



UNIVERSITY OF  
THE THIRD AGE

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*PROGRAMME NOTES - 23RD NOVEMBER, 2018*

## *SALUTE TO GRAINGER*



The worth of my music will never be  
guessed or its value to mankind felt  
until the approach to it is  
consciously undertaken as a  
pilgrimage to sorrows.

— Percy Grainger —

AZ QUOTES

# Classically Curious: Percy Grainger

He's known mainly as the composer and collector of whimsical folksongs, but in reality Percy Grainger was one of the most wildly experimental composers of the 20th century. Born in Melbourne, educated in Germany, making his career in England, and then becoming an American citizen, Percy Grainger was a restless soul, eccentric, opinionated, controversial, and unfailingly compelling in everything he did. Here are 10 things to know about this legendary musical genius.

## He had interesting parents



Take a look at Princes Bridge that links Swanston Street with St Kilda Road in Central Melbourne. It was designed by Percy Grainger's father John, a hard-drinking, fast-living, gifted English artist and architect who arrived in Australia in 1877. Three years later, John married Rose Aldridge, the feisty daughter of an



Adelaide publican, and their only child Percy was born in 1882 in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton. *Rose*

Among the family's circle of friends were the Mitchells, whose daughter Helen went on to become known as Nellie Melba (John Grainger designed her future home). John left Melbourne in 1890, leaving Rose to raise Percy alone. Rose was a formidable and domineering mother who schooled Percy at home.

## A child prodigy inspired by Icelandic sagas

Percy's lifelong fascination with Nordic culture developed when he was very young, and in later years he described the Icelandic "Saga of Grettir the Strong" as "the strongest single artistic influence on my life". He was gifted at painting, but it was in music that his true genius showed. From the age of 10 he studied piano under Louis Pabst, Melbourne's leading piano teacher, and soon began writing his own music too.

A series of recitals at Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building in 1894 received rave reviews for "the flaxen-haired phenomenon" and Professor W.A. Laver from the Melbourne Conservatorium helped arrange funding for him to go to the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, Germany. Percy was just about to turn 13 when he left Australia, and he would never return permanently, although he visited regularly and maintained ongoing professional links and a sentimental attachment to the land of his birth.

## Influential friends at Frankfurt

While in Frankfurt, Grainger fell in with a group of slightly older English composers including Roger Quilter, Balfour Gardiner, and Cyril Scott, who would remain lifelong friends and whose influence shaped much of Percy's subsequent career. Together they formed the "Frankfurt Group", whose ambition, despite its name, was actually to liberate British and Scandinavian music from what they saw as the yoke of German and Austrian influence.



*Balfour Gardiner*

*Percy Grainger*

*Roger Quilter*

*Norman O'Neill*

It was here that Grainger's lifelong interest in folksong and world music reached its initial peak. He also fell in love with the writings of Rudyard Kipling around this time and set several Kipling works to music. Cyril Scott commented that "No poet and composer have been so suitably wedded since Heine and Schumann."

### The London Years

Percy's mother Rose suffered a serious mental collapse when they were in Frankfurt and Percy needed to become the family breadwinner. They moved to England in 1901 and it was there that his career took off. Charming, handsome, and with exotic passions, Percy became a society darling and a concert phenomenon, making appearances with the British orchestras and touring the country as part of opera singer Adelina Patti's concert party. The great pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni came across him around this time and offered Percy free lessons, which Percy accepted for a short period in 1903, before tiring of feeling like Busoni's "willing slave and adoring disciple". He left for a 10-month tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as part of Ada Crossley's concert-touring party. Back in England, his career continued to prosper, and his first compositions began to be performed in public. There, he made the acquaintance of Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Richard Strauss, Debussy and other leading musical figures of the day.

### Folksong collector

Percy had arrived in England at the height of the English folksong revival. In 1905, he attended a lecture given by the folk-song historian Lucy Broadwood. It rocked his world, and from that moment on, he became a folksong collector himself. His first expedition into the field occurred at Brigg in Lincolnshire, where he collected one of his, and subsequently Frederick Delius's, most famous works, "*Brigg Fair*". It was just one of more than 300 songs that he collected over the course of the next five years, sometimes using a phonograph to do so.



*The Edison Phonograph used by Grainger to record folk songs to wax*

His 200 Edison cylinder recordings of English folk singers became an invaluable national archive, and the source for many of his own greatest compositions, including *Country Gardens*. "These folk-singers were the kings and queens of song!" he declared. "No concert singer I ever heard, dull dogs

that they are, approached these rural warblers in variety of tone quality, range of dynamics, rhythmic resourcefulness and individuality of style".

