



CHANDOS :: intro

CHAN 2029

an introduction to Percy Grainger





Classical music is inaccessible and difficult. It's surprising how many people still believe the above statement to be true, so this new series from Chandos is not only welcome, it's also very necessary.

I was lucky enough to stumble upon the wonderful world of the classics when I was a child, and I've often contemplated how much poorer my life would have been had I not done so. As you have taken the first step by buying this CD, I guarantee that you will share the delights of this epic journey of discovery. Each CD in the series features the orchestral music of a specific composer, with a selection of his 'greatest hits' played by top quality performers. It will give you a good flavour of the composer's style, but you won't find any nasty surprises – all the music is instantly accessible and appealing. The discs are beautifully presented, and very good value for money, too.

I sincerely hope this CD marks the start of your own lifelong passion for classical music.

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Classic FM presenter



Percy Grainger (1882–1961)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 1 | Country Gardens [BFMS Unnum.]
<i>Version A</i>
Edited by Dana Paul Perna | 2:21 |
| 2 | Irish Tune from County Derry* | 4:23 |
| 3 | Green Bushes [BFMS No. 12] | 8:30 |
| 4 | Early One Morning [BFMS Unnum.]†
Stephen Varcoe baritone
David Archer trumpet • Andrew Watkinson violin | 3:03 |
| 5 | There Was a Pig Went Out to Dig
[BFMS No. 18]‡ | 2:03 |
| 6 | Shepherd's Hey [BFMS No. 16] | 2:06 |
| 7 | Shallow Brown [SCS No. 3]†‡
Stephen Varcoe baritone | 6:12 |
| | Lincolnshire Posy [BFMS No. 34]§ | 15:43 |
| 8 | 1 Dublin Bay (Lisbon) | 1:28 |
| 9 | 2 Harkstow Grange | 2:59 |
| 10 | 3 Rufford Park Poachers | 3:51 |
| 11 | 4 The Brisk Young Sailor | 1:42 |
| 12 | 5 Lord Melbourne | 3:16 |
| 13 | 6 The Lost Lady Found | 2:24 |



14	The Immovable Do (The Cyphering C)	4:49
15	Handel in the Strand [RMTB No. 2] [†] Penelope Thwaites piano	4:14
16	I'm Seventeen Come Sunday [BFMS No. 8] ^{†‡}	3:02
17	Blithe Bells	4:14
18	Molly on the Shore [BFMS No. 1] [†]	4:06
19	Mock Morris [RMTB No. 1] [†]	3:19
20	English Dance	9:01
		Total time 77:11

Joyful Company of Singers[‡]
 BBC Philharmonic
 City of London Sinfonia[†]
 Royal Northern College of Music Wind Orchestra[§]
 Richard Hickox
 Matthias Bamert*
 Timothy Reynish[§]

BFMS – British Folk Music Settings
 SCS – Sea Chanty Settings
 RMTB – Room-music Tit-bits

Percy Grainger (1882–1961) is one of music's most original voices and his compositions, especially his arrangements of folksong, include some of the world's most well-loved pieces. Born in Brighton, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, Grainger studied piano from an early age under the watchful eye of his mother, Rose. To broaden his studies, mother and son travelled to Europe and in 1895 Grainger entered Dr Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt, a major centre for piano pedagogy.

Grainger had thought out or formulated the majority of his compositions before he reached the age of twenty: the following years saw him feverishly reworking and re-arranging pieces. Once settled in London in 1901, he enjoyed a flourishing career as a concert pianist, but he remained reluctant to publish his own compositions in the fear that he would be dismissed by his public and generally misunderstood. By 1911 he had accumulated a large number of manuscript compositions, but it was with the assistance of his friend Roger Quilter that he was at last persuaded to publish his music. Early successes in London, and in particular works presented at the series of concerts promoted by Balfour Gardiner, another friend, in 1912–13, proved him to be an accomplished composer. After moving to America in 1914 Grainger conceived the idea of 'elastic' scoring: a work having an almost limitless number of performable versions, all showing a wonderful sense of instrumental colouring.

