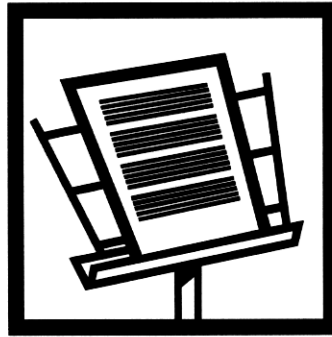


Music Extension Essay

Student Number:

School Number:



Hypothesis:

Part of Percy Grainger's compositional style was that his compositions reflected aspects of the singer's vocal style, experiences, and personality, as well as the characteristics of traditional folk songs.

General Note

Some words that have been used in this essay come from the Danish Language, and cannot be appropriately translated. This has been done to the best of my ability. These mainly occur in the bibliography, but some occur throughout the essay.

Throughout the course of Percy Grainger's life, he went to many countries throughout Europe. Two countries, which he visited in particular, were Denmark and England. In these countries, he travelled with friends from various communities collecting many folk songs on his phonograph. In this essay, I will explore the relationship between Grainger's music and the folk songs, which he collected and incorporated into his music.

Grainger was not alone in looking to folk music for inspiration. A considerable number of his contemporaries such as Bartok and Kodaly in Hungary, Grieg in Norway, Cantaloube from France, De Falla and other Spanish composers formed a broad coalition of folkloric composers. Even Stravinsky in the Rite of Spring uses excerpts from Transylvanian folk song. However, Grainger pioneered the use of the phonograph in collecting folk music, and moreover, his approach to setting folk songs differs markedly from his contemporaries in that he does not simply use folk material to give a nationalist flavour to his music, but attempts to create a portrait of the performer and the original performance. He did not simply notate a basic version of the tune but took great care to note variations in each verse, pitch aberrations and expressive devices such as glissandi and grace notes.

In a letter from Percy Grainger to Roger Quilter, a pianist friend of Grainger, Grainger writes about a group of Danish peasants whom he met on a trip to Denmark. He writes:

"Wonderful were the peasant folk we collected from, able to move quickly; above all [though] full of fun and life."

This explains the feelings Grainger had for the people he was collecting folk songs from and in part explains the pains he took to faithfully reproduce their work in his written transcriptions.

In this letter he also makes reference to "publishing a collection of Danish folk music," which he did under the title *Danish Folk Music Settings* and which were reused in the *Danish Folk Suite*.

Q Aug 30, 1912

Darling Roger

After a favorable voyage across the Atlantic (most of the time I spent asleep, by night & by day, being 'em very overworked before leaving home) I arrived in Denmark a week ago & have just spent 7 days with old Ewald Tang Kristensen at Vejle a recorder, collecting Danish folksongs. The old boy is 79, but is still a wonder at his work (able to take down folksong texts at sight, i.e. spend without glasses) & able to stand motoring (in his motor) around in the cold & rain. After a life of honest work he lives on a small pension, most of which goes to a Sanatorium where he has a poor daughter out of her mind. So he, his wife & son (born when E. was 65) live on ~~the~~ 300 kroner (£15) a year, & he sups. Breeds without butter, going to bed early, son is sure oil for the lamp, never affording a taxi, wooden shoes most of the time, etc. He owns a little house, & it is just crammed full of things he has collected (pewter, china, broadsheets, old pictures, etc, & mixing with his published books, which he can't sell. He is the finest collector, & requires folksong texts & a knowledge of music

Fig 1. Letter from Grainger to Roger Quilter

The final movement of the *Danish Folk Suite* is entitled a *Jutish Medley*, and this is a reworking of number 8 of *The Danish Folk Music* settings. Grainger's approach to the collected material is immediately evident from his comments accompanying the score. Each part is composed to suit each particular vocalist's style and range.

The excerpt below is from *Choosing the Bride*, as sung by Anna Nielsen Munch. She comes from Jutland where this piece was arranged by Grainger and his friend Evald Tang Kristensen. The piece is smooth and flowing. This is achieved by the use of triplets and ornamentation such as glissandi.



