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May 8, 2008

#### **Chapter 4 (draft): Percy Grainger, The English Folk-Song Society, and the Phonograph: The Quest for Artistic Expression**

In a letter sent to Percy Grainger in May of 1908, Cecil Sharp, the celebrated collector of English folk songs, applauded Grainger's folk song collecting with the phonograph, but expressed a degree of hesitancy that challenged Grainger's methodologies and conclusions regarding English folk song and music. Sharp first shared how his own experiences with phonographic recording did not go as smoothly as he would have liked. He commented "I have found singers...yet quite incapable of singing into it in their usual un-selfconscious manner."<sup>1</sup> But, his strongest doubt regarded the issue of interpretation. Sharp questioned whether it was useful to use the phonograph's ability to manipulate the playback speed of an English folk song in order to hear subtle notes or rhythmic irregularities that may have not been heard by the audience. He went further, and insisted that "the difficulty, which is perpetually confronting the collector, is to decide which of these small aberrations he should record and which he should omit, in other words to settle when a rhythmic irregularity belongs to the song itself and when it is a merely a personal idiosyncrasy."<sup>2</sup> Whether it was a melodic or rhythmic irregularity, Sharp did not believe that the authoritative source for the study of folk music should come from the phonograph, but rather from the trained musician. In other words, the phonograph was not there to necessarily challenge the authoritative ear of the trained musician, but rather to aid in the interpretation of folk music, a position that he and others associated with the English Folk Song Society endorsed.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Cecil Sharp to Percy Grainger, May 23, 1908, Sharp Correspondence, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Percy Grainger, on the other hand, questioned the distinction made by Sharp between the performer and the composition. As we will see in this chapter, this was an assumption and approach that Grainger vehemently disagreed with. According to Grainger, Sharp's distinction was an artificial one and the phonograph served as the perfect instrument for the elimination of this artificial boundary because it collapsed the acts of creation and performance into one musical moment, which Grainger saw as essential to the development of modern music at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though Sharp and Grainger remained on good terms throughout their professional careers, Grainger maintained his intellectual position and continued to record and collect folk songs, until he busied himself with other compositional projects and performances.

Much ink has been spilled over this debate between Percy Grainger and Cecil Sharp, creating a highly polarized assessment of the dynamics at the English Folk Song Society at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> And while much has been made of his travels, compositional works, friendships with other musicians and composers, and overall innovative stamp on modern music, Grainger's phonographic work at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is interpreted as an enthusiastic, yet temporary project. The aim of this chapter is not to engage necessarily this debate or to isolate Grainger as "a solitary and courageous pioneer," an assessment made by John Bird's biography on Grainger, but rather to bring a focus to Grainger's employment of the phonograph during his folk-collecting project

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<sup>3</sup> A simplified interpretation of this debate can be found in Michael Yates, "Percy Grainger and the Impact of the Phonograph," *Folk Music Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1982, pp. 265-75. Even though important distinctions are made between the various intellectual positions of different EFDSS members, the impact of the phonograph can be better assessed through a more comprehensive look at Percy Grainger's work.

between 1905 and 1908 and explore how it contributed to his musical theory and practice, as well as his later projects.<sup>4</sup>

David Tall, author of, “Grainger and Folksong,” like John Bird casts Grainger in a heroic light, highlighting Grainger’s innovative and groundbreaking work in folksong recording. Tall emphasizes this point by distinguishing that Grainger was the first member of the English Folk Song Society to utilize the phonograph in the recording and study of folksongs.<sup>5</sup> John Bird states that Grainger saw folk songs as advanced music and not a project in musical archaeology and thus heralds him as a cutting-edge musician and scholar who brought innovation to a stagnant musical tradition in England.<sup>6</sup> For the most part, I agree with this statement, but refrain from romanticizing the heroic Grainger.

Christopher Berman has also commented on the debate between Grainger and Sharp, but in a different manner, and has explained that there was more in common between the members of the English Folk Song Society and Percy Grainger surrounding the use of the phonograph, and that any suggestions of hostility are merely unsubstantiated myths.<sup>7</sup> Even though I generally agree with Bearman’s assessment of the relationship between Grainger and members of the English Folk Song Society, if one expands the analysis of Grainger and the phonograph to a larger vantage that includes both his musical ideas and his later experiments with automatic music-making machines, there still exists an important facet of Grainger’s work shaped by his early engagement

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<sup>4</sup> John Bird, *Percy Grainger*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131. Grainger was definitely not alone in his ideas or his work. This can be seen with his reference to the work of Bela Barto’k and Edvard Grieg, fellow musicians interested in incorporating folk music into their compositions.

<sup>5</sup> David Tall, “Grainger and Folksong,” in *The Percy Grainger Companion*, ed. Lewis Foreman, (London: Thames Publishing, 1981), 55-71.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., John Bird, “Grainger on Record,” 195.

<sup>7</sup> C. J. Bearman, “Percy Grainger, The Phonograph, and the Folk Song Society,” *Music & Letters*, vol. 84, no. 3, August 2003, 452-54.

with the phonograph that deserves additional exploration. Beneath the simple arguments regarding the enthusiastic or cautious use of the phonograph laid important social and musical concepts that were being contested, such as the difference between folk and art-music, a distinction that Sharp and others maintained. Also, questions over scales, rhythms, musical styling were posed, calling into question what exactly music is and if it is modern, why? I want to argue that Grainger's work with the phonograph and folk music in England at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an essential component to his overall vision and quest for the theories and practices of music. The phonograph provided an experiential basis, upon which he reflected and articulated a clear exposition on what music is to be in order to remedy what he and other cultural critics considered to be the "musical poverty" of modern music, a crisis that occupied the attention of many musical experts.

