WHAT IS MUSIC ARRANGEMENT?

- ❖ In March of 2003, Alan Walker, the prominent music critic and biographer of Franz Liszt, wrote an article for the Sunday Times (London) entitled “Do Arrangers Destroy or Create?” In his opening paragraph, Walker says,
- ❖ “Time was when the art of arranging occupied an honored place in musical composition. Bach, Mozart, Liszt and Ravel were among the many composers who lavished their talents on this important activity, fitting out their own works or those of others for different forces, usually larger or smaller.

WHAT IS MUSIC ARRANGEMENT?

- ❖ “Today all of that has changed. The arrangement is widely regarded as second-class music. At best it is tolerated, at worst disdained. What brought about the change? For the last 100 years, musicology has been increasingly successful in pressing the case for the urtext: an authentic performing edition in which, purportedly, the composer's original thought is perfectly preserved, every note is sacrosanct and the "sonic surface" of the music is reproduced exactly as the composer envisaged it. A musical performance, by this view, should amount to the re-creation of a bit of history.

WHAT IS MUSIC ARRANGEMENT?

- ❖ Alan Walker goes on, “The most familiar criticism of arrangements is that they harm the originals. An analogy is sometimes drawn with painting. If you put a mustache on the "Mona Lisa," it is argued, a masterpiece has been destroyed. Likewise with music. Tamper with the original, and something has been lost forever. But this analogy is surely false. A musical arrangement destroys nothing; it merely creates an alternative. The original is still there, unharmed, waiting to be played.

WHAT IS MUSIC ARRANGEMENT (CONT'D)

- ❖ “Camille Saint-Saëns once observed that every opera has an overture. "And what is an overture," he asked, "except an arrangement of themes drawn from the opera it precedes?" He then drew the conclusion. Drop the double standard. If you play overtures, be consistent and play arrangements, too.

THE TOPIC

- ❖ Re-imagining Percy Grainger through arrangement is a broad and interesting topic.
- ❖ Here are two areas of discovery we'll attempt to tackle in this hour:

THE TOPIC

- ❖ 1. If one has a desire to arrange Grainger's music for other forces, how might one go about that? What can we learn from how Grainger thought of his own music to inform how we might go forward with a Grainger arranging project?

THE TOPIC

- ❖ 2. Are there broader implications? Can Grainger's processes and opinions inform us on what he called the "manifest nature of music?"

● THE GRAINGER STYLE



- I HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED COMPOSING...

‘I have always enjoyed composing. No “wretchedness” there. But the worth of my music will never be guessed, or its value to mankind felt, until the approach to my music is consciously undertaken as a “pilgrimage to sorrows”.’ ...

"My tone-works are full of hangings, drownings, murders, jailings, death for love's sake, knights mouldering in ditches, the sad fates of young men killed before their time, and grumble-shouts against town-skill-th." (*protests against civilization*)

PERCY GRAINGER (from an interview with D.C. Parker, reprinted in Lewis, Source Guide)

• “NO SUGGESTION OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN”

- ❖ (Amis) You’ve never really gone in very much for sonata?
- ❖ I’ve never touched it.
- ❖ (Amis) Never touched it. Why?
- ❖ Well, the Italians were on our side in the First World War, were they?
- ❖ (Amis) Yes
- ❖ Yes, well then that spoils the story.
- ❖ (Amis) Well, I’ll say “No” then!

(Recorded interview courtesy of Barry Peter Ould and the I.P.G.S.)

- “NO SUGGESTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN”

- ❖ My story was that I wouldn't write anything that had an Italian title.

- ❖ (Amis) Oh, I see.

- “NO SUGGESTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN”

❖ No, my whole attitude has nothing to do with the date of the war. My attitude is simply this. All my life I've found that the best Art comes from the North. When I was about 10 I came in contact with the Icelandic sagas and I've never found anything to equal them; in psychology, in touchingness and altogether.

• “NO SUGGESTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN”

- ❖ So, when I was 10 years old and gave concerts in Melbourne, a committee was formed to send me to Europe and raise some money. They only raised 50 pounds, which was very much better than nothing. There was the question where shall we go to? To England, France, Italy, Austria or Germany. Well, I was thinking only of the Sagas, so I said “Oh, Germany I think would be the best, because German is closer to Icelandic than any of the other languages.”
- ❖ And that was my only thought.
- ❖ Well, so when I composed, I was not going to have any suggestion of the Mediterranean in my music, if I could help it.

• THE “GRAINGER STYLE”

- ❖ “It always seems to me that the “texture” (the actual distribution of notes in a chord, the critical or unconscious choice of inversions - whether they are close or spread; in short the *weft of the fabric*, the actual *stuff* [sonority] produced by the polyphony or by a “chordy” style of writing) of a composer is the determining factor of his work, at least to other composers, at least, so it seems to me.”

● GRAINGER'S TEXTURE

- ❖ “I believe that any originality that may exist in my “texture” can be brought home to the particular blend of horizontal & perpendicular that has always been my fate from my earliest childhood’s composing beginning.
- ❖ The whole life-giving element in my music comes from the *flow of my parts*, but my critical influence is always applied *horizontally*.”

• GOOD PART-WRITING

- ❖ I would not tolerate good part writing that did not produce the particular *harmonic* color I want at each moment, nor would I for long be satisfied with successions of chords that *did not arise out of wandering parts*.
- ❖ I instinctively choose part writing that will result in a *harmonic clash* because that is what my ear yearns for...