His involvement in the collection of British folksong led Grainger to cherish the voice, which became an essential ingredient in his music. As an arranger of folksongs he is hard to surpass, Benjamin Britten exclaiming, 'in the art of folksong arrangements Grainger is my master!' Yet his arrangements are far more than pieces transferred from one medium to another. Grainger liked to think of his arrangements as dishes, and his 'blue-eyed English' term for them was 'dishings-up'. Sometimes many years



would pass before certain dished-up versions were served to the public.

Though Grainger had always looked forward to the day when he could devote himself entirely to composition, the need to secure a steady income, as a concert and recital pianist with an overflowing vitality that led to engagements in all directions, drove his activity as an innovative composer and arranger into the shadows, and towards the end of his life he found himself isolated and at odds with the musical establishment. However, Grainger had always striven against the forgetting of the past, and he amassed a huge collection of all types of musical materials which he eventually housed in a building built specially for this purpose in the grounds of the University of Melbourne. The Grainger Museum, as it is now generally known, is a vast treasure-trove of musical manuscripts, instruments, paintings etc., invaluable for a complete exploration and realisation of Grainger's compositional output.

country gardens

In January 1949 Leopold Stokowski wrote to Grainger, suggesting that he would like to record a number of Grainger's popular pieces in new orchestrations. Later that year the two met up to discuss details of the orchestration and Stokowski recommended certain scoring procedures which Grainger adopted, and would come to think of as 'especially clever and successful'. Grainger orchestrated seven pieces, going back to his original sketches of 1908 for the orchestration of *Country Gardens*, his first of this well-known piece. However, Stokowski made a number of cuts in the pieces as well as many minor changes before recording them for RCA Victor, who issued them on LP in 1951. The edition recorded here restores the full version that Grainger produced after his first consultation with Stokowski. It is completely different from the later, more familiar version.

irish tune from county derry

The source for the many and varied settings of what Grainger would usually refer to as *Irish Tune from County Derry*, but in some arrangements called *County Derry Air*, is George Petrie's collection *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin, 1855). The work's first manifestation was as a choral piece a *cappella*, but Grainger was to return to it again and again, producing eight different versions in all, the instrumentation ranging from solo piano through wind band to full orchestra, and the harmonic texture varying from simple support of the well-known melody to highly contrapuntal and chromatic settings featuring unusual harmonic progressions. Grainger's popularisation of the melody through various versions for piano may well have helped to inspire the famous 'Danny Boy' words by Fred E. Weatherley (1848–1929), written in 1912.

green bushes

Green Bushes is a passacaglia on an English folksong collected in Somerset by Cecil Sharp. Originally scored for small orchestra in 1905–06, the version recorded here is the rescoring of 1921. With the exception of a momentary break, the 'Green Bushes' tune is heard continuously, pitted against a multitude of original counter-melodies. This setting was the first to subject a British folksong to treatment in passacaglia form, an innovation that, Grainger averred, led Delius to write his *Brigg Fair* and *Dance Rhapsodies* in a similar way.

early one morning

Grainger was sixteen when he first set *Early One Morning* as a single strophe for voice and piano. He developed the work in 1901 after which it lay untouched until 1939 when he made a new harmonisation. The following year he scored a version for 'room-music' – his term



for solo instrumental chamber music – with optional voice, the version recorded here. In this poetically sensitive setting, the tune is first heard in the minor key, then changes abruptly to the major, to magical effect.

there was a pig went out to dig

There Was a Pig Went Out to Dig is an English playing song which Grainger found in *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* by Miss M.H. Mason. His free setting for female voices was composed in 1905, but he rescored and shortened it before publication five years later. To the traditional tune he added musical material of his own as well as supplying his own words for strophes three and nine.