For example, in the summer months of 1916, a heated debate emerged between two musical critics, Hugh A. Scott and D. K. Sorabji. Scott began his case with an article entitled "The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music," in which he deplored the current state of modern music due to its willingness, for the most part, to dismiss any serious interest in the composition of strong melodic and thematic components in classical music. Even though he acknowledged "no one will be disposed to deny that while serious music is often independent of melody in the more obvious sense," he countered with the argument "there is – to put it moderately – a legitimate place for it."<sup>8</sup> A month later, D. K. Sorabji responded to Scott's essay criticizing him for not providing a broad enough definition of what a melody or tune could be. Sorabji gave the example of short Indian melodic

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<sup>8</sup> Hugh Arthur Scott, "The Melodic Poverty Music," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 57, No. 88, June 1916, 276.

fragment to suggest that even though Scott's plea for melody was important, it did not go far enough, since his request for melody did not include non-Western melodies. For Sorabji, "There is no possible place for Mr. Scott's 'definite melody' in modern music ... Melody as understood in a wide and not unwarrantedly restricted sense there is in abundance of rarest and richest beauty."<sup>9</sup> In this short debate, Scott and Sarabji engaged in a topic that permeated musical circles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by re-assessing the balancing of melodic and harmonic components in modern classical music. Interestingly enough, Scott in his assessment of the state of modern music, gave credit to Percy Grainger for composing pieces that "excites anything like genuine enthusiasm in the concert room – whose music is strikingly, one might even say aggressively, tuney."<sup>10</sup> From this brief exchange between two musical critics, Percy Grainger emerged as a figure that played an important role in struggling with the dilemma of modern music. But what was missing from Scott's analysis was the source of inspiration for Grainger's approach to modern: the melodies of English folk songs recorded on the phonograph.

By tracing Grainger's work with the English Folk Song Society to his manufacturing of free music machines in the 1950s, the phonograph played an indispensable role in the creation of a musical theory and practice that went far beyond Grainger's short time spent on direct recording of folk music. The phonograph forced Percy Grainger and others, regardless of their feelings for the phonograph, to wrestle with slippery assessments of musical categories of English folk music, such as melody and harmony. Also, the fusion of the phonographic technique and folksong study not only redefined what folk songs were in relation to other Western music, but also developed a

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<sup>9</sup> D.K. Sarabji, "The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music: To the Editor of the 'Musical Times'," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 57, No. 881, July 1916, 332.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, "The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music," 278.

part of Grainger's overall musical vision to collapse the distance between the creative and executive moment of music. What he experienced and learned from his phonographic recordings in 1905 laid the groundwork for an intimate relationship towards music that broke free from not only the bounds of time signatures and scales, but also the modern distinction between composition and performance. It was in the ability of the phonograph to literally bend these axes of musical notation and listening, which revealed for Grainger a new space for the creation of a new type of music generated from the personal, idiosyncratic styling of an artist not hindered or constrained by traditions or customs. In other words, Grainger interpreted the creation and execution of folk song as occurring simultaneously, bypassing the need for either a separate moment of composition or musical notation. And it was only through his phonographic work that this argument not only became defensible, but also realizable with the free music project he pursued until his death in 1961, which strove to eliminate the distance between the creation and production of music through mechanical means. What links both, the first decades of the 1900s and the free music of the 1950s, is the phonograph. It established a practical foundation from which Grainger developed both his musical theory and practice, invigorating his pursuit for the fully expressive capacity of music.

### **Percy Grainger and the English Folk Song Society**

As early as 1892, Lucy Broadwood, one of the main individuals involved with the establishment of the English Folk Song Society (1898), shared the fact that there still remained much work to be done in the collection of English folk songs and ballads. Quite urgently, she asserted, "there still remains very much to do in the way of *systematically and accurately* collecting and recording the old ballads, songs, and rhymes

of the peasantry.”<sup>11</sup> In her early analysis, she suggested that the “pure English folk-tune is exceedingly simple in construction; often it is eight bars long. Its subjects are repeated with artless economy.”<sup>12</sup> She continued that “Our true folk-tune is purely diatonic, and it is often purely modal.”<sup>13</sup> What is interesting about this statement is that the notations of these songs she characterized as “simple” demonstrate just that. However, the juxtaposition of her notations or Cecil Sharp’s, whom she worked with starting in the 1890s, against those of Percy Grainger suggests that they may not be so simple, either in terms of rhythm and/or notation. In her introduction, the approach she took with the study of English folk-tunes is one of development and connection, meaning she sought to place within a chronology of development, the emergence and modification of folk-tunes in relation to modern art music. But, there was a caveat to this argument for Broadwood and Sharp, folk-tunes “have been from the first, and still remain, an art distinct from that consciously-composed music, and that they are the real expression of a sane, sturdy people, none the less emotional because slow to talk of its emotions.”<sup>14</sup> She concludes that for the casual observer, “There is something almost esoteric in this ballad-singing.”<sup>15</sup> This suggestion that the untrained listener might find English folk songs difficult to understand would become a point of contention with Percy Grainger, since it argued against the universal appreciation of different musical styles.

In the discussion that followed Broadwood’s introduction to English folk song collecting, it was suggested that the purchase of a phonograph would be the next best step

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<sup>11</sup> Lucy Broadwood, “Folk-Songs and Music,” *Folklore*, Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1892, 552.

<sup>12</sup> Lucy Broadwood, “The Collection of English Folk-Song,” *The Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 30, 91.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

for the Folk Song Society. Even though Grainger would endorse and undertake this idea, the work done by Broadwood and Sharp, two important players in the English Folk Song Society, did not follow the same intellectual or aesthetic interpretations of music as Grainger. Rather, at a time of renewed interest in national musical styles, it was important for these members of the English Folk Song Society to establish the legitimacy of their project by fitting aspects of English folk music into the canons of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century music.

In their early analysis, Broadwood and Sharp established a broad framework to their study of English folk music, which they would refine and add to over the next two decades. Together, they led the collection of English folk songs over the next ten years and recruited fellow specialists to examine the lyrics and music of folk song to ascertain their origin, and subsequently, relation to modern forms of music found throughout Europe. It would not be until 1906, when Broadwood presented her work for the Musical Association at the Briggs Festival in North Lincolnshire, that Percy Grainger attended her lecture and engaged himself in the work of the English Folk Song Society. It is there that Percy Grainger familiarized himself with Broadwood's folk song collections, which she noted by repeated listening and then noted down by hand. Grainger found her work exciting and it is from this point that he began his earnest collection of folk music with the phonograph.<sup>16</sup> But before Grainger's work is explored, it is important to examine the fundamental arguments made by Broadwood and Sharp regarding the nature of English folk music.

