Recording of the week: being uncouth at drama school

This week's selection comes from Holly Gilbert, Cataloguer of Digital Multimedia Collections.

Mother and son, Radhika and Omar, talk about Omar's experience of attending a drama course at LAMDA – The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Omar describes the assumptions that he feels people at LAMDA have made about him as a mixed-race East Londoner and they discuss the experiences of some of his fellow students as well as one of the teachers on his course. They emphasise the importance of learning from people who are different to us and not making judgments based on stereotypes. They also discuss the difference in attitudes towards career choices between Omar, who is a second generation immigrant, and Radhika, who moved to England from Sri Lanka when she was 8 years old.

The Listening Project_Radhika and Omar

LIBRARY
HISTORY

This recording is part of *The Listening Project*, an audio archive of conversations recorded by the BBC and archived at the British Library. The full conversation between Radhika and Omar can be found here.

Follow @CollectingSound and @soundarchive for all the latest news.

Linguistics at the Library – Episode 3

PhD placement students, Andrew Booth & Rowan Campbell, write:

Is the UK in danger of losing its wide variety of local accents? In the third episode of Linguistics at the Library, Andrew and Rowan investigate why we might tone down our accent when talking to people from different areas, and whether the media is making all British accents sound the same.

This week's 'What's the feature?' used a clip from:

Millennium Memory Bank Recording in Quorn, Leicestershire. BBC, UK, rec. 1999 [digital audio file]. British Library, C900/09097. Available: https://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/Millenium-memory-bank/021M-C0900X0909 7X-2100V1

Studies mentioned:

Eckert, Penelope. 2003. Elephants in the room. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7(3): pp. 392-397. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9481.00231/full

Evans, Bronwen G. and Iverson, Paul. 2007. Plasticity in vowel perception and production: a study of accent change in young adults. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 121(6): pp. 3814-26. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17552729

Milroy, Lesley. 2007. Off the shelf or under the counter? On the social dynamics of sound changes. In Christopher M. Cain and Geoffrey Russom (editors): *Managing Chaos: Strategies for Identifying Change in English*, pp. 149-172

Gill, W. W. (1934). *Manx dialect: words and phrases* (No. 4). Arrowsmith http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/fulltext/md1933/index.htm

Linguistics at the Library Episode 3

Percy Grainger’s collection of ethnographic wax cylinders

*The British Library is pleased to make available online around 350 English folk songs recorded by composer Percy Grainger in different regions of England between 1906 and 1909. Thanks to the generous support of the National Folk Music Fund, these sound recordings have been catalogued and indexed by librarian, researcher and folklorist Steve Roud, author of Folk Song in England (Faber & Faber, 2017). Roud has also married them up with Grainger's transcriptions of the songs, where these exist, on the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website, thanks to their digitisation of the Percy Grainger Manuscript Collection. Links have also been included on the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website to corresponding sound recordings featured on British Library Sounds. Listeners are able to hear the songs whilst following Grainger’s unique transcriptions of recordings by singers such as Joseph Taylor, Joseph Leaning, George Gouldthorpe, Charles Rosher, William Fishlock, Tom Roberts, Dean Robinson, and many more. All recordings have been catalogued to include Roud numbers (this number refers to songs listed in the online databases **Folk Song Index** and **Broadside Index**), Grainger’s Melody numbers, and the numerical references to the discs and wax cylinders these sound recordings existed on previously.*

Percy Aldridge Grainger, composing 'Lincolnshire Posy' at reed organ, 1937 (British Library reference: MS Mus. 1771/1/PR1301). Reproduced by kind permission of the Estate of George Percy Grainger.

When the Gramophone Company released a small portion of Grainger’s recordings of English traditional folk songs on a commercial 78 rpm record in 1908, Grainger pointed out in the liner notes that “These records are not folksongs sung at second hand.” Perhaps he wanted us listeners to know that what we would hear on record was not only the voice of a folk singer, Joseph Taylor of Saxby-All-Saints, North Lincolnshire, but also the echoes of time: “the very men who have passed such songs down the centuries to us.” Grainger insisted on this fidelity whilst also acknowledging that folk singers were individual creators, capable of creatively impressing their personality on their versions of inherited tradition. He was able to capture and analyse the individuality of folk singers in England thanks to the novel phonograph technology and his musical transcriptions of these sound recordings, which were meticulously detailed.

To celebrate the publication of these unique sound recordings and their interlinking with Grainger’s manuscripts, we asked Steve Roud to write a short article exploring the importance of these resources. In the following piece he also explores Grainger’s position in the English folk collecting scene as well as the nature of his collaboration, in the making of these sound recordings, with women such as Lady Winefrede Cary-Elwes or Miss Eliza Wedgwood.