Fig 2. *Jutish Medley Choosing the Bride*

Grainger carefully notated the performance of the piece and indicates this in his published edition. Variations observed in performance are carefully notated with optional portamenti, and rhythmic and pitch variations transcribed. These can be seen in the excerpts quoted above and below this paragraph. The excerpt below comes from *Jutish Medley's* first movement *Choosing the Bride*.



Fig 3. *Jutish Medley Choosing the Bride*

The third movement of the *Jutish Medley*, *Husband and Wife once again* demonstrates how Grainger scored his music in the style of the vocalist. It is written

in the lower register and rather simple in pitch with no overly hard intervals. This is because Jens Christian Jensen, a male with a lower voice, sings the movement. It can also be seen from this excerpt below that Grainger once again notates carefully variations in the performance.



Fig 4. *Jutish Medley Husband and Wife*

From the book *Percy Grainger Companion*, several quotations were made by Grainger himself in relation to his feelings about his Danish songs in particular. Some quotes such as:

“My part of collecting was undertaken, partly in order to compare singing habits of Danish Country-side singers with those of English folk-singers,”

from his dedication, describe how much care he took with the styles of the singers.

Another quote from Grainger in this book is

“the tune that underlies the second movement of the suite is a sturdy dance-song, cast exclusively in seven bar phrases. This build of tune is a rare survival from the middle ages,”

This shows how he incorporated the dance aspect of traditional folk music into his compositions.

One particular quote by Grainger, again from the *Percy Grainger Companion* describes how his compositions reflected the vocal style and personality of the singer. He states that the piece is to be sung with “fanciful” style, just as Mrs Nielsen sung it:

“In the third movement are combined two songs of a fanciful and supernatural character. The Nightingale and The Two Sisters. Both were sung with winsome grace by [Mrs Anne Nielsen Post],”

Below is an excerpt from the second movement of the Jutish Medley. It shows the “fun and liveliness” that Grainger saw in the peasant folk he describes in the letter to Quilter. This is achieved through the use of ornamentation and the quick tempo throughout.



Fig 5. Jutish Medley The Dragoon's Farewell

In *The Dragoon's Farewell* we can see Grainger's developed harmonic style. Notice how the theme above is harmonised in the excerpt below. At first the chords are simple tonic, dominant and minor harmonies but at the melody's climax comes rising in parallel motion a G ninth, Ab and Bb eleventh chords resolving through the diminished triad on C to the tonic



Fig 6. Jutish Medley The Dragoon's Farewell

Of further interest in the *Dragoon's Farewell* is the constantly changing metre. If we look at the transcriptions provided to Grainger by the folk writer Steen Eller Rasmussen, whom Grainger met in Denmark, we can see that in general Rasmussen did not make these detailed rhythmic and metrical observations.

The following excerpt is called *Arkitekten*. Interestingly Grainger recorded this on phonograph. There is no time signature at the start, or throughout the piece. But the piece is moulded into a quadruple metre except for two bars in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, which could possibly be an error in writing triplet quavers rather than triplet crotchets. As I have been unable to obtain a recording of this song, I am not in a position to amend the transcriber's notation. However, it is clear from only a brief inspection that Grainger was much more concerned with representing accurately the rhythmic and melodic subtleties in his transcriptions.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Arkitekten". It consists of seven staves of music, each with a corresponding line of Danish lyrics underneath. The tempo is marked "Andante Maestoso". The lyrics are: "Silda GODT Silda GODT Store levne SildaGODT", "Ky spøts Her Levne Ryspøt TÆR", "Femmer' Tredv' Ør' Stykket", "HORN fisk er godt Horn fisk er GODT", "HER store levne Horn fisk GODT", "RY spøt TÆR Lev na Ryspø TÆR", and "Femmer' Tredv' Ør' Stykket". The notation includes various rhythmic values and rests, with some notes beamed together in triplets.