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<sup>16</sup> *Percy Grainger*, 117.

10 years after the official establishment of the Folk Song Society, Cecil Sharp and Lucy Broadwood explained the significance of accurately recording and scientifically studying folk songs. They proclaimed that such an undertaking would reveal a great deal about the origin of music, and as a consequence the relationship between different forms of music from around the world. Considering that since the late 1880s, many Western ethnologists and musicians had been studying the music of the Chinese, Samoan, American Indian, Indian, and other groups, the presence and practice of a folk music in England necessarily raised the question of the heritage of English music. Sharp and Broadwood's fundamental argument about folk music was its overall lack of structure and the absence of any formal rules in the composition or performance of music. However, Sharp did point out that for the most part, English folk songs utilized the diatonic scale mode, which categorized English folk songs into medieval modalities that had not been used since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> It was this characteristic that Sharp and Broadwood relied on to establish their scientific study of the form of folk music. And this could be seen in the numerous song notations that both Sharp and Broadwood published in the first decade of the 1900s.

Cecil Sharp went on to compare the construction of the folk song to the arrangement of the planets around the sun, meaning that there was a "*center of gravity*," in this case the tonic note, around which most, if not all, folk tunes arranged their melodic lines. An important musicological point is then made by Sharp, which is that since all music from around the world, whether modern or not, is modal and natural in terms of scale(s), it becomes apparent, at least from Sharp's perspective, that there is a universal

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<sup>17</sup> Lucy Broadwood and Cecil Sharp, "Some Characteristics of English Folk-Music," *Folk Lore*, Vol. 19, (June 30, 1908), 136.

base for all music that can be recognized along the diatonic form. This also meant that music was to be arranged and oriented in a certain manner. In other words, there was a *should* in the evaluation of a folk song if a particular tonal or rhythmic aspect occurred irregularly due to the individual performance of a folk singer. But that is the point at which the similarities between folk music and art music end.

According to Sharp and Broadwood, the change in music during the 16<sup>th</sup> century encapsulated in the unification of the European Church, the interplay between art music and folk music became one where “the folk musician has been the *exporter* rather than the *importer*,” suggesting that after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, folk music shared its melodies, which may have been modified by new art music, but folk music did not receive new modes or other forms of musical standardization that spread throughout Europe in the 1700s.<sup>18</sup> They maintained that art music was built off of and borrowed much from folk music, and that the replacement of the various scale modalities with the minor and major scales during the 17<sup>th</sup> century revolutionized the creation and production of music, but did not affect folk music. Specifically, Sharp argues that the abandonment of musical modes during the last half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new wave of harmonic composition that revolved around major and minor scales.<sup>19</sup> This revolution “did not affect the folk” and they “continued to make their own music in their own way independently of the art-musicians.”<sup>20</sup> With the transformation of music in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sharp and Broadwood argued for a strong transitional moment in the evolution of music, one that is truncated by both different musical modes, but also the folk-tune’s

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>19</sup> Cecil Sharp, *English Folk-Song*, (Taunton: Barnicotts Limited, 1907), 45-46.

<sup>20</sup> Lucy Broadwood and Cecil Sharp, “Some Characteristics of English Folk-Music,” 141.

characteristics of irregular time and rhythm. Inherent in this analysis was the argument that there was a strong and marked difference in the impressions made by folk music and art music in the transition from a focus on melody to a focus on harmony. Sharp articulated this difference between melody and harmony in a different way by stating that folk music “is the product of a race, and reflects feelings and tastes that are communal rather than personal” while he defined art music “is the work of the individual, and expression is own personal ideals and aspirations only...it is for ever fixed in one unalterable form.”<sup>21</sup> This distinction between folk (melodic) and art (harmonic) music necessarily gave folk music an evolutionary layout that emphasized a developmental assessment of unwritten music.

In terms of the phonograph, the publication of the article by Broadwood and Sharp both after Sharp’s critical letter to Grainger regarding the use of the phonograph and also after Grainger’s article on his folk song collecting signifies that Broadwood and Sharp did not value the phonograph as a reliable agent for the English Folk Song Society. A quick examination of the notations provided in “Some Characteristics of English Folk-Music” demonstrates a couple of things. First, the phonograph was not used at all, suggesting that the documentation of folk songs was performed in the traditional method of written notation. Second, the classification of different folk songs into single modes with single time and key signatures emphasizes the point that it was the authoritative ear of the folk song collector, in this case Broadwood and Sharp, which would establish the definition of the folk song in terms of well-understood musical concepts.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 132-52.

This theoretical approach was maintained even in the limited moments that the phonograph was used. In November of 1912 near Exeter, Lucy Broadwood did notate a folk song from a phonograph record, but maintained the entire song in a single time and key signature. Additionally, in her description of the song's lyrics, she discussed how an unclear line towards the end of the song was not decipherable due to "the very indistinct words and accents of the phonograph."<sup>23</sup> Even though Broadwood utilized a phonograph recording in this one instance, her caution regarding the phonograph revealed her position that the phonograph could not supersede the trained ear of the musical scholar, a position markedly different than Percy Grainger.

After his initial meeting with Lucy Broadwood in 1906, Grainger began his own collection of folk songs with a phonograph in Northern Lincolnshire. He took an Edison Bell cylinder phonograph on a bicycle and continued his work in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, as well as London until 1908.<sup>24</sup> In May of that year, Percy Grainger published a lengthy article expounding the merits of collecting folk songs with the new phonographic method. He quickly acknowledged the immediate, yet temporary, discomfort of the folk singers, but pointed out that once they had grown accustomed to singing into the device, this method of recording allowed for an "incomparably greater scope" in the "unconscious sense for rhythmic and dynamic contrasts and dramatic effects."<sup>25</sup> This advantage of phonographic recordings overshadowed, for Grainger, the initial discomfort generated between the singer and the phonograph. Grainger did not utilize the phonograph to record a song in order to defend his unaided interpretation, but

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<sup>23</sup> "The Pretty Ploughboy," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, No. 17, January 1913, 304-7.