shepherd's hey

Shepherd's Hey is a setting of an English Morris tune collected by Cecil Sharp and given to Grainger around 1908. The tune (which is akin to the North English air 'The Keel Row') is widely found throughout England. The large orchestral setting recorded here, dating from 1913, uses four variants of the tune, to which Grainger adds stylistically appropriate contrapuntal lines derived from the melody. The 'Hey' of the title refers to a step peculiar to Morris dancing.

shallow brown

Based on a sea chanty collected by H.E. Piggott and Grainger from the singing of John Perring of Dartmouth on 18 January 1908, *Shallow Brown* was composed between August and December 1910. 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.

This is one of Grainger's most powerful works, evoking the wildness of the sea and the intensity of parting.

lincolnshire posy

Grainger turned to the folk singers of Lincolnshire and their songs for *Lincolnshire Posy*, considered by many to be his finest achievement in writing for wind instruments. It was completed in 1937 and first performed at the Eighth Annual Convention of the American Bandmasters Association in Milwaukee that year, Grainger himself conducting. He described the work as 'my best band composition' and summed up his intentions for it as follows:

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 preferences for gaunt or ornately arabesqued delivery, his contrasts of legato and staccato, his tendency towards breadth or delicacy of tone.

This bunch of 'musical wildflowers' (hence the title 'Lincolnshire Posy') is dedicated to the kings and queens of folksong who, as Grainger said, 'sang so sweetly to me'.

the immovable do

The Immovable Do (or 'The Cyphering C') is one of Grainger's many scores for the performance of which any or all of the possible different versions may be joined together, thus making it suitable for massed gatherings of organisations (such as high school or



competition festivals). The 'Immovable Do' of the title is a high drone on C sounded throughout the piece. In this full orchestral version, scored in April 1940, the drone is played by successive combinations of wind and string instruments. In this attractive work, with its rich, lush chords and flowing melodic line that rises to several imposing climaxes, Grainger displays his harmonic invention and command of sonority to great effect. He dedicated the piece to his wife, Ella.

Handel in the Strand

Handel in the Strand was originally entitled 'Clog Dance'. Grainger's friend the financier William Gair Rathbone (to whom the piece is dedicated) suggested the title 'Handel in the Strand' because the music seemed to reflect both Handel and English musical comedy (The Strand being its home). In the first sixteen bars, and in their repetition, Grainger makes use of material from an earlier set of variations on Handel's 'Harmonious Blacksmith' tune. For the energetically minded, Grainger adds that the piece is 'To be played to, or without, clog dancing'.

I'm Seventeen Come Sunday

I'm Seventeen Come Sunday is a folksong from Lincolnshire and Somerset which Grainger collected from the singing of Fred Atkinson of Redbourne, near Kirton Lindsey, Lincolnshire in 1905. Grainger also makes use of a version of the same tune collected by Cecil Sharp.

Blithe Bells

Grainger was fascinated with Bach from an early age, and in Frankfurt he heard performances of Bach's Passions which were

to have a direct influence on his writing. *Blithe Bells*, a 'free ramble' on *Sheep May Safely Graze*, is an impressionistic study on Bach's melody, which Grainger uses as a point of departure. Written in 1930–31, this colourful score makes use of 'tuneful percussion' and Grainger points out that his ramble is coloured by the thought that Bach, in writing the melody in thirds at the opening and close of the number, may have aimed at giving a hint of the sound of sheep bells.

Molly on the Shore

Molly on the Shore is based on two reels from Cork, taken from *The Complete Collection of Irish Music as noted by George Petrie* (1902–05), edited by Charles Villiers Stanford. It is one of the key pieces around which Grainger's popularity has revolved. In this setting Grainger strives to imbue the accompanying parts, which make up the harmonic texture, with a melodic character not too unlike that of the underlying reel. The jauntiness and vivacity of the tunes are exploited here to great effect, Grainger adding a ravishing counter-melody of his own.

