

# 2021 - A Percy Grainger Commemoration

~ Bill Garlette



“These are the times that try men’s souls.” Apparently, Thomas Paine could predict our current situation. In this time of uncertainty, we musicians especially look forward to returning to our passion. The question? When? Well, that’s not so simple but it can be motivating to start planning for when we do.

To that end, we at the International Percy Grainger Society (IPGS) and Percy Grainger America want to give you something to look forward to. 2021 marks two milestones in the history of our amazing wind band composer. First, the Graingers (Percy and his mother, Rose) settled, permanently, in the U.S., in their home at 7 Cromwell Place, White Plains, NY in 1921. Secondly, 2021 is the 60th anniversary of Percy’s death.

Our goal for this commemoration is to encourage band directors to program the wonderful music of the Master. There is so much to choose from:

Original wind band works with no folk song usage:

- Hill Song No. 1 (1902)
- Hill Song No. 2 (1907)
- The Lads of Wamphray (1907)
- Hill-Song No. 2 (1907)
- Colonial Song (1911-14)
- The Immovable Do (1933-39)
- Marching Song of Democracy (1901, 1908, 1915-17, arr. for band 1948)

For band and piano:

- Children’s March “Over the Hills and Far Away” (1916, 18)
- “The Gum-suckers” March (1905-7, 11, 14, arr. for band 1942)

For band and organ:

- The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart (1918-43)

Arrangements for band by Percy Grainger:

- Blithe Bells (Free Ramble on Sheep May Safely Graze by J.S. Bach) (1930-31)
- J.S. Bach: O Mensch, bewein deine sünde Gross (1937, 42)
- J.S. Bach: Sehnet was die liebe tut (1937)
- Gabriel Fauré: Tuscan Serenade (1937)
- William Lawes: 6-part Fantasy and Air No. 1 (1937)
- Guillaume de Machaut: Ballade No. 17 (1937)
- John Jenkins: 5-part Fantasy No. 1 (1930s)
- Alfonso Ferrabosco: The Four Note Pavan (1940)
- Antonio de Cabezon: Prelude in the Dorian Mode (1941)
- Eugene Goossens: Folk tune (1942)
- J.S. Bach: March (1946)

Percy Grainger, born in Australia in 1882, was a renowned composer and pianist, a writer and watercolorist, a clothing designer and pioneering collector of folk songs. For forty years, from 1921 until his death in 1961, Grainger occupied the house at 7 Cromwell Place, White Plains, using it for his residence, practice studio, and laboratory for his avant-garde musical compositions and experimental music machines.

The American Foursquare wood shingled house is the resource most significantly associated with Grainger in America. This historic house, built in 1893, and added to the National Register of Historic Places on April 8, 1993, was originally the residence of David Cromwell, banker and prominent local citizen. Cromwell served as Westchester County Treasurer and Chief Officer of the then Village of White Plains. He was president of several local banks, most notably the Home Savings Bank.

Cromwell built the two streets which connect Maple Avenue and East Post Road. Chester Avenue, parallel and to the east of Cromwell Place, built and deeded to White Plains in 1891, was named for his son John Chester Cromwell. Chester later lived in a house there, which still stands behind the Percy Grainger House. He died in 1907, age 30, while fighting a fire on Main Street, only days after he was married.

While some of the Cromwells’ household items are stored on the third floor, the Grainger House remains today furnished as it was during Grainger’s lifetime, a dramatic living testimony to the life and times of a multi-faceted genius. It is one of the cultural gems of Westchester County and a site visited by a steady stream of musicians, historians and students from all over the world.

On May 12, 2017, the White Plains Historical Commission recommended to the City of White Plains that the Percy Grainger Home, 7 Cromwell Place, White Plains, be designated an Historical Landmark.



- Anon: Angelus ad Virginem (1940s)
- Katherine Parker: Down Longford Way (1940s?)
- Josquin des Prés: La Bernardina (1953)
- Bell Piece (Ramble on Now, O Now, I Needs must Part by John Dowland) (1953)
- Pagodas from “Estampes” Claude Debussy 1903 / 1928 / 1996
- Prelude in the Dorian Mode by Antonio de Cabezon c. 1550 / 1937-1941

#### Folksong settings for band:

- Shepherd’s Hey (1908-13; arr. for band in 1918)
- Molly on the Shore (1920)
- Country Gardens (1918; arr. for band in 1920s?)
- Lord Peter’s Stable Boy (1922-25; arr. for band 1930)
- “Nightingale” and “The Two Sisters” (1923-30)
- Ye Banks and Braes O’ Bonnie Doon (1901, 1932)
- Irish Tune from County Derry (1902-11; arr. for band 1937)
- Lincolnshire Posy (1937)
- “The Duke of Marlborough” Fanfare (1939)
- Faeroe Island Dance (1943; arr. for band 1954)
- Spoon River (1919-29; arr. for band in 1940s?)