<sup>24</sup> Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 123-125.

<sup>25</sup> Percy Grainger, "Collecting With the Phonograph," *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, No. 12, May 1908, 147.

rather to challenge his own musical tradition steeped in Western European musical ideals and practice. As he bluntly put it, “The gramophone and phonograph record admirably what our ears and systems of notation are too inaccurate and clumsy to take advantage of.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the phonograph acted more as an objective ear than the supposed trained ear of the “civilized” observer, which might miss important subtleties of a folk singer’s performance.

Not limited by a musical tradition that emphasized certain scales and harmonies, Grainger saw the phonograph as recording subtle, yet significantly different musical practices that could evade the trained ear and force what one hears either melodically or harmonically into what one expects. Grainger suggested, “One is so distressingly liable to think one hears what one is expecting to hear.” A consequence of this “liability” was that “Even what one does hear with fair accuracy loses in exactitude when translated into our very limited musical and verbal notations.”<sup>27</sup> In his emphasis on noting subtle irregularities in both tone and rhythm, Grainger refused the notion that subsequent verses in a song were blanket repetitions of a particular melody, but rather argued that each verse was supposed to be different, making a strong case for the intimate connection matching “*the particular music to those particular words.*”<sup>28</sup> The attention to detail that Grainger argued for opened up a realm of interpretation for “the intimate flavour of his personality,” that personality belonging to the recorded folk singer.<sup>29</sup> H. G. Wells, the novelist, accompanied Grainger to Gloucestershire and after observing his work

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 152

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

concluded that Grainger was not merely recording music, but “trying to record life.”<sup>30</sup> A major consequence of this understanding allowed for the discussion of a narrative folk song as having inherent inventive qualities, which besides making English folk songs unique relative to other non-art music forms, became a formidable component of Grainger’s argument for his grand vision of music. As has been discussed earlier, Grainger’s disappointment with what he called the dead and lifeless aspect of art music was to be resuscitated with phonograph recordings, enabling the collector and student of folk songs to “feel the throb of the communal pulse, but each single manifestation of it is none the less highly individualistic and circumscribed by the temperamental limitations of each singer.”<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on the *individual* resonated strongly with his focused work in 1906 on folk songs and established a well-formed foundation from which Grainger could extend his plea for the return of the individual composer and performer to all music.

Percy Grainger’s first collection of transcriptions acquired from folk-song recordings was interesting in the fact that it contained several versions of songs, such as “Six Dukes Went A-Fishin’,” sung by different folk singers. The first transcription was recorded on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1906 by a Mr. George Gouldthorpe, who sang “Six Dukes Went A-Fishin’” into Grainger’s standard phonograph. What is interesting about this recording is the fact that this song was recorded at an earlier time on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1905. Even though there was great similarity between both recorded versions, Grainger pointed out that in his notation that in the first rendition, C-sharps were actually sung as C-naturals. However, at the second recording, the noted C-sharps were sung as C-sharps. Also, in

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<sup>30</sup> Percy Grainger, “The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music,” 420.

<sup>31</sup> Grainger, “Collecting with the Phonograph,” 164.

terms of meter, Percy Grainger did not stick to one time signature, but noted it as oscillating between two different time signatures throughout the entire song.<sup>32</sup> Compared to other folk-song transcriptions done at the same time, the notational shifting and meter changes Grainger noticed with his phonograph recordings were not acknowledged in the same light. If one looks at other phonograph recordings and analyses by Lucy Broadwood or Cecil Sharp, one does not see the same commitment to noting down not only different versions by different singers, but also the subtle discrepancies in one folk-singer's multiple versions of a song, such as Grainger's study of "Six Dukes Went A-Fishin'."

What is also interesting about the different emphasis of people like Grainger and Broadwood is their emphasis on different components of a folk song. Consistently, Grainger includes more comments on the stylistic elements, elaborating on the mood in which songs are sung. For example, in "The North-Country Maid" ballad sung by Joseph Leaning, Grainger notes "Mr. Leaning sang this song with great lilt, and in parts with striking expressiveness. It is noteworthy, that for his most pathetic moments, he has chosen the sharp third, while the minor third is used with a merry swing in the same verses."<sup>33</sup> Here, Grainger drew a connection between musical styling and the emotional content of the song, which demonstrates two things. First, unlike the other members of the English Folk Song Society, Grainger chose to analyze and point out the emotional expression of folk-songs; this emotive freedom was a sign of what music should be pursuing, not musical codification. Second, what made this analysis possible was his work with the phonograph. He could have listened to the material just like the other folk

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 185.

song scholars, but the ability of the phonograph to playback its recorded material at different speeds allowed Grainger to hear the freedom from pitch constraints or meter, in terms of rhythm. Without the phonograph, the phonograph collector had to constantly focus his or her attention to the details of the musical performance and thus preventing a complete experience of a folk song performance. With the phonograph, the collector was “able to note down leisurely and unhurriedly” the “melodic variants” of a song’s verses. Capturing these subtle details convinced Grainger that with the phonograph, “the stronger grows my *personal feelings* that any noting down of an *individually and creatively gifted* man’s songs that does not give all possible details of all the different verses of his songs ... cannot claim to be a representative picture of such a man’s complete art and artistic culture, but only a portion of it.”<sup>34</sup> Not happy with only one version of a song, Grainger maintained that a thorough recording and preservation of a song’s verses protected the creative freedom of individual singers by not categorizing them on a few melodic elements. Moreover, in terms of rhythm, the phonograph’s preservation of at times the “frequent uniform repetition of irregularities ... prove that very many of them are not mere careless or momentary deviations from a normal, regular form, but radical points of enrichment, inventiveness, and individualisation.”<sup>35</sup> The mechanical means of ensuring melodic and rhythmic freedom through phonograph recordings was for Grainger the most important principle in his study of unwritten music. And one sees this consistently in his analysis of folk songs.

