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review

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Grainger's Top Ten

One of the last frontiers of Grainger research is his autobiographical writings. Prompted by the death of his mother in 1922, Grainger started conscientiously to record the memories of his and his mother's lives, and later, of his life with his wife, Ella. Over the next thirty years he penned hundred of thousands of words of recollections, in English, in his own made-up Blue-eyed English, and occasionally launching into Scandinavian languages. These essays are now deposited in the Grainger Museum in Melbourne, where they could be considered to be the very core of Grainger's personal materials. There is, for instance, his voluminous "Sketches for my book *The Life of My Mother*". There is his first major essay in Blue-eyed English, the "Love-Life of Helen & Paris", which records the courtship of his wife, Ella, and also lays down the principles of his Nordic form of English, with its characteristic avoidance of words of Graeco-Latin origin. From 1933–34 there is the vast "Aldridge-Grainger-Ström Saga", written while on a ship journey from Europe to Australia. And from the later 1930s and early forties there are the chunkily-titled "Thots & Call-to-Mindments", "Thunks" and "Deemths" collections, that precede the final massive collection of "Anecdotes" from which he only signed off in 1954. Secreted in the corners of his autobiographical output are also several short essays about his flagellatory lusts and sexual preferences.

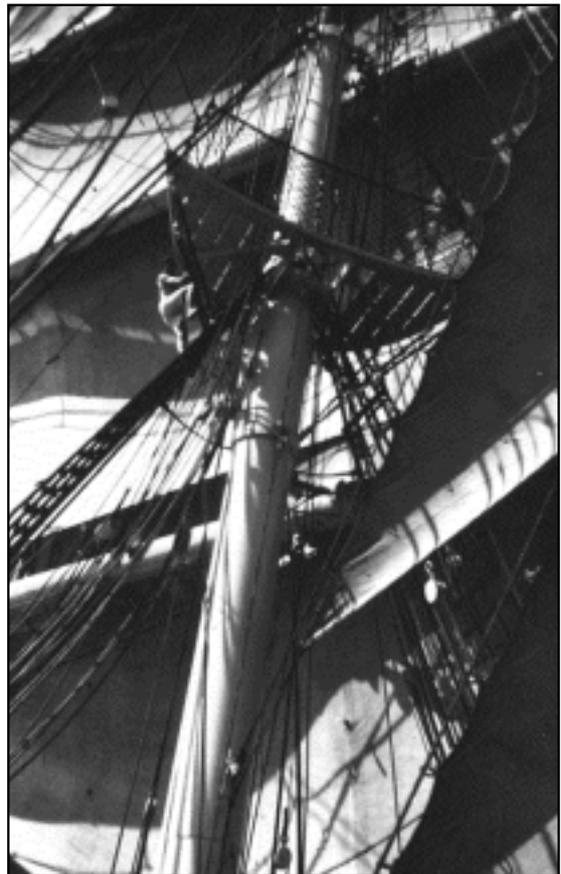
Despite the huge volume and unfettered ambit of these writings, Grainger did not manage to pen a definitive autobiography or family history. He sketched the introduction to *My Wretched Tone-Life* in 1951, but did not proceed further with its tale of lament. During the 1950s he seems to have preferred to tie up his archival and compositional legacies, leaving it to posterity to piece together his rambling, sometimes contradictory accounts of his world and himself.

Sections from twenty-five of Grainger's mostly unpublished autobiographical essays are to be included in a *Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger* volume, which we are editing in collaboration with Mark Carroll. *Self-Portrait* will present a tapestry of Grainger's thoughts about himself, his kin, his passions and his more private thoughts about the art of music. Because of the huge amount of redundancy in Grainger's autobiographical writings, as well as a good number of missing or illegible sections, it is neither particularly useful, nor commercially viable, to produce a consistent, omnibus edition of these many essays. More useful is a thematic approach, with chapters drawing together Grainger's key writings over these thirty years on such personal themes as his mother, his wife, sex, language, race and athleticism, and on such artistic themes as musical aesthetics, composition, orchestration, performance and work analysis.