#### Arrangements of Grainger’s Music by Others:

- Australian Up-Country Tune [arr. Bainum]
- Bell Piece (after Dowland) [ed. Duffy/Ould]
- Blithe Bells (after Bach) [ed. Ould]
- Blithe Bells (after Bach) [arr. Robert Jager]
- Bridal Lullaby, A [arr. Hartley]
- British Waterside [arr. John Moss]
- Colonial Song [ed. Rogers]
- Country Gardens - [ed. Clark]
- County Derry Air\* [ed. Ould]
- Danny Deever [arr. Carpenter]
- Early One Morning [arr. Kreines]
- Eastern Intermezzo [arr. Warshaw]
- Handel in the Strand (Clog Dance) [arr. Goldman]
- Harlem 125th Street Walkabout [arr. Hartley]
- Harvest Hymn [arr. Kreines]
- Hunter in His Career, The [arr. Robinson]
- I’m Seventeen Come Sunday [arr. Daehn]
- Jutish Medley [arr. Kreines]
- Lord Peter’s Stable Boy [arr. Kreines]
- Mock Morris [arr. Kreines]
- Mock Morris [arr. Simpson]
- Power of Love, The + piano [arr. Kreines]
- Six Dukes Went A-Fishin’ [arr. Kreines]
- Scotch Strathspey & Reel [arr. Osmon]
- Shenandoah [arr. Osmon]
- Spoon River [arr. Bainum]
- Sussex Mummers’ Christmas Carol [arr. Goldman]
- Sussex Mummers’ Christmas Carol [arr. Simpson]
- Walking Tune [arr. Daehn]
- Walking Tune [arr. Simpson]
- Willow, Willow [arr. Simpson] - Maecenas (UK) 4’00”

\*different setting of Irish Tune from County Derry

In addition to promoting the playing of Grainger’s music, several events will be held at the Grainger House, which is an Historical Landmark Home.

We have so many wonderful books tracing the history and people of the wind band movement. Proper emphasis is placed on two British masters, Holst and Vaughn Williams, for their contributions to the foundation of the repertoire. What we wind band musicians should acknowledge is that Grainger was the first to truly recognize and capture the full potential of the wind band instruments. He believed in using full sections of winds from the highest to the lowest. His penchant for the sax section is a landmark in the orchestration of bands (see the wonderful article by renown saxophone expert, Paul Cohen:

\* <https://percygraingeramerica.org/blog/9049340>

\* [https://percygraingeramerica.org/resources/Documents/Strategic%20Planning%20Task%20Force/Grainger%20and%20the%20Intimate%20Saxophone\\_2020\\_Final%20final.pdf](https://percygraingeramerica.org/resources/Documents/Strategic%20Planning%20Task%20Force/Grainger%20and%20the%20Intimate%20Saxophone_2020_Final%20final.pdf)

He set the standard for the expanded percussion section and the use of ‘tuneful percussion’ which had not been explored prior to his writings.

He was a fascinating and remarkable musical genius. He was not only a renown concert pianist but a noted ethnomusicologist, and explorer of ‘free music’, the beginnings of what we would see as the electronic music genre and Musique concrète. His use of mixed meters, composite meters and free time was far ahead of its time.

Truth is, his music opens up such a passion and freedom of expression that no band or audience can go untouched by any performance of any work by Percy Aldridge Grainger. Join us for the wonderful celebration of Percy Grainger and please share you concert programs and thoughts on the national treasure.

See the Percy Grainger Society website - <https://percygraingeramerica.org>

#### Additional references from:

Ould, Barry Peter, *The New Percy Grainger Companion*, ed. Penelope Thwaites (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK), Catalogue of Works, pp. 249-294.



*Major (Retired) William Garlette served as Deputy Commander and Associate Conductor at the United States Military Academy Band from 1998-2002. Since 2002 he has been involved with guest conducting, clinician, and adjudication endeavors throughout Virginia. He has been the Conductor and Music Director of the Chesapeake Bay Wind Ensemble since 2010. He was recently selected as a Board member of the International Percy Grainger Society.*