Fig 7. From *Danske Folkemusik*

In the *Shoemaker from Jerusalem*, the fourth movement from *Jutish Melody*, Grainger composed a song very different in character from the rest of the piece. This was very slow and not lively at all. This was due to the fact that the piece was sung by Mari Jensen Hus (Evald Tang Kristensen's wife). She had a very hard life, she as very poor, and her daughter was in a mental asylum. Grainger knew well of this, as he was

Kristensen's best friend, and hence he tried to incorporate these feelings of sadness into the movement. This shows once again, Grainger's concern for reflecting in his compositions the singers' experiences and personality.

The overall sad mood of the movement was achieved by having a very slow tempo, *Andante religioso*, (more than half as slow as the other movements) and by marking the piece to be played *molto espressivo*. Although there are few dynamics changes, swells are carefully indicated in the final bars of the excerpt below.



Fig 8. Jutish Medley Fourth Movement

Four years after completing a Danish Folk Suite Grainger "wrought" a work for "wind fivesome" entitled Lisbon. In 1937 he rescored this for wind band and added five more movements creating what is now regarded as a masterpiece for band. *A Lincolnshire Posy* expanded the resources of the wind band. Grainger scored for complete choirs of clarinets and saxophones, exploited the tone colours of chamber groupings within the ensemble and expanded the role of tuned percussion.

Grainger used folksongs as the basis of the six movements of *A Lincolnshire Posy*, his imaginative and faithful handling of these give the work strength, integrity and vitality. Just as he did in a *Danish Folk Suite*, Grainger carefully annotated the sources from which he collected the folk songs taking great care to describe the character of the singer.

3. RUFFORD PARK POACHERS (Poaching Song)

Please ask Bandmaster whether version A, or version B, is to be played.

Fig 9. Lincolnshire Posy Third Movement

The third movement of *Lincolnshire Posy* is *Rufford Park Poachers*. Interestingly it is in two versions A and B in which the openings differ in key. The reason for this is because Grainger offers a choice of two soloists, either the flugelhorn (version A) or the soprano sax (version B). The difference in key is due to the soprano saxophone range does not go as low as the flugelhorn. Despite being given as option B the soprano saxophone was Grainger's personal preference as soloist. It had been the instrument that Grainger was assigned to when he joined an American service band.

He states:

The soprano saxophone is to be preferred – that is if its player has assurance enough to throb forth this melody with searching, piercing prominence. The solo was written, partly in the hope of convincing bandleaders and bandmen of the supreme desirability of this glorious instrument.

The movement opens with a canon between a piccolo doubled three octaves lower on Bb clarinet and Eb clarinet doubled three octaves lower on bass clarinet. The canon is at the octave. The music has an eerie quality because of this choice of instruments, the thinness of texture, the differences in range between the parts (four octaves). This is enhanced by constantly changing metres, soft dynamics, considerable variety of rhythmic figures and slurred articulation. The mood clearly suggests the poachers creeping through the dark.



Fig 10. *Lincolnshire Posy Third Movement (recorded excerpt 1)*

Grainger's approach to texture here is interesting. Despite the simple procedure of a canon at the octave being employed, the aural effect is considerably more complex because of the melodic and rhythmic idioms he uses.

In this opening, Grainger achieves a sense of free time, the beat and pulse suspended. This reflects his interest in "beatless" music and anticipates his free music experimentation. Initially this interest developed in response to his desire to notate accurately the natural speech rhythms of folksong performances. To do this he employed irregular metres and frequently changing time signatures. The effect is enhanced here by the polyphonic interplay and the absence of clear attack on notes because of the slurs used and the attack characteristic of the clarinet family. Crescendos and decrescendos also help to obscure the beat.

With the entrance of the soloist at bar 19, even though a sense of pulse is briefly established, the metre is immediately disguised by syncopation in the accompaniment over a sustained upper and lower pedal notes. The soloist is given prominence through textural change. Gone is the complex polyphony. It is replaced by piquant harmonies.

Grainger's harmonic procedures are also interesting. The modal nature of the song is maintained with sustained upper and lower pedal Fs, against which first (bar 18) a D diminished triad is played, then Db Major, G diminished 7th. There is no sense of resolution; a nervous energy is pervasive.

Once again at bar 51 the texture is altered. A gradual build up of forces precedes the tutti. The theme played in octaves by the woodwind choir is accompanied by flutter-tongued chords on trumpets and sustained harmonies in the bass line.