In the recording of another folk song, “Lord Melbourne,” Grainger goes at great length emphasizing the importance of having three records of the same song performed

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 150-51.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 155.

by the same singer. Individually, they could have been categorized as either Dorian or Mixolydian scales. But, taken together, these three recordings signified for Grainger the variability with which folksingers modified their pitches due to the mixing of different modes. Also, he noted that “the minute rhythmic irregularities of the above (such as the 3/16 bars) are mere wayward and theoretically unimportant lengthening and shortening of rhythms fundamentally regular. Nevertheless, their presence added to the extreme quaintness of Mr. Wray’s rendering, as I feel there may be value in as literal as possible a translation into musical notation of all his details.”<sup>36</sup> Compared to what Lucy Broadwood said about the same song, there was not the same emphasis on the stylistic varieties as Grainger does. Rather, she drew a connection in how the song is regionally similar between Sussex and Lincolnshire.<sup>37</sup> Although subtle, there was an emphasis on categorizing folk songs here by Broadwood, which differed from Grainger’s delight in individual idiosyncrasies. Rather than expose the individual variations between different singers, Broadwood preferred to streamline folk song content in to categorical interpretations. Interestingly, the different arguments by Grainger and Broadwood were both justifiable through phonograph recordings, but dependent on how they related to or relied on the phonograph as a collection technology. How these folk song scholars related to the phonograph was a point of distinction, which not only impacted how folk music was understood, but in Grainger’s case, also shaped his later musical work.

Contrary to Grainger’s position, other members of the Folk Song Society, including Broadwood, Sharp and Anne Gilchrist, all major players in the society, expressed hesitations over Grainger’s zealous approval of the phonograph. They did not

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

relinquish any authority to the phonograph in challenging their expertise, but rather aired on the side of caution, preferring to resort to their own personal impressions regarding knowledge created about English folk song. Gilchrist did not believe that the phonograph was as reliable as Grainger proclaimed and commented “it seems to me wisest to regard it meanwhile as the best substitute (available) – where a substitute has to be found – for the trained ear of the musician – or as its *corroborator* – but not as its *supplanter*. Its limitations are somewhat like those of photography – cinematographic, if you like!”<sup>38</sup> Gilchrist found the phonograph to be only a last resort, not a mechanism that could interfere with the trained judgment of a musician. Sharp, in his May 1908 letter to Grainger would make the same suggestion and like Gilchrist, he invoked the analogy of the camera. He conceded that there did reside some scientific accuracy with such technologies, but emphasized that the “artist does not want to put upon his canvass just what is in front of him, but only that part of it that he sees, and even that, not as it is, but as it appears to others.”<sup>39</sup> For Sharp, the impression created by the artist mattered, not necessarily the specific notational or rhythmic idiosyncrasies missed by the listener. Sharp explained this, stating “I fancy that many of the chromatic notes which you have transcribed from your records, although no doubt they were in fact sounded, were nevertheless, practically inaudible, and would have been omitted, and I contend rightly so, by the ordinary collector.”<sup>40</sup> The subtle detail collected by Grainger was unnecessary to Sharp and thus diverted attention away from the general form of a folk song, which

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Michael Yates, “Percy Grainger and the Impact of the Phonograph,” 266-67. Letter from Anne Gilchrist to Lucy Broadwood, June 1 and 2, 1908, Anne Geddes Gilchrist Correspondence, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Sharp to Grainger, May 1908, 5. The last part of the quotation beginning with “and even that...” is Sharp’s own editing of the letter and the underlining is his as well.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

would reveal its similarity to other English folk songs in the communal conception that he argued for in *English Folk-Song*. In their efforts systematically analyze English folk songs, Broadwood, Sharp, and Gilchrist refrained from going into much detail, which might muddle their theoretical understanding of the relationship between folk and art music. Gilchrist, in her evaluation of Grainger, asserted how he suggested that “we have lost a presumably similar innocence of the ear (*possibly* surviving to some extent amongst folksingers), and as musicians are *apt* to reproduce tunes as we think they ought or are meant to be rather *than* as we hear them.”<sup>41</sup> It is at this level of interaction between the human observer and the phonograph mechanism that Grainger sharply differentiated himself from others in the English Folk Song Society. For Grainger, to focus in on “what is actually heard” with the unaided ear simmered with problems of subconscious traditions and habits that would color, filter, and misinterpret the folk songs of folk-musicians. As he stated at the beginning of his 1908 article, “Personally I deeply regret having to rely on my own hearing in any delicate matter of pitch. One is so distressingly liable to think one hears what one is expecting to hear.” As a consequence, “Even what one does hear with fair accuracy loses in exactitude when translated into our very limited musical and verbal notations.”<sup>42</sup> According to Grainger, the cultural and intellectual listening tools brought to the recording of folk music required the phonograph to counterbalance and call into question what the listener thought they heard or should have heard. A scientific approach that relied on mechanical means of analysis of preservation opened up a new avenue for the study of non-art music that would consequently develop the composition and performance of art music, a major concern Grainger engaged with

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Yates, 267. Gilchrist Correspondence, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

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throughout his life. Even though he did not collect English folk songs with the phonograph after 1908, the impact of the phonograph on his musical ideas and practices continued in his later work.

### **Grainger's Theory on Music**

Seven years after his work with the phonograph and folk music, Grainger published in July of 1915 an article entitled: "The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music." This article expanded on the locality of English folk songs and folded in other forms of unwritten music, from Polynesian music to North American Indian music, to generate larger conclusions relevant to the direction of modern music. He came to conclusions that challenged some of the fundamental assumptions made by others in the English Folk Song Society. In opposition to the communal nature of folk music argument made by Sharp and Broadwood, Grainger emphasized the individual nature of the different unwritten songs. He explained how "an old Lincolnshire man" heard a variation of a song he sang sung by another person and he responded with "I don't know about it's being fine or not; I only know it's *wrong*."<sup>43</sup> Grainger understood this response to mean that "To each singer his own versions of songs are the only correct ones."<sup>44</sup> Even though this statement was made several years after his work with the English Folk Song Society, it is clear that he was responding to arguments made by Cecil Sharp, which suggested the "folk-song is, therefore, communal in two senses; communal in authorship, and communal in that it reflects the mind of the community."<sup>45</sup> Grainger fundamentally disagreed with this conclusion, asserting the non-communal standardization of unwritten

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<sup>43</sup> Percy Grainger, "The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music," *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 3, July, 1915, 421.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Sharp, *English Folk-Song*, 15.

music. Thus, the emphasis on the individual, whether it was folk or art music, was paramount for Grainger.