One fascinating aspect of Grainger's behind-the-scenes musical musings is his ultra-candid views of the music of other composers or traditions. From his essay "Ere-I-forget" (1944–47) comes one

comprehensive tabulation of Grainger's own views on "the tone-worth of . . . tonewrights". Perhaps we might translate this "blue-eyed" phrase as "the musical worth of . . . composers". He worked on this tabulation as part of a draft proposal for an international guild of composers. Grainger proposed that each year a highly experienced composer from each nation would set forth his opinions on the current state of reception and regard of composers or musical traditions. This would, he believed, be a useful guide to a nation's people in developing their habits of listening and music-making. He went on to propose, in his Blue-eyed English, a weighted grid of ten categories by which each composer or tradition might be evaluated:

1. "Soul-life" (mark out of five)
2. "Tied-upness with life" (5)
3. "Many typedness" (5)



Grainger climbing the rigging of the ship "L'Avenir", on which he and Ella travelled between Copenhagen and Australia during 1933. To help pass the time during the weeks aboard, he wrote the "Aldridge-Grainger-Ström Saga", one of his principal autobiographical texts. The Graingers had hoped to take the trip again in a subsequent year, but the ship was sunk, with the loss of all hands, shortly after the Graingers completed their journey.

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4. "Beauty" (5)
5. "Change-shock-fulness" (5)
6. "Self-hood" (mark out of ten)
7. "Out-findfulness" (10)
8. "Steadily color ((local colour))" (5)
9. "Well-sounding-ness" (5)
10. "Tween-realm-some skill-hoard-fulness ((international tradition))" (10)
11. "Puzzle-them gift-ful-ness ((complicatedness))" (10)

In total, then, Grainger placed most emphasis on what we might call musical identity (6), experimentation (7), cross-cultural (or international) characteristics (10) and complexity (11). But he did wonder if he had achieved the right balance and weighting of characteristics: should texted music have a separate rating or replace the nebulous "well-sounding-ness" (perhaps meaning "euphony")? Should "soul-life" (by which he means something like "inner being") have the higher weighting "to give the spokesman greater choice & stretch-litheness"?

Who won and lost in Grainger's weighted grid? Here are the "Top Ten" of Grainger's list of forty composers or traditions:

1. Wagner (70/75)
2. Cesar Franck (69)
- =3. Rarotongan part-song (68)
- =3. William Lawes (68)
5. Debussy (62)
6. J.S. Bach (61)
7. Russian part-songs (folk harmonies) (arr. Eugenia Lineva) 60
8. Cyril Scott (59)
- =9. Negro part-songs (folk harmonies) (arr. Natalie Curtis) (58)
- =9. Grainger (58)

In this naive tabulation, which Grainger confessed was undertaken on the spur of the moment, we see his lifelong regard for traditions other than the western individual art-music tradition, such as the Rarotongan improvised polyphony which he had first encountered over three decades before in New Zealand, and now in the 1940s ranked equal third, alongside the music of English composer William Lawes (1602–45). So bowled over had Grainger been by this Rarotongan improvised "ant-like" polyphony that on 20 January 1909 he had sent a telegram to his mother saying: "NEVER HEARD THE LIKE TREAT EQUAL TO WAGNER I AM GODLY LUCKY LOVE PERCY" (20 January 1909).

Equally strong in Grainger's listing is his highest regard for the music of western canonical figures of Debussy and Bach, as well as the supreme Wagner, although he commented that "if Bach is rated 61, then 70 is too high for Wagner". (However, when we add up the individual scores in Grainger's list we sometimes come to different totals from Grainger's. Sometimes scores are not

even entered for some grid categories.) Why Wagner took pride of place in Grainger's panoply is not altogether apparent from the table, where some of his individual scores are unclear, although it is not hard to find the reason elsewhere in Grainger's other writings. For most of his mature life Grainger craved a "spiritual music", in which the main ingredient was melody. As he explained in the overview to his New York University lectures in 1932–33, melody was weakened where there was too much rhythmic energy or too much attention to harmony. His premier example of such "pure melody" was the opening of the Prelude to Wagner's *Parsifal*. Wagner also exhibited the "large form" of one single inspiration, which was to Grainger much to be preferred to the sectional forms, such as sonata form, that dominated so much Austro-Germanic output.