• THE KEY TO THE GRAINGER STYLE?

- ❖ “Rightly or wrongly, a composer stands or falls by his *texture* as far as I am concerned.”
- ❖ “My music tells its story mainly by means of intervals and the liveliness of the part-writing, rather than by means of tone-color, and is therefore well fitted to be played by almost any small, large or medium-sized combination of instruments, provided a proper balance of tone is kept.”

“Lisbon,” played by Richard and John Contiguglia, pianos

• SOUSA'S TEXTURE

- ❖ Heavily scored melody or “melodic ensemble” (harmonized melody), typically everybody who sounds in the treble clef (flutes, oboes, clarinets, trumpets)
- ❖ Bass line that is functional, rhythmic, very rarely melodic, and even then only typically for a moment at phrase endings.
- ❖ Lightly scored accompaniment that is almost exclusively rhythmic, typically in horns, saxes, lower clarinet parts, trombone.



**I DON'T ALWAYS PLAY
SOUSA MARCHES**

**BUT WHEN I DO,
I'M GLAD
I DON'T PLAY
THE FRENCH
HORN.**

TEACH MUSIC, MY FRIENDS.



• SOUSA'S TEXTURE

- ❖ Predominant interval below middle c is the octave or 5th.
- ❖ Orchestration stable for each phrase segment.
- ❖ Dynamic movement (hairpins) is almost always in the same direction at the same time in all parts.
- ❖ Little detail as to articulation.

● GRAINGER'S TEXTURE

- ❖ Typically 6 independent lines, each of them with equal melodic content (democratic polyphony).
- ❖ SATTB is the predominant distribution, so there's actually more going on below middle c than above.
- ❖ No such thing as accompaniment (well, sort of).

● GRAINGER'S TEXTURE

- ❖ Almost any chord member might be found below middle c. Much more “intervallic diversity.” And some incredible bass lines.
- ❖ Sophisticated orchestration, with unexpected doublings, instruments brought in to support a crescendo or accent, and removed to effect a decrescendo.
- ❖ Dynamic movement (hairpins) may move in opposite directions, or some ensemble members may have hairpins while others don't.
- ❖ Extraordinary detail as to articulation.

- # INNOVATIONS IN PERCUSSION



The Completion of the Percussion Family in the Orchestra (PG in 1926)

- ❖ The percussion family is the least complete in the orchestra.
- ❖ I do not refer here to more or less noisy instruments of fairly indefinite pitch, such as the snare drum, tenor drum, gong, cymbal, triangle, bass drum and so on,
- ❖ but to those instruments of definite pitch which are capable of melody and harmony, such as the xylophone, glockenspiel, large bells, dulcitone, celesta, piano, kettle drums, 'nabimba', tubular bells and others.

Bells, Xylophone, Chimes



Bells, Xylophone, Chimes

Glockenspiel

Xylophone

Chimes

This musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Glockenspiel', features a melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic, moving in an ascending eighth-note pattern. The middle staff, labeled 'Xylophone', has a similar melodic line that begins later in the measure, also marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bottom staff, labeled 'Chimes', contains whole rests throughout the entire duration.

Glock.

Xyl.

Chim.

5

This musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Glock.', contains whole rests for the entire duration, with a measure rest symbol above the first measure. The middle staff, labeled 'Xyl.', features a melodic line that begins with a measure rest, followed by an ascending eighth-note pattern that concludes with a sixteenth-note flourish. The bottom staff, labeled 'Chim.', has whole rests for the first two measures, followed by a melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. A measure rest symbol is placed above the first measure of the 'Chim.' staff, and a measure number '5' is written above the first measure of the 'Glock.' staff.