Structurally, throughout the majority of *Lincolnshire Posy's* movements Grainger moves from simple to complex. Forces start in chamber groupings, textures are linear and harmonies are straightforward. The sections then climax in tutti.

Once again in *Lincolnshire Posy*, Grainger has composed a piece where the feeling of beatless music is incorporated from earlier folk music. The composition itself is not beatless, but there is no defined pulse. This is created by the notes being sustained over a series of beats, creating almost a drone like sound, or pedal-point. Below is an example from the third movement, showing these features.

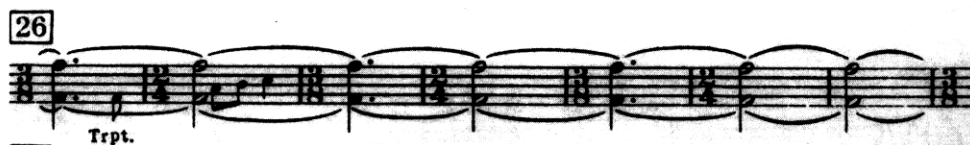


Fig 11. *Lincolnshire Posy Third Movement*

Another element from the third movement that helps to create the sense of beatlessness as described above is the way the music is marked to be played. It is

asked to be played lingeringly, which means slightly off the beat. This in conjunction with the pedal-point notes creates the beatless feeling.



Fig 12. *Lincolnshire Posy Third Movement*

The third movement of *Lincolnshire Posy* is also a good example of Grainger's compositional approach to dynamics. Almost every bar changes in dynamics, whether it is a crescendo or a decrescendo. This was also similar in traditional folk songs where the singer continuously altered dynamics to make the piece more lively and realistic.

This also holds true in the fourth movement of *Lincolnshire Posy*, *The Brisk Young Sailor*. The piece is very quick, sprightly, and has mainly semi-quavers. This reflects the flowing and natural feeling that Grainger attempts to establish throughout his works.



Fig 13. *Lincolnshire Posy Fourth Movement*

A critical aspect of Grainger's compositional style though is evident in the fifth movement of *Lincolnshire Posy*, *Lord Melbourne a War Song*. As has been said before, Grainger wanted his songs to be played and sung like traditional folk songs.

There is a passage written on this movement at the beginning of the score, instructing the bandleader how to conduct the band. It states:

“In the passages marked ‘Free Time’ the bandleader should vary his note lengths with that rhythmic elasticity so characteristic of many English folk singers.”

This is accompanied by another statement:

“Give free reign to his rhythmic fancy, just as folk singers do.”

These quotations show that Grainger wanted the ‘rhythmic elasticity’ that is present in traditional folk songs, in this composition. This leads to the conclusion that he wanted to incorporate aspects of traditional folk song into his compositions. The second quotation also shows something else he wanted to reflect in his compositions, the personality of the singer.

N.B. In the passages marked “Free Time”...the Bandleader should vary his note-lengths with that rhythmic elasticity so characteristic of many English folksingers give free reign to his rhythmic fancy, just as folksingers do. Each note with an arrow above it may [*must*, ed.] be beaten with a down beat...

Fig 14. Lincolnshire Posy Fifth Movement

Another aspect of traditional folk music that Grainger experimented with was Beatless music. Grainger attempts in *Lord Melbourne* to rid the music of its metrical pulse and leave this up to the discretion of the conductor. Throughout the movement, there are several sections that have no written time signature. They are marked “free time” indicating the rhythmic elasticity mentioned before. There is no regular pulse either, which adds to the free and beatless feeling experienced when playing. But at the same time, it is not completely free either, just like traditional folk songs. The conductor

beats a downbeat for every note, in order to keep each instrument in time with each other. This is what gives the movement its rhythmic elasticity, which Grainger wanted.