Looking at the scores for the individual categories we clearly see Grainger's perception that Debussy's music was, for instance, highly individual and inventive, but lacking in complexity. Bach was highly universal (cross-cultural) and complex but less rated on individual or local criteria. Rarotongan music, by contrast, scores highly on most categories, although only gains 2/5 for "change-shock-fulness" (an index of musical contrast) and 3/5 for "many typedness". Runners-up to Grainger's "Top Ten" are, on 57/75, Grieg, "English folksong", and the American composer Arthur Fickenscher (1871–1954), who invented the polytone instrument. On 56 are found Tchaikovsky and "African music (discs)".

If these are Grainger's "Top Ten", then who featured at the other end?

1. Mozart (32)
2. German folksong (34)
- =3. Skryabin (37)
- =3. "Verdi (not late works)" (37)
- =5. Sibelius (38)
- =5. Gounod (38)

Runner-up to Grainger's bottom six was Puccini, on 40/75.

In case Mozart's rating might have been misinterpreted, or even taken as a mistake in arithmetic, Grainger immediately clarified that "32 is *not* too low for Mozart—the heartless tonery that caused the French Realm-crash ((revolution))' as I like to call it". Mozart was part of the First Viennese School of "jazz classics", that—as Grainger described in an essay of 1934—fell victim to a regrettable "dancification" in all forms of art music. By the time of this mid-1940s listing Beethoven had been partly rehabilitated, gaining 45/75 (with low ratings for soul-life, inventiveness, local colour and "well-sounding-ness", but the full 10/10 for identity), although Haydn did not make Grainger's list at

all. For Grainger, this rhythmic nature of much Austro-Germanic music was a sign of its obsession with war, “music in which militaristic fanfares, march-like drum-beating and mass-dragooned rhythms prevail”, as he elaborated in a 1949 essay on the saxophone. In the notes to his “Ere-I-forget” list, then, Grainger was moved to warn: “The shallow thinking of war-fain lands *must not* be echoed in the art-judgements of our war-hating theeds [nations].” Not surprisingly, then, Mozart scored a miserable 1/5 for “soul-life”, 3/10 for “out-findfulness”, and 2/5 for complexity.

Sibelius was another composer against whom Grainger had, although for different reasons, long railed. Sibelius represented the new commercial “middle-class ideal”, with its support of capitalism and consumerism, although he occasionally did recognize Sibelius’s grasp of larger forms and his Scandinavian sense of individualism.

Ever the self-critic, Grainger did include himself in his line-up of composers and traditions although only at the bottom of the “Top Ten” (58/75). What then was his self-assessment scoresheet?

1. Soul-life 4/5
2. Tied-upness with life 5/5
3. Many typedness 3/5
4. Beauty 4/5
5. Change-shock-fulness 3/5
6. Self-hood 8/10
7. Out-findfulness 10/10
8. Steadily color ((local colour)) 4/5
9. Well-sounding-ness 2/5
10. Tween-realm-some skill-hoard-fulness ((international tradition)) 7/10
11. Puzzle-them gift-fulness ((complicatedness)) 8/10

So Grainger comes out as a fair, all-round achiever against his own criteria, with peaks in secondary parameters of inventiveness and extra-musical connection and a trough with “well-sounding-ness”.

In Grainger’s list of forty composers or traditions there are a few surprises. Throughout his life he was a passionate advocate of Delius’s music and proved a great personal support to the composer in his declining years. But Delius emerges on the list with the same score as Beethoven (45/75), and just a notch behind Brahms (46). Delius’s weakest scores are for beauty (1/5) and “self-hood” (2/10), which would certainly not be expected by those familiar with Grainger’s many and eulogistic essays about the composer.

Another surprise is Roger Quilter, whom in public Grainger acknowledged as “the greatest songwriter of our age” (1936), but in this comparative line-up marked at 47/75, with weaknesses in “change-shock-fulness”, “out-findfulness” and “international tradition”. He scored maximally, however, for beauty, “local colour” and “well-soundingness”.

Although Grainger’s “Ere-I-forget” list never became public, he viewed such a list, with supplementary explanation, as being a suitable way of influencing the musical appreciation of the “millions of children [who] are to be taught tone-art in schools & still greater millions led to hear (in tone-shows & over the air) types of tone-art new to their ears”. For him the listening public had settled into a few well-worn and narrow ruts of repertory, while the “half-lettered job-tone-men”—the professional musicians—shared a “mind-fog” over the question of quality in music. It was for the “over-souls” (geniuses) of each generation, such as Grainger himself, to take a leading role in pointing out the truly flexible and innovative in music, and so lead the art of music towards sublimity.