Vibraphone and Marimba



Vibraphone (Steel Marimba) and Marimba

Vibraphone

Marimba

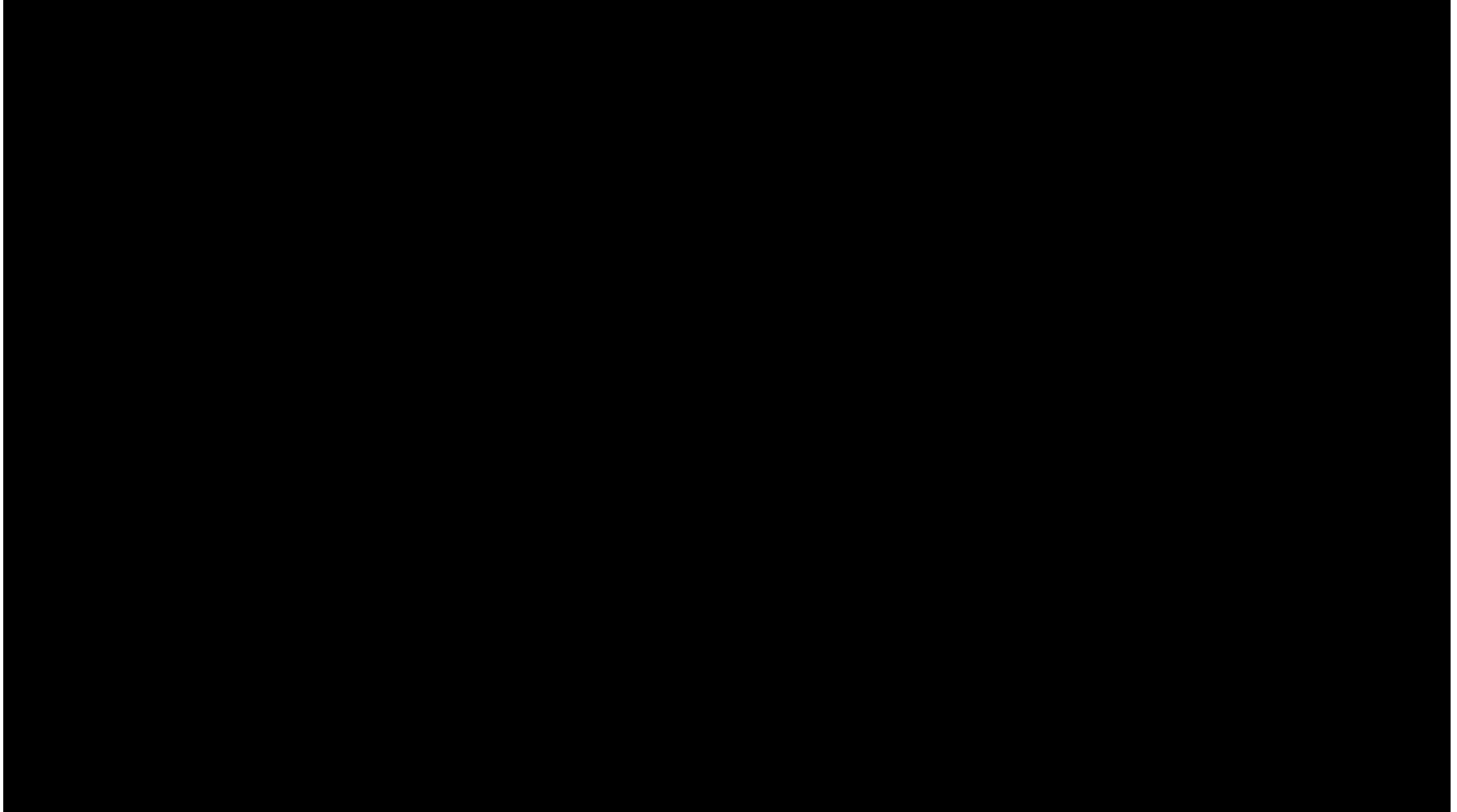
Vib. ⁴

Mar.

5 octave 4.3 octave (3.5 octave)

(4.6 octave) (4 octave)

Deagan 'Nabimba'



PERCY GRAINGER'S "SHEPHERD'S HEY"



8 PLAYERS ON 4 MARIMBAS, 2 VIBRAPHONES, XYLOPHONE, ORCHESTRA BELLS,
ARR. CHALON RAGSDALE, PERFORMED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Earliest Percussion Ensembles

- ❖ Most sources point to Edgar Varese's *Ionisation* (1929-1931; first performed 1933) as the first percussion ensemble.
- ❖ Worth considering, though, is Percy Grainger's setting of Claude Debussy's *Pagodes* (originally for piano) from 1928.

1948 Lecture at the University of Texas

If we think of the popular music of today and compare it with that of the turn of the Century, we will seek for some strong influence in the direction of greater delicacy and subtlety, and I think Cyril Scott and Debussy are two of the clues. The chords that are used in Jazz and Swing today are the chords that are the most generally used in Cyril Scott and Debussy.

And if we want one single influence that turned Music away from the noisiness of the late 19th Century to the delicacy of 20th Century music, I think it is to be sought in Debussy's admiration for the Javanese gong orchestras that he heard in Paris in 1888.

You can hear very beautiful examples of that music in a volume of records called “Music of the Orient” edited by Dr. Von Hornbustle. I think it’s put out by Decca. In that album, of course, you will hear the music on the instruments it was conceived for.

Debussy's task was how to translate it into our own types of instruments. And the piece I want to play you now is not an exact transcription of what he heard from the Javanese orchestras in 1888. Some of the passages in it are European chords with some Oriental influence, but most of the passages are truly transcriptions of Oriental music.

The tones of the Javanese gong orchestras are never dampened; they sing on. And it makes less of a problem in their Music than in ours, because the intervals of the scale are so arranged that they are all harmonious, one with another. The piece that I am about to play is called “Pagodes”, by Debussy.

“I have tried the experiment of orchestrating Debussy’s ‘Pagodes’ (the piano piece he wrote after studying the Javanese gong-orchestras at a Paris exhibition around 1888) for a complete tuneful percussion group - thus, as it were, turning back to its Oriental beginnings the Asiatic music he transcribed for a Western instrument (the piano). In so doing I am merely giving it back to the sound-type from which it originally emerged.” (*PG from a lecture at the University of Texas, 1948*)

DEBUSSY: "PAGODES" (from "Estampes" for Piano solo)
 arranged for Tuneful Percussion Instruments & Harmonium (19 or more players)
 by PERCY ALDRIDGE GRAINGER (arranged, Chicago, about June 17-23, 1928)
 FULL SCORE

Moderément animé

University of Arkansas
 Percussion Ensemble
 Fayetteville, AR 72701

Harmonium

Glockenspiel

Metal Marimba (3 players)

Celesta

Dulcitone

Tubular Chimes or Staff Bells
 Gong

Xylophone (1 to 3 players)

Wooden Marimba (2 players)

Piano I (1 player)

Piano II (3 players)
Played with marimba mallets on piano strings!