### A friend of Grieg

In 1906, Percy began one of the most important friendships of his life. Already by that stage, the piano music of Edvard Grieg featured prominently in Percy's concert repertoire, but in May 1906 he met the composer himself. Grieg loved the way Percy played his music and later commented: "I have written Norwegian Peasant Dances that no one in my own country can play, and yet here comes this Australian who plays them exactly as they ought to be played! He is a genius that we Scandinavians cannot do other than love". In the next year, Grainger spent ten days staying with Grieg in Trolldhaugen near Bergen. During this time they revised and rehearsed the Grieg Piano Concerto in preparation for a performance at that year's Leeds Festival. Grieg died suddenly just a few months later but Percy continued to champion Grieg's music throughout the rest of his life.

### A friend of Delius

In that same year of 1907 when Grieg died, Percy met Frederick Delius, and again, as with Grieg, their meeting of minds was immediate.

Both Percy and Delius were interested in folk music, they shared many of the same views on harmony and counterpoint, and both rejected the dominance of Central European aesthetics in classical music. And most of all, they were both champions of freedom, beauty, and the celebration of wild landscapes. Like Grieg, Delius owned a summer home in Norway, and when Delius' sight was failing, Percy fulfilled his friend's wish to witness a Norwegian sunset by carrying him to the top of a nearby mountain peak – a massive physical effort achieved with the support of others. They remained close friends until Delius' death in 1934.

### **American citizen**

In a shock to his British friends, Percy Grainger and Rose departed suddenly for America in September 1914, just as the First World War was getting underway and so many of his fellow-English composers were enlisting.

It didn't do much for his reputation in Britain thereafter, but once settled in America, he joined the U.S. Army as a bandsman and appeared in uniform at concerts in aid of the Red Cross and other wartime charities. He became a naturalized American citizen on 3 June 1918 and three years later

bought the house in White Plains, outside New York, that would remain his home right through until his death in 1961. In America between the Wars he was seen as a great concert virtuoso, a successor to Paderewski, and he made a fortune on the concert touring circuit, as well as through his most popular compositions like *Country Gardens* and *Handel in the Strand*. But he continued to return to Australia, making important broadcasts on the fledgling ABC in the mid-1930s and establishing his Grainger Museum in Melbourne.



*Grainger Museum  
University of Melbourne*

### **A wife named Ella**

In 1924, Grainger's mother Rose, tormented by rumours of an incestuous relationship with her son, threw herself out of a high-rise building in New York City.

Percy never recovered from the guilt, but onboard ship two years later on his way back to America from Australia, he met Ella Ström, a beautiful Swedish poet and painter. They



married at the end of a concert in Hollywood Bowl in front of 20,000 witnesses. Percy's bridal song "To a Nordic Princess", written for Ella, had been premiered at the concert. While Percy's eccentricities and sexual proclivities were notoriously demanding, Ella remained his loyal wife and greatest supporter for the rest of his life. Before meeting Percy, Ella already had a daughter, Elsie, who Percy loved and treated as his own. For her part, Ella continued to champion her husband's music long after his

death.

### **Percy the eccentric**

Much of the fascination with Percy Grainger these days revolves around his eccentricities, and everyone seems to have their own favourite Grainger legends. Among them were his interest in flagellation, his controversial racial views, his home-made terry-towelling clothing, his vegetarianism (for the middle part of his life), and his feats of physical endurance, including long-distance walking and running, sometimes from town to town on concert tours. Often seen sprinting or jumping onto the concert platform from within the audience, one of his most notorious concert routines came at the end of the Grieg Piano Concerto where, after finishing the final cadenza, he'd run offstage through the audience, touch the back wall of the theatre,

before rushing back onstage in time for the final chords of the concerto. But it was his musical innovations and experiments in ‘free music’, early electronica, and world music where his eccentricities seemed most pronounced during his lifetime. But now, in this post-John Cage era, he just seems to have been way ahead of his time. Not that he himself saw it that way, lamenting at the end: "All my compositional life I have been a leader without followers...Where musical progress and compositional experiment are discussed, my name is never mentioned. Can a more complete aesthetic failure be imagined?"