Mock Morris

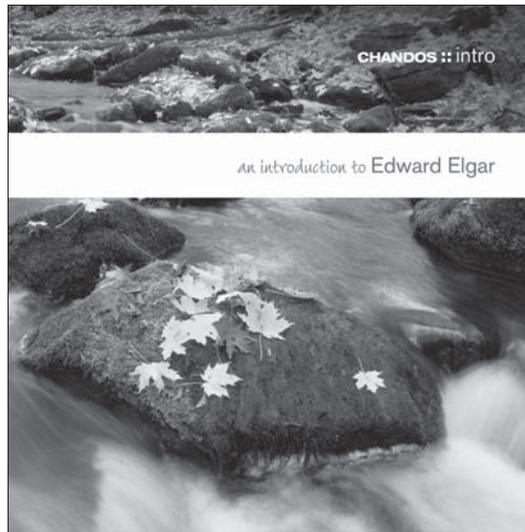
Mock Morris was originally called 'Always Merry and Bright' after the title of the song which Lionel Monkton had composed for his musical comedy *The Arcadians*. The score was initially published for six or seven single strings, to which Grainger later added wind, brass and percussion parts, making it one of his earliest examples of elastic scoring. He tells us that 'no folk-music tune-stuffs at all are used' and although the rhythmic cast is Morris-like 'neither the build of the tune nor the general layout of the form keeps to Morris dance shape'.



english dance

An arranged holiday at the turn of the century gave Grainger and his mother the chance to travel around Europe. A visit to the Paris World Exposition of 1900 and a trip to Argyll, Scotland proved the high points. In Paris Grainger heard musical sounds that were to enthral him, gamelan orchestras with their multitude of percussion instruments producing bell-like sounds impressing him particularly, and leading him to employ the use of mallet percussion instruments in many of his scores. The Scottish experience likewise had a profound effect on his development as a composer, and almost overnight a remarkable change occurred in his writing. His compositional energies knew no bounds, and he conceived, sketched and formulated ideas for numerous works, continuing to develop these sometimes over long periods of time. *English Dance* was chiefly composed between 1899 and 1902, reworked between 1906 and 1909 and finally rescored between 1924 and 1925, Grainger aiming to achieve what he called 'the somewhat grey and certainly monotonous scheme of Bach's colouring'. It is one of his most energetic works and the subtitle, 'A Tally of English Energy', is an apt description of a piece about which Gabriel Fauré exclaimed, 'It's as if the total population was a-dancing'.

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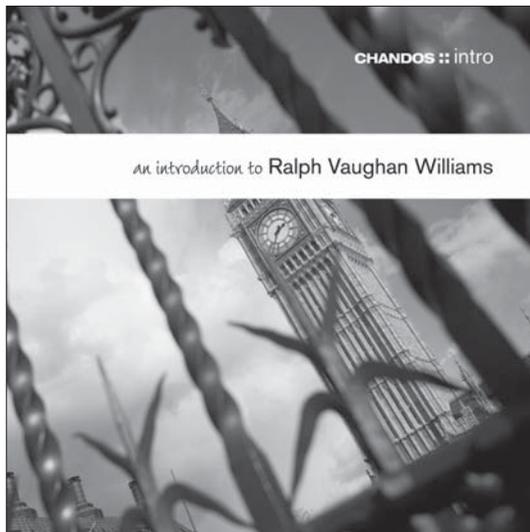


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Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201

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Percy Grainger (1882–1961)

The Australian-born composer and pianist Percy Grainger was an eccentric musical figure, a lifelong experimenter, best known for his many exquisite folksong arrangements, including 'Country Gardens' and 'Molly on the Shore'. An enthusiastic participant in the English folksong movement, he collected more than 500 folksongs on which he drew both for his impressive original works and his imaginative arrangements.

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