Piano III (1 player)

Piano IV (ad lib.) (1 player)
Piano IV doubles lowest part of Piano II, up to bar 33.

FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE
 GRAINGER MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
 NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION

rit. a tempo rit.

rit. a tempo rit.

rit. a tempo rit.

Instrumentation

- Harmonium
- Glockenspiel
- Metal Marimba (3 players)
- Celesta
- Dulcitone
- Tubular Chimes or Staff Bells
- Gong
- Xylophone (1 to 3 players)
- Marimba (3 players)
- Piano I (1 player)
- Piano II (3 players)
- Piano III (1 player)
- Piano IV (1 player)

- ❖ In about 1913, Grainger began to conceive of forming an “additional choir” for the orchestra, based on Wagner’s extensions of the woodwind and brass choirs of the orchestra in his operas.
- ❖ This new section of the orchestra would consist of mallet percussion instruments (separate from the usual orchestral battery and timpani), with piano, harp, celesta, and other keyboard instruments like the dulcitone.

- ❖ Grainger was to play out his theory in at least 3 grand experiments.
- ❖ *The Warriors (1913-1916).*
- ❖ *In a Nutshell (1916)*
- ❖ *Danish Folk Song Suite (1928)*
- ❖ Unfortunately for the band world, he did not apply this theory to the percussion section of the wind band.

Here's how it might have worked.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Opening Section, Grainger's Original

JOHN ELIOT GARDINER, CONDUCTOR

FROM THE PHILIPS CD "DANNY BOY: SONGS & BALLADS BY PERCY GRAINGER"

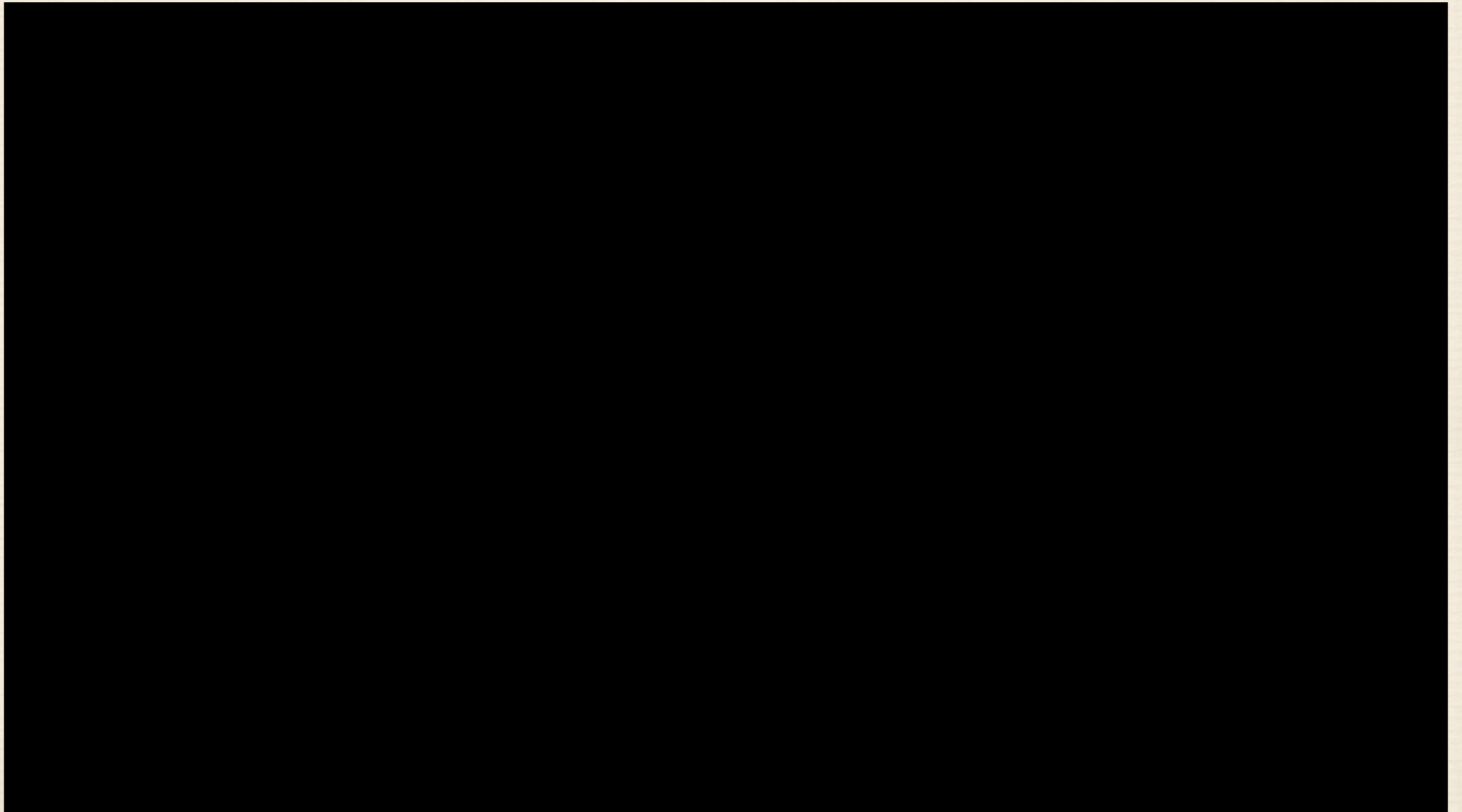
FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Opening Section, Band Transcription