In his analysis of Edvard Grieg, the Norwegian composer, Grainger borrowed the words of Grieg's biographer to emphasize "how much more the Norwegian genius owed the unique originality of his music to the strength of his own purely personal inventiveness than to any particular external or "national" source whatever."<sup>46</sup> Thus, for Grainger, an artist's personality laid at the core of any original music. And this would become a theme that Grainger did not abandon. Whether it was folk or art music, a distinction that Grainger questioned, the individual emotion and style present in a musical performance or composition was not overshadowed by a communal or national "style" of music.

Grainger proceeded in this article to expound upon the complexities of folk music and essential to the defense of his interpretation was the phonograph. He admitted that many folk song melodies are simple to a degree, but what made them rich and complex were the idiosyncrasies employed by the artist in their performance of the song. Grainger saw this personal expression as "a precious manifestation of real artistic personality; so much so that a skilled notator will often have to repeat a phonograph record of such a performance some hundreds of times before he will have succeeded in extracting from it a representative picture on paper of its baffling, profuse characteristics."<sup>47</sup> Here, Grainger indirectly challenged the arguments made by Anne Gilchrist in her letter to Lucy Broadwood, which demoted the role of the phonograph to a "corroborator." Grainger, on the contrary, understood the phonograph as a critical technology essential to

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<sup>46</sup> Grainger, "The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music," 417.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 422.

breaking through the modern musician's theoretical and performative lenses. More precisely, the phonograph enabled the modern musician to acknowledge the limitations of musical theory and practice inherent in art music.

Grainger expanded on the complexity of folk music by elaborating on the melodic and rhythmical irregularities that he recorded on the phonograph. In his analysis, Grainger suggested that the way "so-called "modal" melodies move are not finally fixed as are our art-scales, but abound with quickly alternating major and minor thirds, sharp and flat sevenths, and (more rarely) major and minor sixths."<sup>48</sup> In this argument, Grainger again responded to arguments made by Sharp and Broadwood regarding the scale characteristics of folk music. They both argued that English folk songs operated on modal scales, which were all diatonic. Many of the songs resembled ancient Greek scales, and thus represented a striking separation from modern music. Part of Sharp's argument creates a chronology of development for music, since folk music loosely correlated to ancient modal scales that were no longer used in art music. Grainger opposed this classification and argued from his own experience with over 400 phonograph records that folk music changes modes more than once in one performance. From this he drew the conclusion that the "whole art is in a constant flux; new details being continually added while old ones are abandoned."<sup>49</sup> Grainger found this constant improvisation not only interesting, but also appealing. What he found lacking in the biased listening of the modern musician was reciprocated with the phonographic preservation and manipulation of highly individualized folk songs. The phonograph

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 423.

served as a sufficient un-mediating mechanism that revealed subtleties easily missed by the best-trained ear.

In the rest of this article on unwritten music, Grainger posited what he called lessons. He began with “What life is to the writer, and nature to the painter, unwritten music is to many a composer: a kind of mirror of genuineness and naturalness. Through it alone can we come to know something of the incalculable variety of man’s instincts for musical expression.”<sup>50</sup> Drawing inspiration from the phonograph’s ability to preserve musical expression without the constraints of musical notation, Grainger tasted a degree of freedom and personality in unwritten music that was lacking in modern music. The problems with modern music stemmed from the simple act of written notation, since it “divided musical creators and executants into two quite separate classes.”<sup>51</sup> Grainger thought that unlike artists of unwritten music, who were simultaneously both the composer and performer, the methods of modern music nearly eliminated the possibility for idiosyncratic artistic expression.

Even though Grainger would agree on the folk-musician’s adherence to “natural music,” meaning non-standard musical forms in modern music, Grainger held this musical style and practice as something to be emulated and necessary for repairing the deplored state of art music. The main culprit for this cultural demise was the egotistical and self-absorbed intellectual obsession with technical performance, a product of developed art-music that overshadowed the genuine individual creativity reflected in highly personal performances of English folk singers as well as other forms of unwritten music.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 428.

In his study of Arnold Dolmetsch, a specialist in folk songs, Grainger pointed out that Dolmetsch's efforts at re-creating English folk songs unfolded "the angelic mood, the sustained rapture, the complexity of musical thought, the glowing sonority, the breadth of form-flow so native to the strings."<sup>52</sup> Dolmetsch who learned the craft of making and repairing various instruments opened a door to the aesthetic beauty of antique music, something to be appreciated and inspired by, and not just studied. According to Grainger, in contrast to the desires of modern musicians, who were only concerned with the "need of pushing forward their tiresome skill and personality," which he also characterized as "wretchedness," Dolmetsch represented the balanced approach to the study and performance of music that had been lost with the modern emphasis on intellectuality and technical skill – Grainger also saw this in the growing divide between composition and performance.<sup>53</sup> At the core of Grainger's argument was his belief that folk music contained musical perfection, which many 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century musicians were pursuing. For Grainger, Dolmetsch revealed "to our ears the perfections of a great variety of ancient European music," which made Dolmetsch a "genius...one who has not allowed his great natural gifts to become narrowed and withered by specialization, but instead has kept a manly, full blooded, all around approach to art and life."<sup>54</sup>

Grainger contrasted Dolmetsch's approach with the general trajectory of modern art music. From his article on the impress of personality in unwritten music, Grainger argued "It has grown to be an important part of the office of the modern composer to

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<sup>52</sup> Percy Grainger, "Arnold Dolmetsch: Musical Confucius," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, (April 1933), 196.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-197.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

leave as few loopholes as possible in his works for the idiosyncrasies of the performer.”<sup>55</sup>

This argument by Grainger emerged from his concern that the direction of modern art music was developing in a manner that de-emphasized both unaccompanied melodies and discordant harmonies. And the composer served as a fundamental part of this trajectory. Instead, Grainger desired not a return to old folk musical styles, but a more balanced approach that leveled the playing field for all agents of musical expression, whether they were technical, instrumental, or even personal. For him, “The considerable increase of exactness in our modes of notation and tempo,” which has produced both great music and creative musical geniuses, “has done so at the expense of the artistry of millions of performers.”<sup>56</sup> In a way, his democratic approach to music was embodied in his assessment of the phonograph and its ability to truncate the interpretative filter of the modern musician in their analysis of either folk or modern music. Additionally, his musical arguments resonated with his assumption about the phonograph as being able to reconcile “the present gulf between the mentality of composers and performers.”<sup>57</sup>

Grainger would dedicate a significant portion of the rest of his life to closing the gap between composers and performers. He pursued this in White Plains, New York, and while he continued to compose and perform around the world, he began a new project that would culminate in the construction of a music-making machine, which embodied what he called “free music,” the foundation of which can be traced back to his work with the phonograph and English folk music.