*Acknowledgement ABC Classic FM (abc.net.au)*

## Shepherd's Hey



Grainger made several different settings of *Shepherd's Hey*, which is based on a folk tune collected by the British folk song expert Cecil Sharp. The first setting, for “room-music 12-some” (Grainger’s “blue-eyed English” phrase for chamber ensemble) first appeared in 1909. The band version came in 1918. This coincides with the end of Grainger’s stint in the US military, which appears to have been instrumental (no pun intended) in sparking his interest in band music. The tune itself is a Morris dance, a centuries-old tradition of fluid, group dancing from England. Still, Grainger insists on his 1913 piano solo score that “This setting is not suitable to dance Morris dances to”. Ever the contrarian, Grainger also said that “where other composers would have been jolly setting such dance tunes I have been sad or furious. My dance settings are energetic rather than gay”.

## Lord Maxwell's Goodnight



The tale of the gory death of Sir James Johnstone at the hands of Lord John Maxwell, 400 years ago. The Johnstones and the Maxwells were feuding reiver families in the Western Scottish Borders. (*Border reivers were raiders along the Anglo-Scottish border from the late 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century. Their ranks consisted of both Scottish and English people, and they raided the entire Border country without regard to their victims' nationality*).

By the middle of the 16th Century the Maxwell and Johnstone families were sworn enemies and the feud between them has been described by George MacDonald Fraser as “probably the bitterest and the bloodiest family quarrel in British history”. The Reivers quarrels were not just a matter of English versus Scots. Both families owned land in the Scottish West March and were quite happy to call on English allies to assist in their battles. The Johnstones were helped by the English Grahams, and the Maxwells could count on support from the Armstrongs, Scotts, Beatties and Littles. The early verses refer to the Battle of Dryfe Sands (1593) in which John, 8th Lord Maxwell, having dismounted and raised his arm to surrender, had it cut off by Will Johnstone. The song tells of the events of 1608 when the then Lord Maxwell and his Johnstone counterpart met with a view to reconciliation. The meeting ended in failure, with Maxwell shooting Johnstone and being forced to flee to France. When he returned four years later he was betrayed by a kinsman and executed by beheading in Edinburgh in 1613. A “Last Goodnight” song simply means a “farewell” song. This one is not historically accurate as Maxwell's wife was already dead by this time. (*The verses below are the ones recorded on the CD. The original has many more*).

*Adieu, madame, my mother dear,  
But and my sisters three, o!  
Adieu, fair Robert of Orchardstane*

*Then he took off a great gold ring,  
thereat hung signets three, o!  
“Hae, tak thee that, mine ain dear  
thing*

*my heart is wae for thee, o!  
 Adieu, the lily and the rose,  
 the primrose fair to see, o!  
 Adieu, my lady and my only joy  
 for I may not stay with thee, o!*

*Though I hae slain the Lord Johnstone,  
 What care I for their feid, o!  
 My noble mind their wrath disdains,  
 he was my father's deid, o!  
 Both night and day I labour'd oft,  
 of him avenged to be, o!  
 But now I've got what long I sought,  
 and I may not stay with thee, o!*



### Duke of Marlborough Fanfare

Written for a brass ensemble, Percy Grainger's Duke of Marlborough Fanfare is a shorter work for winds that, in many ways, is an underperformed and under-appreciated piece for the medium.

Percy Grainger's inspiration here is from an 18th-century broadside ballad, probably written relatively close to the event it portrays - namely the Battle of Ramillies (1706) between the English and French.

“The Fanfare, written in 1939, was based on the English folk song The Duke of Marlborough as collected by Miss Lucy E. Broadwood, whom Grainger credits with ‘first revealing to me the charm of living English folk song’. Grainger uses the tune first to recall memories of long past wars, far-off and poetic. Then he uses it to typify wars in the present, at hand, and drastic”.

*John Spencer*      *James Hull, 23 November, 2008*      *from the programme notes of the Claremont Wind Band.*

In the ballad (we hear only the orchestral version today) the duke lies “on a bed of sickness,... resigned to die”. He thinks back on his deeds of valour and in his imagination exhorts “you gen’rals all and champions bold” to “stand true”, as he had done in the past:

*We clim’ed those lofty hills away,      The sun was down, the earth did  
 With broken guns, shields likewise;      shake,  
 And all those famous towns we took,      And I so loud did cry,  
 To all the world’s surprise...      ‘Fight on, my lads, for England’s sake,*

The majestic, long-measured tune of this ballad is said to be quite unlike the general style of an English folk song, being altogether more artfully conceived. One would suppose that it took its origin in the 'polite' tradition of the formally composed music heard in English pleasure gardens and playhouses of the early Georgian era.