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS WIND SYMPHONY

W. DALE WARREN, CONDUCTOR

Lads of Wamphray Ballad incorporating Grainger's Suggestions



GRAINGER'S “FREE MUSIC”



FROM "NOBLE SAVAGE"



A 1986 BBC DOCUMENTARY BY BARRIE GAVIN

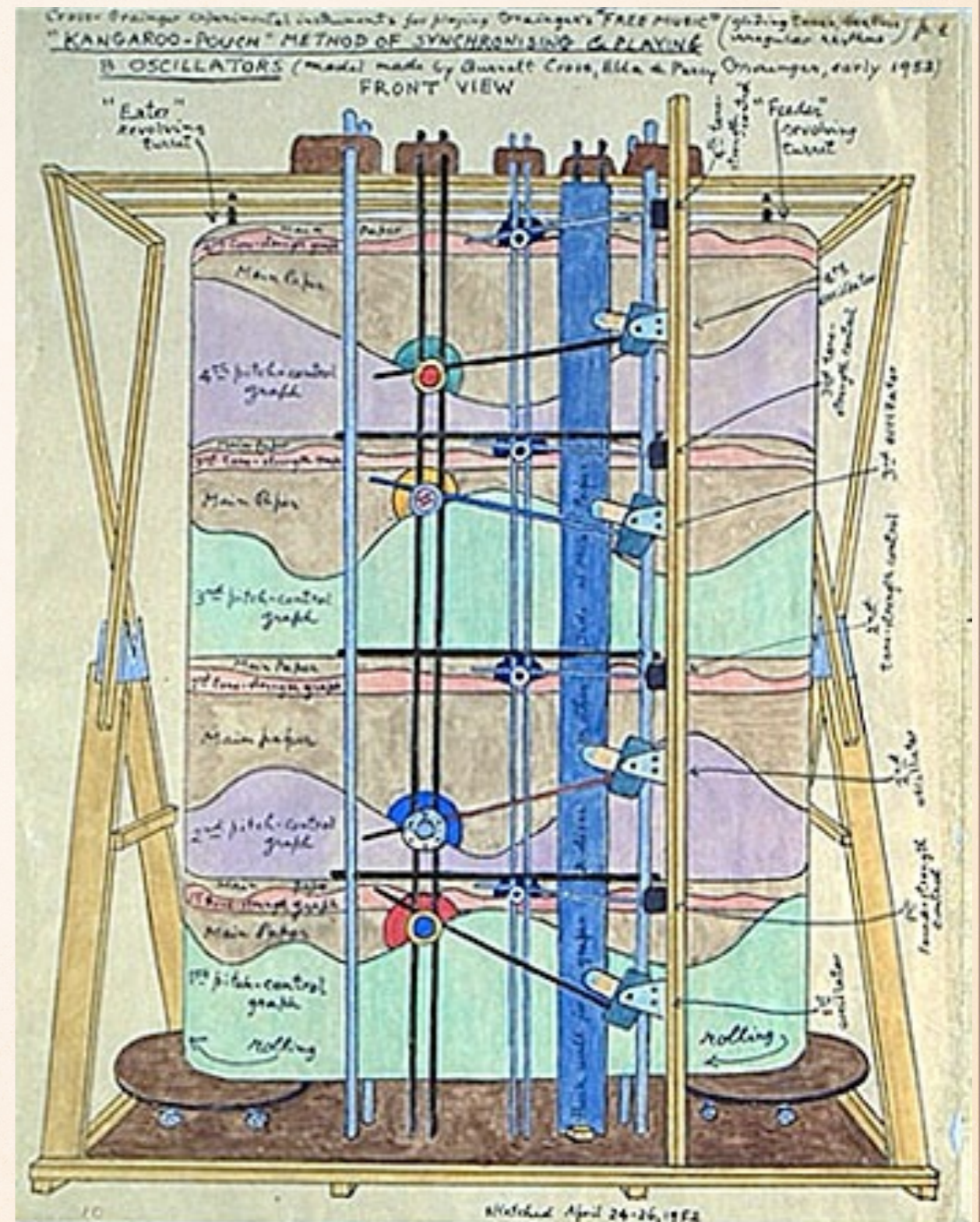


GRAINGER'S "FREE MUSIC"

“Existing conventional music (whether ‘classical’ or popular) is tied down by set scales, a tyrannical (whether metrical or irregular) rhythmic pulse that holds the whole tonal fabric in a vice-like grasp and a set of harmonic procedures (whether key-bound or atonal) that are merely habits, and certainly do not deserve to be called laws.....”

“Free Music Nr. 1”

performed by Lydia Kavina on
“Spellbound: Original Words for Theremin”



Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne, Australia

HOW DID GRAINGER INCORPORATE HIS “FREE MUSIC” CONCEPTS?