MALCOLM GILLIES & DAVID PEAR

Malcolm Gillies is a deputy vice-chancellor at the Australian National University. David Pear is a visiting research fellow at ANU. The authors acknowledge the collaboration with Mark Carroll and Simon Perry in researching Grainger’s autobiographical writings over the last decade.

Prestigious, Charming, Corrosive and Insidious

Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney’s Conservatorium* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001)

The Conservatorium building in Macquarie Street Sydney “has been an ambiguous endowment”, writes Diane Collins, “at once prestigious, charming, corrosive and insidious”. Something similar could probably be said about most music schools, but it has never been as engagingly portrayed as in Collins’s volume, written to mark the reopening of the Sydney building after major renovations 1998–2001.

From the outset, Collins’s account of the Conservatorium’s origins sets music education in a broad cultural and political context. Housed at the edge of the Botanical Gardens, the Conservatorium seemed designed to represent “an ideal world, where music could be pursued in tranquillity and beauty”, but it inevitably became a “contested territory. . . . where

images of ourselves are acted out, as well as rival views of what constitutes a musician and a music community”. Collins’s characterisation of the Conservatorium’s first director, the superbly gifted Belgian violinist Henri Verbrugghen, and the musical values he brought with him in 1915 gives meaning to her approach; she portrays his departure in 1922, amidst government interference and financial conflict, not only as a disaster for the national musical scene but as characteristic of the decades between the two world wars, when a sizeable number of academics, creative artists and intellectuals left Australia. Her appraisal of the “vigorous Anglification”, which took place under Verbrugghen’s successors Arundel Orchard and Edgar Bainton, is equally vivid. Her

treatment of Sir Bernard Heinze conveys him well, and her account of Eugene Goossens’s sudden departure, humiliated after his arrest at Sydney airport for importing pornographic photographs, embraces all that we now know of that sad and sordid episode. Of the more recent heads, she is candid and precise in her assessment of the limitations of John Hopkins’s tenure, and of the difficulties faced by John Painter, Ron Smart and Sharman Pretty.

Collins’s intention is to treat the Conservatorium not just in its social context but also as a private world, and she finds space to breathe life into many of the Conservatorium’s personalities, from Roland Foster to Isador Goodman, Raymond Hanson to Don Burrows. A host

of famous students pass through the pages, including composers Malcolm Williamson and Martin Wesley-Smith, singers Joan Hammond and Yvonne Kenny, conductors Charles Mackerras and Richard Bonyngé, and soloists Richard Tognetti and Roger Woodward. The result is a rich narrative, which will not only appeal as a memento for the Sydney Con alumni but also be valuable as a commentary on the historical issues which have faced all Australian music schools.

A scholar of history and cultural studies, Collins is a refreshing voice in Australian music-school history. She has re-read many historical documents and drawn her own conclusions, along the way dismissing several of the well-known and frequently retold tales told of Conservatorium history. Apparently Ravel was never an applicant for the first directorship; Engelbert Humperdinck was, though his poor health and (in the midst of the Great War) German nationality augured against him. And Schoenberg, despite what has been suggested, neither applied for a teaching post at Sydney nor was he excluded from one because he was Jewish.

The Conservatorium did indeed grow from stables, as Collins's title suggests. Dating from 1821 and designed by the convict architect Francis Greenway, the Macquarie Street building had originally been commissioned as the stables for Government House. It was used for that purpose for most of the 19th century, and converted for a new State-funded music school in 1914. While the building had

been needlessly extravagant for horses, it was never very satisfactory for musicians. Collins describes the interior in 1916 as "ordered, conservative and domestic", where "musicians learnt in classrooms resembling middle-class living rooms". But the conversion to a music school had been done on the cheap, and by the 1990s, despite extensions, renovations and annexes, it was desperately ill matched to its purpose. Concerts in its main auditorium Verbrugghen Hall were liable to be punctuated by the sound of rain on the roof above or of underground trains in the tunnels below. "The conservatorium's notorious facilities" writes Collins "chiefly provided students with an incentive to study at another institution".