Fig 15. *Lincolnshire Posy Fifth Movement*

Ironically, in the recording that I have listened to by Frederick Fennell and the Eatmann-Kodak School of Music Band, despite its overall excellence, it seems that the interpretation of these sections is too metrical. **(recorded excerpt 2)**

The section immediately following the free time section in *Lord Melbourne* is marked as 'strict time', which seems to contradict what was mentioned before. This is not true however. Although there are defined time signatures, they continuously change. Again as in the third movement the manner in which the notes are played also help to offset the feeling of 'strict time'. They are played legato with no recognizable accents, and a great variety of rhythmic values are employed, making it difficult to hear the beat.



Fig 16. *Lincolnshire Posy Fifth Movement (recorded excerpt 3)*

The reason why Grainger has to revert to defined time signatures for these sections is because the entries in the accompanying parts makes it necessary, however the way

the notes are played creates the feeling of rhythmic elasticity just as in the free time sections.

In traditional folk songs, dance music such as a Polka is also very common. Below is an example of traditional Danish folk music that was danced to. It is called *Festvalsen Efter Viggo Gade*. It is written in 3/4, and is extremely metrical and eminently danceable.

Festvalsen
Efter Viggo Gade

The musical score for 'Festvalsen Efter Viggo Gade' is presented in ten staves. Each staff begins with a measure number: 7, 13, 19, 25, 31, 36, 42, and 47. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. First and second endings are indicated by '1.' and '2.' above the staff lines.

Fig 17. Traditional Danish Folk Song

In *Lord Melbourne* there is a dance section also with a strong, metrical feel. The key signatures become more regular, however the rhythms are quite complex and the metres continue to change creating a folkdance with a suggestion of improvised instrumental accompaniment.



Fig 18. Lincolnshire Posy Fifth Movement (recorded excerpt 4)

Right at the end of *Lord Melbourne*, Grainger brings back the beatless concept again, only slightly more different, though still having the same effect nonetheless. This time the rhythmic elasticity is achieved not only by the slurring of notes, ties across bar lines and by the playing instructions and the tempo. It is to be played lingeringly, creating an even more irregular beat.

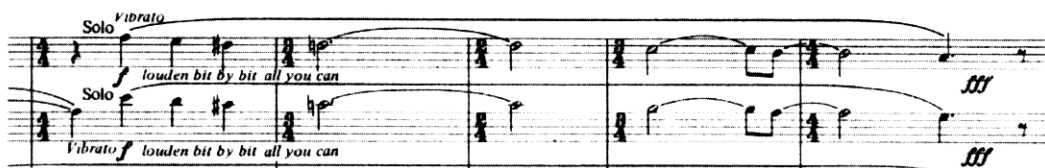


Fig 19. Lincolnshire Posy Fifth Movement (recorded excerpt 5)

Some of the harmonic procedures Grainger uses in *Lord Melbourne* are similar to folk music procedures and those found in *Jutish Medley*. There are sections where the parts move in parallel in the accompanying sections. This means the parts play in unison. However, the harmony is 'spiced up' by the frequent use of 9th chords and chromaticism. This continues throughout the movement, but particularly occurs at the start.



Fig 20. Lincolnshire Posy fifth movement

In conclusion, Percy Grainger was an original composer whose radical ideas and experiments are often underestimated. The reasons for this are difficult to discern although it may be because of the brevity of many of his major works or the unusual instrumentation. In his settings of folk songs such as *Lincolnshire Posy* and a *Danish Folk Suite* Grainger established himself as unique in his approach to the material, his intense sense of instrumental colour, and the respect for the original material which formed the basis of his work. Throughout the course of his life, he collected many folk songs from small communities, and as has been shown here, has incorporated these into his compositions in a unique and personal expression, which nonetheless reflects faithfully the tradition from which he derives his inspiration.

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DISCOGRAPHY

MUSIC EXTENSION – Musicology Elective

Band E2/3

Annotation – Sample 1

Title: Percy Grainger's Composition Style

A clear hypothesis with some independence of thought. Critical analysis attempted. The argument is coherent but at times repetitive eg on *beatless* music. A comprehensive understanding of the concepts is evident although some statements lack depth. The supporting scores are relevant but lack annotation and detailed drawing out of the point. Evidence of extensive research and an attempt is made to integrate primary and secondary sources into the discussion.