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<sup>55</sup> Percy Grainger, “The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music,” 428.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## Free Music and the Connections to the Phonograph

Grainger's pursuit in his project of "free music," which did not gain full speed until the 1950s, had roots that went back to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1907, right after Grainger had completed the bulk of his phonograph recordings, he received a letter from the composer and friend Cyril Scott. Interested in the same question regarding the direction of modern music, Scott, according to Grainger's account, requested permission "to use my 'irregular rhythms', saying that he had got so used to hearing them in my music that he could not compose naturally without them."<sup>58</sup>

Grainger's exposure to the irregular rhythms and subtle pitch shifts in folk song melodies served as an inspiration for his compositional work. And, in an effort to stretch the bounds of music, Grainger developed a series of mechanisms that would play what he called free music, characterized as scaleless and pulseless music.<sup>59</sup> And it is important to emphasize that the elements of English folk song, of which he spilled so much ink in his 1908 article for the English Folk Song Society, established a continuous thread of musical principles Grainger pursued until the end of his life in 1961.

In August of 1916, a year after the publication of "The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music," the Scottish music critic, D. C. Parker, was working on a monograph covering Grainger's musical work. In an effort to be as honest as possible, Parker wrote Grainger and asked him his opinion concerning different pieces of his unpublished manuscript. Grainger responded with a lengthy letter (28 pages) explaining how he had evolved musically throughout his life. Grainger began his letter with a fundamental assumption that every living creature has the capacity for artistic expression. But, there

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<sup>58</sup> quoted in Ivar C. Dorum, "Grainger's 'Free Music'," *The Grainger Society Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 1986, 26.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

was a critical element to this statement: time. It was time which created the space for artistic expression, but with a quick observation of civilized life, Grainger concluded that the “civilized wage slave not only has laughably little time to be artistic, but he is held back from the natural unreasoning self abandonment of art by 1000 and one ideals, ideas – rights and wrongs.”<sup>60</sup> In this statement, Grainger crystallized one of his musical priorities, which advocated that more and more people should practice musical expression and not concern themselves with the musical dos and don’ts established by a cadre of authoritative musicians.

Much of Grainger’s inspiration for the future of music came from his work with English folk song. He recalled how one of his compositions, the “Hill-Song,” contained the irregular rhythms and musical barring, which he found so enlivening in folk music. Also, critical to his vision for music’s future was melody. He stated, “an instinct for melody was never properly stirred until my contact with English folksongs.”<sup>61</sup> Even though, he proceeded to speak of the superiority of the English melodic line, it is important to emphasize how his phonographic work with English melodies shaped his musical leanings at a time when he had professionally established himself as a leading modern musician.

Another important element to Grainger’s approach to music that emerged in this response to D. C. Parker was his physical conception of music. Although this is still thirty plus years before his work on free music machines, the physicality to which Grainger relates to music establishes a strong connection between the phonograph and his work in the 1950s. Right before his discussion of the value of folksongs, Grainger spoke

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<sup>60</sup> Percy Grainger, “Grainger on Grainger,” *The Grainger Society Journal*, Vol, 4, No. 1, Fall 1981, 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

of the “force” that he wanted to infuse into his work. He borrowed the Maori proverb: “Die like the shark, fighting to the last gasp.”<sup>62</sup> From this statement, he articulated that “Some force like that, a force not of beliefs, morals, ideals & ideas, but the bodily force of life itself, is what I always long to invest my music with.”<sup>63</sup> Opposed to a conceptual relationship with music, Grainger preferred to emphasize the physicality of music in terms of the body. This visceral understanding of music, something that he explicitly sought out in his phonographic recordings during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was integral to his articulation of a musical argument that did not reside in the realm of theory, but rather in the realm of a physical experience. He manifested this priority in the creation of different musical mechanisms, whose purpose was to create what he termed free music, a music that correlated to the freedom Grainger saw in nature.

Beginning in 1946, Grainger and Burnett Cross, a long-time admirer of Grainger and musician, initiated the free music project by attempting to construct a machine capable of producing Grainger’s musical ideas. Over the course of 6 years, Cross and Grainger produced 4 types of mechanical instruments, which fundamentally operated on player piano mechanics, which eventually became fully electronic. Regardless of their differences though, the main function of the free music machines was to produce gliding tones, which were not possible on most instruments.<sup>64</sup> As Cross recounted, “Percy didn’t see why ... as a composer he should be limited to the pitch of the ordinary scale or, indeed, the quarter-tone scale, eighth-tone or sixteenth-tone of any fraction of any known

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 276.

scale.”<sup>65</sup> Put in a more qualitative sense, John Bird explained that Grainger “thought to himself that just as the sounds and shapes of nature knew no arbitrary scales or metres so there should be no reason why in its search for full emotional expressiveness music should not enjoy a similar freedom.”<sup>66</sup> For Grainger, his free music project was an avenue to empower the musical artist to not be restrained by either a musical performer, who would have to understand a composer’s musical intention through written notation, or the standards of pitch and meter, which shaped what music could be and sound like. As he put it, “Existing conventional music (whether ‘classical’ or popular) is tied down set scales, a tyrannical (whether metrical or irregular) rhythmic pulse that hold the whole tonal fabric in a vice-like grasp ... that are merely habits, and certainly do not deserve to be called laws.”<sup>67</sup> Grainger’s commitment to a fully expressive music, which broke free from the bounds of scale and meter, required the ability to produce sliding tones defined and shaped by the composer. The precise control over the shifting of tones and chords represented for Grainger the music of a “scientific age” and in order to convey “the beauties and expressiveness into the art of music,” which were restrained by “our archaic notions of harmony,” mechanical means had to be developed to create a direct conduit between the creator’s musical intentions and the audience.<sup>68</sup> And by “scientific,” Grainger meant knowing music as it is and not as it should be symbolically represented.<sup>69</sup> The ability to bypass the standards of meter, scale, and written notation

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<sup>65</sup> “Interview with Burnett Cross,” Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1966, printed in *A Musical Genius From Australia: Selected Writings By and About Percy Grainger*, ed. Teresa Balough, (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1982), 155.

