

# Grainger Celebration

Reviewed by Clive O'Connell

July 4, 2011

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Reviewer rating:

## The Consort of Melbourne, Melbourne Recital Centre, July 2

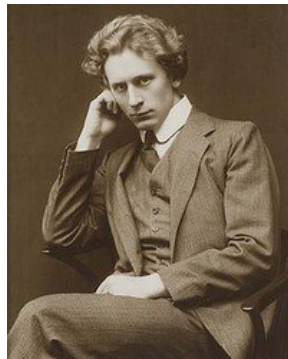
JUMPING the gun by eight months, the Consort of Melbourne gave an all-Grainger recital last year to observe the half-century anniversary of the Australian composer's death. Reinforcing its reputation in this original musician's considerable output, the Consort presented another program on Saturday with remarkably little content transference.

Soprano Lee Abrahmsen again led the Consort male singers and orchestra through the sweeping *Shallow Brown*; the *Love Song of Har Dyal* once more demonstrated the composer's love of Victorian-era sentiment; the performance of *Tribute to Foster* proved much more rewarding than that concluding this year's Myer Bowl free concerts, which involved Consort members.

Conductor Peter Tregear emphasised Grainger's powerful lyricism, sometimes cluttered with hefty chromatic crab movement underlining the influence of Delius. He was fortunate in his resources: the 16-strong Consort voices, the warm underpinning of Monash University's String Sinfonia, a vivid viola solo from Matthew Laing, Ensemble Liaison refurbishing *Shepherd's Hey* and Grainger's version of *The Man I Love*, a clutch of able wind players from the Australian National Academy of Music, the resonant harp of Jessica Fotinos.

Few of the night's elements wore out their welcome, although the *Australian Up-Country Song* and *The Lonely Desert Man Sees the Tents of the Happy Tribes* proved instantly forgettable.

But the pleasures were many: three of the Consort's eloquent tenors all bouncy competence in some brilliant folk-song arrangements; an aggressive choral version of the *Irish Tune from County Derry*; a rollicking *Lost Lady Found* reading and Nick Dinopoulos's potent bass in the *Foster* score.



Percy Grainger Photo: University of Melbourne