GLIDING TONES

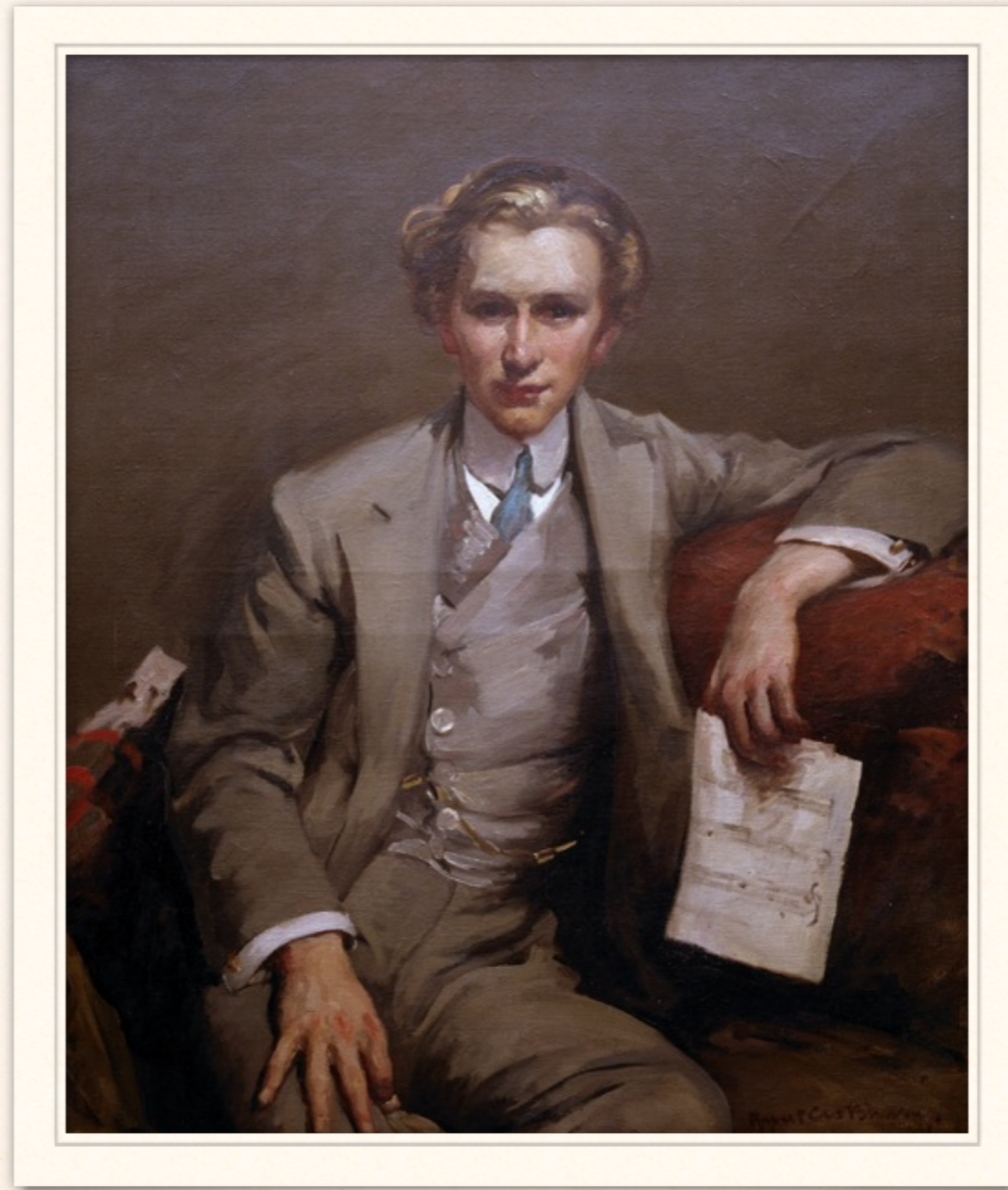
- ❖ From Percy's setting of the very old traditional English folksong "The Three Ravens"



John Eliot Gardiner, conducting The Monteverdi Orchestra and Chorus from the Album *Danny Boy: Songs and Dancing Ballads* by Percy Grainger

GLIDING TONES

❖ Same passage
arranged for Wind
Band.



The Three Ravens, Percy Grainger, arr. Chalon Ragsdale
University of Arkansas Wind Symphony, W. Dale Warren, cond.

THE WARRIORS



MUSIC TO AN IMAGINARY BALLET

1913-1916

Charles L. Buchanan review of “The Warriors” Premiere

True, Grainger will have his fling with the best of them, and cacophony rules many a page of *The Warriors*. On the other hand, there are moments where a memorable outspokenness projects itself from this musical hodge-podge, a virility and directness of sound that we get from no other of today's composers [. . .] Grainger's contribution to the sheerly instrumental side of his art is obviously far and away the most important development in contemporary symphonic music.

Charles L. Buchanan review of “The Warriors” Premiere

An inborn knack, a ceaseless practical intimacy with the orchestra and a utilization of a whole new army of percussive instruments [...] lend his orchestra an individual timbre of an exceeding richness of texture. [...] *The Warriors* offers us at one and the same time an inconsequential debauch of a fertile but incoherent imagination and a wealth of tone color that appears to mark a new high record in the contemporary concert hall.

(Bird, p. 195)

INDEPENDENT BARLINES

* The 3rd conductor can be dispensed with if harp II, from bar 297 to bar 322 inclusive, will take its own speed (♩ = 50) and hold it independent of the 1st conductor and the instruments that follow the 1st conductor. In this case harp II must give the speed to harp I, pianos II and III, steel marimba and wooden marimba as they follow or gradually join harp II in this passage (bars 297-322 inclusive.)