<sup>66</sup> Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 274.

<sup>67</sup> Percy Grainger, “Free Music,” (December 6, 1938), in Balough, *A Musical Genius from Australia*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Percy Grainger to the music critic Olin Downes, in Balough, *A Musical Genius from Australia*, 141.

represented a step forward in the development of music. Grainger's free music, due to its breaking away from standard musical form, required a non-human performance.

Grainger explained, "Like most true music, it is an emotional, not a cerebral, product and should pass direct from the imagination of the composer to the ear of the listener by way of delicately controlled musical machines."<sup>70</sup> For the composer to deliver his or her musical composition without it being modified or interpreted by a human performer, Grainger maintained that the composer needed mechanical means to guarantee the integrity of the composer's complete composition and emotional expressiveness.

Grainger filled this need with his free music machine inventions. The most notable one, described as the Cross-Grainger Kangaroo-pouch system, "consisted of two huge vertically mounted carpet rolls around which had been wound two strips of strong coloured paper whose specially cut 'hill-and-dale' upper contours correspond to the pitch and dynamic needs of music."<sup>71</sup> With a feeder system, the Cross-Grainger Kangaroo-pouch system, allowed the composer to graphically inscribe onto the paper roll the pitch and meter undulations necessary to activate the oscillators responsible for sound production, and thus fulfill on the principles of free music. Unfortunately, the mechanism did not work perfectly, but enough to demonstrate that the creation of free music was possible.

The significance of the Cross-Grainger Kangaroo-pouch system, as well as the previous and later mechanical contraptions, resided in their mechanical similarity to the phonograph. They all fundamentally included some type of cylinder, which rotated, and a pliable medium that would be inscribed upon. What is clear from this is that the

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<sup>70</sup> Grainger, "Free Music," 144.

<sup>71</sup> Bird, *Percy Grainger*, 277.

technology of the phonograph facilitated the access to the mechanical means necessary to fabricate technology that could - just as the early phonograph recordings of folk music demonstrated - capture and reproduce the complete emotional and personal musical expression of the composer. Even during the inventive process of the 1950s, Grainger and Cross worked on a project, which sought out to “find a way of making minutely accurate analysis of the pitch and metre of his folk-singers’ cylinders.”<sup>72</sup> The simultaneous work on free music machines and continued work on the folk song phonograph cylinders signify the clear role that the phonograph had in casting a realistic way of achieving Grainger’s musical goal: the freedom of artistic expression. An essential component to that musical vision included the ability to transcend in a very physical and visceral sense, the tonal and rhythmic constraints imposed by traditional musical standards. Ironically, the path towards musical development, for Grainger, emerged out of his engagement with the past through phonographic recordings of folk songs that did not operate on the rules of modern art music. Rather, the manipulation of playback speed and the repeated listening of recorded folk songs exposed the crucial ingredient of emotional and personal freedom in terms of pitch and rhythm, a characteristic Grainger pursued throughout his life as a professional, yet personal musician.

## **Conclusion**

Frank Howes, in his article “Recent Work in Folk-Music” (1937), casts a backward looking gaze on the collection of English folk music, which he concludes wrapped up around 1925. In the survey he provides about the collection of music, Howes

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 280.

commented that for most folk song collectors, “no musician who has anything to do with folk-song can resist “setting,” and “arranging” it, from Lucy Broadwood to Ernest John Moeran.”<sup>73</sup> Howes did not see anything fundamentally wrong about this, but merely suggested that this was one way that musical scholars responded to the unfamiliar contours of folk music. Further on, Howes repeats what Vaughan Williams, an important individual in the English Folk Song Society, had to say about the adaptation of folk songs. Williams saw the adaptation of folk songs born from the idea that “it is necessary to “make something of it,”” the “it” being an unconstrained folk tune.<sup>74</sup> This chapter has explored how the phonograph played an important role in engaging with the “it,” and how a musical scholar related to the phonograph greatly shaped the understanding of folk music and its relationship to modern music.

What is important about Howes’s work is that its reflective position highlights the problematic nature of early 20<sup>th</sup> century arrangements made around English folk tunes. The work of the English Folk Song Society raised important questions regarding the origin of English music, and also the relationship of modern music to a type of music that seemed to completely separate from the style and standards of an art music wrestling with its future direction. It is without a doubt that Percy Grainger played an important role in answering some of these questions, a point that has been made by many musical scholars, but how Grainger developed his musical ideas and practices had not been fully addressed. The aim of this chapter has been to explore that topic by exploring how the new

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<sup>73</sup> Frank Howes, “Recent Work in Folk-Music,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 64<sup>th</sup> session (1937-1938), 43. Howes lectured on the history of music at the Royal College of Music throughout the 1910s and 20s. With a focus on the psychology of music, he published *The Borderland of Music and Psychology* in 1926 and *Man, Mind, and Music* in 1948.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

technology of the phonograph at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shaped Grainger's musical landscape and efforts.

Grainger's work with English folk song and the phonograph generated an important experiential basis from which Grainger was able to articulate what was missing from modern music. The extremely personal and unique expositions of English folksingers coupled with Grainger's exposure to other recordings of non-western music provided him with a rich musical experience integral to his vision of music around the world. His work with the phonograph helped him to not only see the possibility of creating a musical stage where the personal improvisation of folk musicians could be forever preserved and played for future generations, but also to move forward in the development of music with his free music instruments where an artist's creation could be fully expressed.

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