

The Complete Grainger Edition: 60 years 1961-1921

How was such a large collection collected and recorded? Some Grainger enthusiasts were there from the beginning. Here's Barry Ould's story, noting the steps along the way and those who helped make this recording possible.



The idea of making a complete Grainger recording was mooted by myself and Penelope Thwaites a couple of years before Chandos took up the challenge in 1995 when their first disc of the orchestral music was recorded by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra in their Manchester studios and released in 1996.

Before that momentous occasion, I had been asked to produce repertoire lists for the various genres of Grainger's music.

This had been quite a task in sorting out, as each intended album had to be carefully calculated for the duration and instrumentation. The various genres had to be carefully mixed and matched in order to avoid problems in the hiring of the musicians themselves. And with the majority of Grainger's compositions being of short duration, it would have been extremely difficult in arranging the recording sessions to make good use of the time allotted for each.

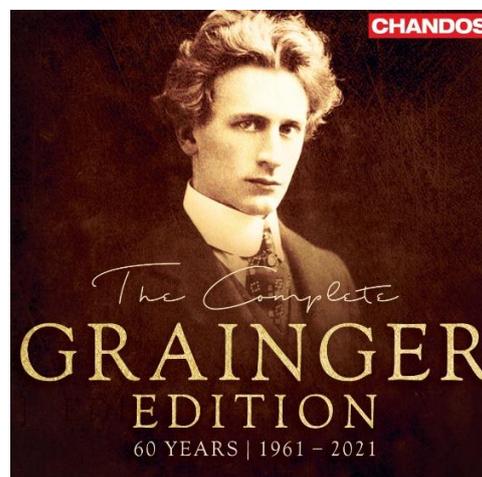
Eventually, I had worked out that to record all of Grainger's original and folk-music settings would occupy 25 CDs. I remember few months before this, I met up with the Chandos team at the home of the late Richard Hickox where he boldly stated that he wanted to record every note that Grainger wrote.

I thought to myself that he had no idea as to how much music there was! If one were to take into account all the various versions, the number of albums I had planned would have at least doubled in size. For instance, a whole CD album could be made of all the different versions of his 'Colonial Song' let alone 'Irish Tune from County Derry'!

Once the recordings had started based on my lists, it became clear that I would be kept fully occupied in producing the scores and material for those works which were not readily available in published sources. A good majority of Grainger's music had been

available from Schott Music, but many of the other scores which had not been published had to be carefully edited from manuscript sources. Thankfully, I had copies of these in the Grainger Society music archive I maintain.

In the end, it proved difficult to keep up with the recordings. For the last album recorded by Chandos of works for large chorus and orchestra, recorded in Melbourne with Sir Andrew Davis and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 2012, I had about three months' notice to prepare and finalize five works! Apart from being the consultant for the recordings, I also undertook the writing of all the CD liner notes.



My only regret is that the main Chandos Grainger Edition only managed to record 19 albums out of the 25 planned although, two further albums were eventually issued (the one mentioned above and another of Grainger's wind band transcriptions of works by other composers) both of which are now included in the new 60th anniversary edition boxed set (released January 2021).

I extend a huge thanks to Ralph Couzens of Chandos Records for his unstinting commitment to these pioneer recordings. I'm still flabbergasted that it even happened.

(Editor's Note: Another casualty of the time demands of these recordings was the original Grainger Journal. The journal ceased publication in 2002. Back editions, noting their contents, are [located here](#). The Grainger Journal will begin again in July, 2021.)

Barry Peter Ould, Huntly, Aberdeenshire, is President Emeritus of the (US-based) *International Percy Grainger Society* and the (US-based) *Percy Grainger America* (an organization dedicated to the preservation of 7 Cromwell Place.). He was also co-founder and long-time President of the (UK-based) *Percy Grainger Society*. His music publishing company, [Bardic Edition](#) continues to publish Percy Grainger's music, and has done so since 1987. He has traveled nearly annually to the *Percy Grainger Home and Workspace*, White Plains, New York, initially hosted by Ella Grainger herself in 1978. His profound knowledge of Grainger's works and the surrounding history has afforded him the opportunity to consult with the many Grainger biographers, as well as the opportunity to participate in recordings, most recently the 21 CD edition of *The Complete Grainger Edition, 60 Years, 1961-2021*.