Grainger's dissonant harmonies are much in keeping with the stridency of its military theme.

- *Stewart Manville.*

**Footnote:** *Duke of Marlborough is a title in the Peerage of England. It was created by Queen Anne in 1702 for John Churchill, 1st Earl of Marlborough, the noted military leader. In historical texts, it is often to him that an unqualified use of the title refers. The name of the dukedom refers to Marlborough in Wiltshire.*

The 7th Duke of Marlborough was the paternal grandfather of Sir Winston Churchill. The present Duke - the 12<sup>th</sup> Duke - is Charles James Spencer- Churchill ..... Wikipedia.

## Dollar and a Half a Day



*Dollar and a Half a Day* (also known as *Lowlands*) from 1909 (published 1922), for men's chorus and solo baritone and tenor, is yet another Grainger masterpiece. The tune alone tears your heart out. It's a fascinating remnant of a little-known corner of history - a shanty sung by black ocean-going sailors, lamenting their unequal pay:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <i>A dollar and a half is poor man's pay<br/>(Lowlands, lowlands away my John.<br/>A dollar and a half, it won't clear my w<br/>My dollar and a half a day.</i></p> <p>3. <i>But a dollar and a half is a nigger's pay<br/>Lowlands, lowlands, eye oh.<br/>But a dollar and a half is a nigger's pay.<br/>My dollar and a half a day.</i></p> <p>4. <i>The nigger, he works both night and day.<br/>The nigger he works both night and day.<br/>My dollar and a half a day.</i></p> | <p>2. <i>Five dollars a day is a white man's<br/>pay<br/>(Lowlands, lowlands away my John),<br/>Five dollars a day is a white man's<br/>pay.</i></p> <p>5. <i>Five dollars a day is a white man's pay.<br/>Lowlands, lowlands away my John.<br/>But a dollar and a half is a poor man's<br/>pay.<br/>Is poor man's pay.</i></p> <p>6. <i>Lowlands low, lowlands low away.<br/>My dollar and a half a day.</i></p> |
|---|---|

The setting is mostly one of great longing, and Grainger exploits the richness of the male choir. At one point, the solo tenor tears through that soft, cushiony sound, with an upward, jagged line. It illustrates superbly Grainger's contention that a discord made its greatest effect in a setting of "sweetness" and that one understood his music rightly only as a "pilgrimage of sorrow".

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Portrait of Robert  
and you are again her Sweet Robin".

## My Robin Is to the Greenwood Gone

An English popular tune from the Renaissance, the earliest extant score of the ballad appears in *William Ballet's Lute Book* (c.1600) as *Robin Hood is to the Greenwood Gone*. References to the song can be dated back to 1586, in a letter from Sir Walter Raleigh to Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester saying "The Queen is in very good terms with you now, and, thanks be to God, will be pacified,

and you are again her Sweet Robin". Although the words have been lost, it is suspected that the character Ophelia, of Hamlet, sings the last line of the tune ("For bonny sweet Robin is all my Joy") during her madness. The 'Bonny Sweet Robin' theme is an English folksong, also known by the title 'My Robin is to the Greenwood Gone', for which the original words have not survived. Amidst her singing of fragments of songs on bawdy subjects and themes of death as a symptom of her descent into madness, Ophelia offers up the line:



Ophelia Goes Mad -

‘For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy’ (Act 4, Scene 5), generally assumed to be the song’s final phrase.

**Footnote:** *Some scholars believe that Shakespeare’s choice of the song was meant to invoke phallic symbolism.*

No less evocative is what Grainger makes of a fragment of the old English tune *My Robin Is to the Greenwood Gone*, which had been a favourite basis for sets of variations by Renaissance composers. In 1912, Percy took it for a ‘ramble’ of his own. The wayward dreamscape he produced has the indefinable ‘sense of flow’ that his great friend Delius thought ‘the only thing that matters’. Here is the yin to the yang of Grainger’s most celebrated piece –

**English Country Gardens.** Cecil Sharp had collected this Morris dance in 1908, so Grainger insisted he should take half the royalties when the arrangement he created ten years later made a lollipop out of a folk-tune. Audiences loved it – and Grainger played it marvellously, but soon tired of having to wheel it out as an encore. “A typical English country garden is more likely to be a vegetable plot than used to grow flowers”, he remarked, “so you can think of turnips as I play it...”. Grainger was a strange man. His eccentricities are an inescapable part of his story, and the catalogue of his oddities is well documented.