* Auf Dirigenten III kann verzichtet werden, wenn Harfe II, von Takt 297 bis Takt 322 einschließlich, eigenes Tempo (♩ = 50) nimmt und beibehält, ohne auf das Tempo des ersten Dirigenten und die von ihm dirigierte Instrumente zu achten. Auch muß in diesem Fall bis Ende von Takt 322 Harfe II das Tempo für Harfe I, Klaviere II und III, Steel Marimba und Wooden Marimba angeben, die entweder diese ganze Stelle im Einklang mit Harfe II spielen oder sich ihr bei dieser Figur allmählich anschließen.

LENTO (independent of 1st conductor's speed)
(♩ = circa 50) (vom Tempo des 1. Dirigenten unabhängig)

INSTRUMENTS FOLLOWING 3rd CONDUCTOR(*)
INSTRUMENTE unter Leitung des 3. Dirigenten(*)

Steel marimba Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Piano II Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Harp II Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Strike piano strings with medium soft marimba mallets. Klaviersaiten mit mittelweichen Marimbaschlägeln anschlagen.

INSTRUMENTS IGNORING BOTH CONDUCTORS' BEATS.
Instrumente von dem Tempo der beiden Dirigenten unabhängig.

Wooden marimba Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Staff bells Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Celesta

Harp I **Allo stesso tempo** (♩ = 50) Repeat these 8 notes again & again, at same speed.
Die 8 Noten, im gleichen Tempo, immerwährend wiederholen.

Piano III Repeat these 4 notes again & again, at same speed.
dim. poco a poco Die 4 Noten, im gleichen Tempo immerwährend wiederholen.

WOOD-WIND

WOOD-WIND

lunga

297

3/4 **298** **PIU MENO** 4/4 299 **Ritard. poco a poco** 5/4 300

lunga

ppp E-Horn, Bass-Ob., B's'n I, (Cl.) molto espr., B's'n II, Bass-Cl.

58

PERCY GRAINGER AND FOLK SONG



Percy Grainger's arrangement of Joseph
Taylor's singing of "Brigg Fair"

PERFORMED BY "POLYPHONY" CONDUCTED BY STEPHEN LAYTON

FROM THE HYPERION CD, "AT TWILIGHT"

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OF THE ENGLISH FOLK- SONG SOCIETY REGARDING COLLECTING FOLK SONG

- Folk music is simple music by simple people.
- “Pad and Pencil” (melodic dictation) is the way to collect folk songs.
- Rhythmic irregularities are unintended and should be “fixed”.
- Melodic irregularities (notes outside an established mode) are unfortunate mistakes and should be “fixed”.
- Collect many versions of each tune; “average” them for the “true form”.

GRAINGER'S VIEW OF FOLK-SONG AS ARTICULATED IN "COLLECTING WITH THE PHONOGRAPH" AND "THE IMPRESS OF PERSONALITY ON UNWRITTEN MUSIC"

- So-called "primitive" peoples can, and often do, produce complex art.
- Rhythmic and melodic irregularities ("failures" to conform to conventional time signatures and scales, the "time and pitch grids") are intended and must be preserved.
- Folk song should be collected by mechanical means (recording) for the truest preservation.
- The performer is a critical part of the creative process.

Grainger on Arranging Folk Song

- ❖ “Gone is the age when 'a few simple chords on the harp' can be deemed a suitable background to a folksong.
- ❖ “What the strong rank character of a story-telling folksong craves, to bring out its flavour, is not the subservience of a piano accompaniment, but the conspiracy of a 'large chamber-music' polyphony to struggle against- especially if the accompanying group can conjure up some suggestions of countryfied sounds, such as those of piping, fiddling and accordion rhythms.
- ❖ "In collecting and arranging folksongs it seems to me a great mistake to arbitrarily construct- out of the different ways the folksinger sings the different verses of a narrative song-a so-called 'normal' version of the tune & to adhere more or less strictly to it throughout the whole song. No folksinger would do anything so poverty-stricken. Instead, he lets the constantly changing rhythms & phrasings of the text play upon his melodic invention, with the result that each verse is a characteristic entity in itself, differing-sometimes drastically, sometimes only slightly-from all other verses.

LUCY BROADWOOD

(John Amis interview with Percy Grainger, 1958)

- ❖ (Amis) When you did start collecting folk songs; I mean how did you come out of that?
- ❖ Miss Broadwood, Miss Lucy Broadwood was the secretary of the Folk Song Society, and she had a program in 1904 which I heard; and although her harmonizations were very simple, I thought they were very touching; and I said to her, “I should like to collect.” So they were organizing a festival at Brigg, Lincolnshire; and I went up there; Miss Broadwood was there collecting, and I collected. And the next year I bought a phonograph and went there with the phonograph.

OVERCOMING LOCAL PREJUDICE

- ❖ You went into a village like Brigg, and you met the schoolmaster, and the squire, and the doctor and so on; the postmaster. And he'd say, "What are you doing?" "I hope to collect some folksongs."
- ❖ "Oh, you won't get any here, this is a most unmusical village."
- ❖ And by the evening you might have 50, 70 songs.

