

Poetry and the written word

Percy Grainger and Australian folk song

Here is another gem provided by Mark Gregory from *The Australasian*, Saturday 10 February 1906 p. 26.

Mr. Percy Grainger has ideals for Australia, which are expressed in the current number of the "British Australasian."

He deplores the fact that there is no national school of Australian composition, no Australian folk song, not even an Australian National Anthem.

But these things must inevitably come, and it is Mr. Grainger's ambition to be the moving spirit in their creation; to use his own words, he would "found a school of purely Australian music."

But he has sufficient modesty to feel himself rather young for this yet,

and so he intends to wait until he is, "say, 40," and has "gained enough experience and sufficient money."

He will then return to our shores, and "take all the hundreds of fine voices there, which only "need teaching, to train them, to weld them together, and by them to call into being that great Australian soul of music which is inborn in all its people, and only waiting to be heard."

This bold scheme unfolded, Mr. Grainger goes on to state that he is busily engaged composing the music in which the soul of Australian song is to find its earliest expression.

"I am composing all the time," he says.

"Everything I do is inspired with the hope and aim that it may breathe the spirit of the land where I was born."

His music is chiefly choral, because, as he

says, "it is in a people's chorus that the national heart beats most strongly."

He will publish nothing in England.

Written for Australia, to Australia shall his work be given.

To sum up, there is plenty of rough material here.

There are plenty of good voices, for already has Australia "given the world the greatest singers of this generation."

All we need is a teacher, an inspirer, a composer, and for these we have but to wait until Mr. Grainger reaches middle age.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article139192105>

The CD Percy Grainger Pleasant and Delightful is available from www.TradandNow.com

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