## The Power of Love



*Grainger with mother, Rose,*

We may or may not agree with his biographer John Bird when he says “Percy Grainger was mad”, but those he knew and loved him best, like the composer Cyril Scott, who talks of the “defects of his qualities”, understood that his strangeness was inextricably tied up with the original cast of his ever-fertile mind. But of Rose’s madness there can be little doubt. What Percy called their “Together-Life” ended when she committed suicide in 1922, jumping from a skyscraper in New York City and leaving a note signed from “your poor insane mother”.

Shortly afterwards, Grainger heard a tune called *Kjaerlighedens Styrke* on a ‘folk-fishing’ trip in Denmark, where it was sung (‘grippingly, piercingly, heart-searchingly’) into his recording device by Ane Nielsen Post. She could only remember one verse, but both she and the song reminded Grainger of his mother, and he had what he needed to create a miniature psychodrama. *The Power of Love* begins with an extended piano prelude that seems to evoke the landscape of the Danish fjords; then the mist clears and the voice enters with a ‘soul-seared’ tune. After a ‘heart-searching’ interlude, the second verse simply repeats the words of the first, descending a semitone in pitch but raising the emotional temperature, before the music finally softens into the nostalgic reflections of a piano ‘tail piece’. This ‘Yule-gift’ to his late ‘beloved mother’ is surely full of the turbulent feelings that Grainger felt for the woman with whom he was himself entwined ‘from root to top’.

*A green growing tree in my father’s orchard stands,  
I really do believe it is a willow tree;  
its branches twine together so close from root to top,  
and so likewise does true love with its heart’s desire,  
in summertime.*

**Shallow Brown**





*Shallow Brown* was composed between August and 17 December 1910 and is based on a sea-shanty collected from the singing of John Perring of Dartmouth by H E Piggott and Grainger on 18 January 1908. In Grainger's words: '[Perring] was a remarkably gifted deep-sea sailor songster and said that this song was supposed to be sung by a woman standing on the quay to Shallow Brown as his ship was

weighing anchor.

Perring did not know why Brown was called "Shallow"—"unless it was that he was shallow in his heart", as he added. My setting aims to convey a suggestion of wafted, wind-borne, surging sounds heard at sea.' Although a woman's voice would make sense to the story, shanties are almost always the prerogative of men singing on board a ship. This is one of Grainger's most powerful settings, evoking as it does the wildness of the sea and the intensity of human loss; one can almost feel the spray of the ocean and taste the salt water. Grainger is said to have swooned with intense excitement when he played the shimmering accompaniment on the piano and on one particular occasion it caused a female admirer to faint at his feet. *from notes by Barry Peter Ould © 1996*

The song is described by Stan Hugill in his book, "Shanties from the Seven Seas" as a song that started out as being used at the pumps and then later used at the halyards. In the age of sail the ship's pumps were used to pump out water in the ship and were operated manually (no engines or motors then). It was mind numbingly boring work and the men would often sing to pass time while working the pumps. A halyard is the rope used to lift the sails into place. A song leader, shanty man, would lead the crew in song as they pulled the rope. This helped coordinate movements and let's face it, lifting heavy things is always done better with a song.

Shallow Brown is a typical call and response song. The shanty man sings the verses while the men on the ropes sing the chorus. The song is a sad tale of a man leaving a woman on shore - a typical subject for a shanty. Like most shanties there are several versions as the song evolved over time. Each shanty man and crew would add to the song or change it in some way.

I have heard two major versions of the song, one where it's just the man leaving and another where it's revealed in the song that the singer is likely a slave about to be sold. Note that Hugill suggests that the origin of the name "Shallow Brown" is likely from "Challo Brown" and 'challo' being a West-Indian term for "Half-caste".

The song is sad and mournful song - perfect for a good bass voice.