Small wonder that a succession of Conservatorium directors had begged the State government to build them something new or move them elsewhere. Ultimately, the Conservatorium moved only for three years while a refurbishment of the Greenway building took place, and Collins recounts how the NSW State Premier Bob Carr came to preside over this protracted and controversial project which, in the end, cost his government more than \$120 million.

Inarguably, the reopening ceremony on 26 August 2001 was a matchless affair. Premier Carr gave a speech and Berlin virtuoso Wolfram Christ conducted Beethoven's Choral Symphony in the astonishingly transformed Verbrugghen Hall. The capacity audience, its distinguished members including a former

prime minister, several former Conservatorium directors, and the leaders of many of Australia's major cultural institutions, many of whom knew the old structure, could scarcely believe their eyes. The familiar white castellated façade had been preserved, yet behind it striking descending staircases now led to level upon subterranean level of brand new facilities: an opera theatre, a multi-tiered library, lecture theatres, teaching studios and over sixty practice rooms.

Most remarkable were the acoustics: every musical space floating in isolation, its foundations set on springs. Structural sound transference, the incurable disease of even the most carefully soundproofed facility and a terrible plague in the old building, had literally been eliminated. At the same time, remnants of earlier structures from convict times, discovered as the ground below the building was excavated, were displayed where they were unearthed, together with archaeological descriptions. The reborn building juxtaposes both the present musical culture and past physical heritage in an elegant sculptured whole. Unquestionably, the Sydney Conservatorium has become the landmark music school building in the southern hemisphere, and quite possibly the finest of its kind in the world. And in print too—Sydney was almost the last Australian capital to gain a history of its major music school, but in Collins's book it can now boast the finest study of its kind.

WARREN BEBBINGTON

Grainger Journal Issue

Australasian Music Research 5 (2000) "Percy Grainger Issue" edited by Malcolm Gillies and Mark Carroll

It has been nearly twenty years since Frank Callaway edited the last "Grainger" journal, *Studies in Music* 16 in 1982. Largely an introduction to the many musical sides of Percy Grainger, this volume appeared in Grainger's centennial year, a time of much renewed enthusiasm for the man and his music. This was tempered in part by the dearth of scores, recordings and research tools available—Kay Dreyfus's indispensable book of Grainger letters, *The Farthest North of Humanness*, for instance, was three years away from publication. How times have changed since then: John Bird has now revised his pioneering

biography; British independent label Chandos are eighteen volumes into their complete Grainger edition on compact disc; Schott have re-engraved their first Grainger score, his imaginary ballet *The Warriors; Passion*, a major AFI-awarded production based on Grainger's London years has been released; Bardic Edition are in the process of publishing the remaining Grainger manuscripts; and illegal MP3 files of Grainger's music are often traded on the internet using computer programs such as *Napster* and *Gnutella*.

To this ever-expanding list, one can now add the invaluable work undertaken

by Malcolm Gillies and other scholars as part of the Grainger Studies project, of which this "Percy Grainger Issue" of *Australasian Music Research* forms a key part. Whereas earlier parts of the project have tended to concentrate on editing complementary primary source material, such as the volume of letters and the selection of Grainger essays on music, this volume employs current musical and contextual methodologies to place the composer within his most appropriate milieu. In addition, the use of largely non-Grainger scholars has ensured that his often-controversial views on race,

masculinity and sexuality have been explored in detail and not merely ignored as has often happened in the past.

David Pear, drawing on his doctoral research on Grainger and masculinity, tackles several of these thorny issues directly. He contributes two fascinating essays, arguing the composer's attitudes towards race were not only a product of his society and upbringing, but actually coloured his very way of viewing the world, using the writings of the American nordicists as his guide. Walt Whitman, another influential American, may have only directly inspired one of Grainger's compositions—the rarely performed *Marching Song of Democracy* (1916)—but Pear reveals that Whitman's philosophies, combined with his celebration of the outdoors and physical culture, became a model outlook for the “running pianist”. Physicality of a different kind, that of Grainger's piano performance, comes under detailed scrutiny by Eleanor Tan. She uses the composer's editions and duo-art recordings of both Grieg's Concerto in A minor and the *Norwegian Bridal Procession* to illustrate how Grainger in performance eschews articulating a work's formal design in favour of dramatic gestures on stage—an artist who prefers a physical, rather than intellectual response to a given work.