COLLECTING “LISBON”

- ❖ For instance, Lisbon was sung by an old man in the workhouse and as he sang he commenced to cry and the matron of the workhouse said to me,
- ❖ “I don’t think we should do any more just now; he hasn’t sung these things for years and years and it makes him think of his youth, and if it works him up it might kill him.”
- ❖ So there’s nothing to be said to that of course, so I just left it uncollected; or rather, rather badly collected.

2ND TRY AT MR. DEANE

- ❖ A year or so later I came back with the phonograph and I said “Well, here I am now with the phonograph to take down your singing, Mr. Deane.”
- ❖ “Oh, no, I can’t. I’m too weak; my head’s too bad; I really can’t;” and so on.
- ❖ I said, “Well, Never mind, really, you don’t need to sing, Mr. Deane, but I would like to listen to some of the other people here who have made records.”
- ❖ So he listened to about 1 verse and a half, and said “I’ll sing for you, young man.” That’s how they were.

COLLECT AT ANY PRICE

- ❖ (Amis) Did it kill him?
- ❖ No, I thought that really it was better to kill him and get the tune than to have him die without being recorded; what use was that?”
- ❖ (Amis) You’re a real collector, I must say.

“The Contrast Between The Sweet and the Harsh”



Sir Simon Rattle, conducting

GRAINGER ON SINGERS (FROM THE NOTES TO LINCOLNSHIRE POSY)

- ❖ “The work [*Lincolnshire Posy*] is dedicated to the old folksingers who sang so sweetly to me.
- ❖ ‘Indeed, each number is intended to be a kind of musical portrait of the singer who sang its underlying melody - a musical portrait of the singer’s personality no less than of his habits of song - his regular or irregular wonts of rhythm, his preference for gaunt or ornately arabesqued delivery, his contrasts of *legato* and *staccato*, his tendency towards breadth or delicacy of tone.’”

THE MAGIC OF GRAINGER'S FOLK-SONG SETTINGS

- “In the long run Grainger wasn't trying to be an “art” composer in the European sense; he was rather a maker and activator who sundered barriers between (unwritten) and literate traditions, and between the genres we arbitrarily call art, folk, and pop.” (Wilfred Mellers *Percy Grainger*, p. 5)

“IN THE ART OF FOLKSONG ARRANGEMENTS,
PERCY GRAINGER IS MY MASTER.”



BENJAMIN BRITTEN

- **IN SUPPORT OF MUSIC
EDUCATION**



Graininger on Music Education

- ❖ “As a democratic Australian, also a lover of the natural & the universal, I long to see everyone somewhat of a musician, not a world divided between musically abnormally undeveloped amateurs & overdeveloped professional musical prigs.
- ❖ “Therefore I long to write for amateurs, to help build up a “home music”, a “room music” similar to Haydn’s in his time, only more valid as to color.

- ❖ “I turn therefore, willingly to instruments (such as mandolin, whistling, singing, percussion instruments such as the Marimbaphone, bells, nabimba, etc.) that amateurs can readily learn, instruments that encourage artistic pleasure in performers rather than yearly labors of preparation for finally joy-poor performances.
- ❖ “To me, music is not only, not chiefly, in how it sounds but almost equally in “how it plays.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



WHAT, THEN, IS PERCY GRAINGER'S MESSAGE TO US?

AS TO ARRANGING MUSIC

- ❖ Balance is more important than tone color. *Make sure every line has enough strength to represent itself.*
- ❖ Choose your tempo to respect both the *vertical sonorities* and the *horizontal lines*.
- ❖ The unfettered approach of the folksong, and elements of Grainger's "Free Music" are present in almost all his pieces, and may exist in the pieces of others. Look for those elements and exploit them in your arrangement.

THE “MANIFEST” NATURE OF MUSIC

- ❖ Grainger believed in “Democratic Polyphony.” He never wrote a solo sonata or concerto, and solos within his pieces are infrequent. His music is communal, and everybody’s important.
- ❖ His music is tight-knit and “nutrient dense.” Every note, articulation and dynamic inflection is there for a purpose. Bring detail to your arrangement , *particularly in the inner parts.*

AS TO INTERPRETING HIS MUSIC

- ❖ Grainger's music is an expression of sorrow. *Fierce*, not jolly. *Wistful*, not pretty.
- ❖ What he appreciated about the double reeds was their ability to snarl.
- ❖ What he appreciated about Frederick Fennell's Eastman Wind Ensemble performance of *Lincolnshire Posy* was "the fierceness of the young musicians and their conductor."

AS TO MUSIC IN GENERAL

- ❖ Study carefully the texture of music. What are the vertical sonorities, what are the lines? If Grainger's right, then it's **texture** above all else that defines the style of a composer.
- ❖ Look outside the bounds of conventional repertoire. Know contemporary music of all types; study the 500 years of rich musics that pre-date Bach.

AS TO MUSIC IN GENERAL

- ❖ Study the popular and folk music that's going on around you. Grainger appreciated Duke Ellington in 1932 and Elvis Presley in 1956.
- ❖ Appreciate the genius of those who make “unwritten music.”

AS TO LIFE

- ❖ Think for yourself.
- ❖ Be a doer; be curious; be a maker.
- ❖ Grasp new ideas; embrace new technologies.
- ❖ Study Art; study language; read voraciously.
- ❖ “Push hard; work exceedingly hard.” (Dr. Kaare Nygaard, Grainger’s friend and physician)