*Acknowledgment:*

*Andrew Reynolds*

*Shaller Brown you're goin' ter leave me, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*Shaller Brown don't ne'er deceive me, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*You're goin' away, across the ocean, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*You'll ever be in my heart's devotion, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*For your return my heart is burning, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*Shaller Brown, you're goin' to leave me, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*

*Shaller Brown, don't ne'er deceive me, Shaller, Shaller Brown.*



### **Green Bushes**

"*Green Bushes*", a Passacaglia, that is: a composition similar to a chaconne, typically in slow triple time with variations over a ground bass. The name 'passacaglia' is Italian but originating from the Spanish 'passacalle' (from 'pasar' -'to pass' and 'calle' -

'street'; because it was originally a dance played in the streets). Ground Bass is a short theme, usually in the bass, which is constantly repeated as the other parts of the music vary.

*Green Bushes* is one of Grainger's most accomplished works and is based on a modal English folk-song incorporating one version collected by himself in Lincolnshire and another from Somerset found by Cecil Sharp. Though the tune is of English origin it has also been found in Ireland and America. George Butterworth used a variant of it in his tone poem *The Banks of Green Willow* as did Vaughan Williams in the Intermezzo from his "*Folksong Suite*" -John Bird (*Grainger Biographer*).

*Green Bushes* takes a well-known folksong and gives it multiple repetitions, yet it is not boringly repetitious, nor is it a set of variations. The theme is treated in endlessly inventive and interesting ways, often interwoven with other melodies and ending with an exciting coda.

*Acknowledgement - The Music Trust (musictrust.com.au)*

### Grainger and the Grieg Piano Concerto



The Last Night of the 1988 Promenade Concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall provided music-lovers with a unique novelty. Percy Grainger, one of the foremost exponents of the Grieg Piano Concerto, had made a pair of piano rolls of the work that were issued in 1921. For this Proms performance, a 'player piano' was situated on the platform and operated by a technician sitting among the violins. The piano rolls were duly inserted into the piano's mechanism and Grainger's 1921 solo performance was then accompanied by the BBCSO under Andrew Davis's baton, much to the delight of the Last Night Prommers.

Should you want to watch this again on Youtube, the link is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-GJBUIbQIQ&t=961s>



#### Convenor's Note:

*I saw this machine in operation in 1980 when I took my children to a family concert in the Melbourne Town Hall.*

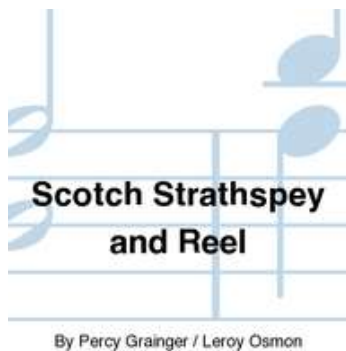
*John Hopkins was the conductor of the MSO for the performance of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto.*

*Air for the playing of the roll was generated by a compressor located back stage and connected to the 'robot' by a large flexible hose-pipe, which in addition to blowing through the perforations in the roll, activated artificial 'fingers' placed above the piano keys. At least that's how I remember it.*

*John Hopkins, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conductor and a Duo Art Vorsetzer robot used to play and record Percy Grainger's pianola rolls with the orchestra.*

For those who are technically minded a detailed description of the art of making Duo-Art rolls can be seen at this web site:

[www.pianola.org/reproducing/reproducing\\_duo-art.cfm](http://www.pianola.org/reproducing/reproducing_duo-art.cfm)



“The *Scotch Strathspey and Reel* is a splendid example of what Grainger called 'democratic poly-phony' which he defined as 'my Australian ideal of a many-voiced texture in which all or most of the tune strands enjoy equal prominence and importance.' In this work there are sections where as many as seven tunes are played simultaneously” (*John Hopkins*).

“It is curious how many Celtic dance tunes there are that are so alike in their harmonic schemes (however diverse they may be rhythmically and melodically) that any number of them can be played together at the same time and mingle harmoniously. Occasionally a sea-shanty will fit in perfectly

with such a group of Celtic tunes.

If a room-full of Scottish and Irish fiddlers and pipers and any nationality of English-speaking shanty-singing deep-sea sailors could be spirited together and suddenly miraculously endowed with the gift for polyphonic improvisation enjoyed, for instance, by South Sea Island Polynesians what a strange merry friendly Babel of tune, harmony and rhythm might result!” (*Thomas Lewis*).

The sea-shanty, entitled “What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor?” is a top-sail haulyards shanty from the collection of Charles Rosher. Its text is as follows:

*1st man: What shall we do with a drunken sailor? (twice)*

*2nd man: Put 'im in the long-boat and let 'im lay there,*

*Early in the morning.*

*Chorus: Way oh! and up she rises, (thrice)*

*Early in the morning.*