Other essays in this volume examine notable periods in Grainger's artistic career. Anne-Marie Forbes with her work on his London years reports on the background to the “At Home” performances that were to be so crucial in establishing Grainger's credentials and acceptance amongst the upper classes, using the Charles Villiers Stanford correspondence to illustrate the development of key friendships over time. Kathleen Nelson, in her essay on Grainger and the ABC, draws upon the extensive collection of Grainger letters held in the National Archives of Australia. Nelson shows that through such figures as William G. James, Grainger maintained a keen interest in the national broadcaster after 1935, from negotiating potential lecture/recital tours, to providing musical advice and composer advocacy. Nelson also contributes a further study on Grainger and early music, in

particular the origins of his interest in the genre, through to his fruitful work with Arnold Dolmetsch, and Dom Anselm Hughes with the *English Gothic Music* project.

With more Grainger scores becoming available and edited for performance, it is disappointing that the two analytical essays included on Grainger's music by Warren Bourne and Malcolm Gillies are so tantalisingly short. Nonetheless, they both touch on underexplored topics, namely the treatment and harmonic implications of folksong modality in the *Lincolnshire Posy* and the examination of texture as used in *Colonial Song* and *The Warriors*. It needs to be added, however, that Bourne's otherwise fine work would have benefited greatly from actual musical examples in the text, for unfortunately very few casual readers would have access to their own copy of Fennell's critical full-score edition of the *Posy*.

The final word is not on Grainger's music at all, but on the many unpublished autobiographical sketches to be found in the Grainger Museum. Simon Perry, who spent many months transcribing, cataloguing and, where necessary, translating these sketches—which range from a few mere typescript pages to lengthy, handwritten tomes—is in a unique position to comment on Grainger's “documentary obsession” and how it relates to his final projected volume, *My Wretched Tone-Life*. No doubt this is a mere taste of the Grainger Studies project's current work-in-progress on these valuable manuscripts.

Overall, one could not ask for a more varied and interesting collection of research articles, let alone on a single Australian composer. Whilst I would recommend reading the earlier *Studies in Music* volume first (now re-printed through CIRCME) to give an overview of Grainger and his music, there is added depth in this volume of *Australasian Music Research*, making it essential reading for any scholar of Australian music, as well as the many critics who thought that there was not much more to Grainger than a few folksong “friperies” and the odd stock whip.

ALESSANDRO SERVADEI

centre news

AMR6

The Centre is pleased to announce that volume six of the Centre's peer-reviewed journal, *Australasian Music Research*, edited by Dr Kay Dreyfus, will be published in September this year. Contents include the following: “Federation: Music in Service to National Ambition” by Thérèse Radic; “Popular Music, Militarism, Women, and the Early ‘Brass Band’ in Australia” by John Whiteoak; “The Riddle of *FFF*: A Forgotten Australian Musical Comedy” by Frank Van Straten; “Linda Phillips: Composer, Performer, Critic and Adjudicator—A Centenary Retrospective” by Adrian Thomas; “The Semiotic and the Symbolic in Music in Two Sweets-Smearing Scenes” by Linda Kouvaras; an interview, “Doreen Bridges on the History, Education and Future of Music”, by Malcolm Gillies; a study, “*Terra Incognita*, the unknown Australian Harpsichord: A Provisional Listing of Australian Solo Harpsichord Music with Brief Chronological Commentary on Selected Works”, by Christopher Wainwright; and a literature review, “Australian Music Studies, 1998–2000”, by Joel Crotty. The journal will be available for sale from the Centre for \$33 (individuals, including GST) or \$66 (institutions, including GST).

Marshall-Hall Publications

The Advisory Committee of the Marshall-Hall Trust has kindly given the Centre permission to sell limited numbers of surplus copies of its publications. While the Trust distributes copies on a philanthropic level immediately on publication, with the majority of the copies produced going to major Australian and international libraries, the Centre is now able to fill orders from individuals and institutions wishing to purchase copies. Of the *Musica Australis* volumes already published, volumes 2–4 are now available for purchase: songs of Marshall-Hall, part-songs of Fritz Hart and the complete music of Henry Handel Richardson in two parts. *Musica Australis* will be available from the Centre at a cost of \$22 for single volumes (Marshall-Hall and Fritz Hart) and \$22 each for the two-part H.H. Richardson volume (including GST). For further information or to place an order please contact the Centre.

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