In correspondence files held at the Music Division of the Library of Congress, kindly made available to the project by Judith Gray from the The American Folklife Center, we find a letter from Grainger, from October 26, 1939, in which he says,

"I have the Edison Bell phonograph [cylinder machine] on which these records were made and can play them on this machine. But there is a good deal of scratch (partly mould?) on these old records. In copying them, can you get rid of part of this scratch by eliminating (filtering out) certain frequencies? If your Music Division has facilities for making such copies from wax cylinders I would be happy to let your Division keep copies of all my folksong phonograph records if you would provide me with copies in return. I could bring the phonograph (Edison Bell) and the wax cylinders to Washington (perhaps at the time I play with the National Symphony Orchestra in March?) or wherever needful."

The digital copies of Grainger's sound recordings now publicly available via British Library Sounds, were digitised from one of three existing sets of lacquer disc dubs of the contents of the original wax cylinders, made at the Library of Congress c. 1940. Whilst we could consider these digital versions 'second hand sounds' it's also true that the different generations of carriers condensed into them have rendered unique the texture of the folksingers' voices who once 'sang so sweetly' to Grainger and his collaborators.

This project was realised thanks to the collaborative effort of many people in the sound archive and music department at the British Library; Steve Roud and Andrew Pace who catalogued and uploaded the sound recordings to the British Library's catalogue and Sounds website; Judith Gray at the Library of Congress for making the Grainger correspondence accessible; Barry Ould of The International Percy Grainger Society in White Plains, NY, for granting us permission to use it; John Bird for contextualising these sound recordings within Grainger's biography.

Facsimile of HMV liner notes included in Leader release, 1972 (British Library reference: 1LP0157546)

Percy Grainger and English Folk Song by Steve Roud

Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882-1961) was born, as George Percy Grainger, in Victoria, Australia, and first came to Europe to study music in Frankfurt in 1895. He settled in Britain in 1901, left for the USA in 1914, and lived there until his death, having taken American citizenship in 1918. In his time he was an extremely popular concert pianist, but is now chiefly remembered as the composer of over 400 classical pieces, many of which are still regularly played in the concert repertoire.

His 13-year period of residence in Britain coincided with the brief golden age of folk song collecting, which was the culmination of an interest in traditional music which had been building steadily during the late Victorian period. The novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, and the diarist Revd Francis

Kilvert, for example, were both interested in seeking out songs in 1870, and by 1900, Sabine Baring-Gould, Lucy Broadwood, Frank Kidson, Marianne Mason, and W.A. Barrett had all published books of songs collected from ordinary people up and down the country. The Folk-Song Society (now subsumed in the English Folk Dance & Song Society) had been formed in 1899 to provide these enthusiasts with a network of contacts, and to further the cause of folk song collection, publication, and study.

It is not surprising that an up-and-coming young musician/composer like Grainger would catch the 'folk song bug', as the subject was very much in the air.

It was a lecture on folk song by Lucy Broadwood to the Royal Musical Association in March 1905 which prompted Grainger's active involvement, and he accompanied her, and Frank Kidson, to the Musical Competition Festival, at Brigg, in Lincolnshire, which included a section devoted to Folk Song at which several local singers had been persuaded to perform. Grainger returned to Lincolnshire in July the following year to begin his fieldwork in earnest, and noted songs by hand, and was back again in 1907, armed with an Edison phonograph, the latest in sound technology.

Over the next three years, Grainger spent a total of 52 days in the field, and collected over 400 songs. About two-thirds of these were gathered in Lincolnshire, but he also made important forays into Gloucestershire, and a few other places. It is the wax cylinders made at this time which are now made freely available on the British Library's Sounds website. Grainger was not the only collector to experiment with phonograph recording, but he quickly became convinced of its vital importance in the field of song gathering, and was its most vocal advocate, and he used it more than all the other English collectors put together.

Wax cylinders were not designed for long-term survival, so we are particularly fortunate that the originals survived long enough to be copied onto a more permanent format in 1940, and to still be available in the present day. Apart from a relatively small number of surviving cylinders recorded by other collectors – including Cecil Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Lucy Broadwood, amongst others, whose recordings also appear on British Library Sounds – Grainger's recordings provide our only opportunity to hear what traditional singers from the Edwardian period really sounded like. Only one other collector made systematic sound-recordings in England before the Second World War; the American academic James Madison Carpenter, who collected in Britain between 1929 and 1935. His recordings are housed in the Library of Congress, and will very soon be available online through the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website. We had to wait until after 1950, and the invention of the portable tape-recorder, for sound-recording to become the normal way of collecting folk songs.

What was really ground-breaking about Percy Grainger's approach was that he quickly realised that it was not just the songs and tunes which were remarkable and worth preserving, but also the highly skilled and creative way in which traditional singers performed a song. He became fascinated with the minute details of performance and set out to devise a way of representing the

nuances of pitch, rhythm, accent and so on, which a skilled singer brought to each rendition of a song. This approach was only made possible by the availability of *recorded sound* – the ability to play an otherwise ephemeral performance over and over again, and even to slow it down to really understand what the naked ear could only fleetingly register. But neither Grainger nor the others who experimented with the new technology saw the phonograph cylinders as a way to preserve the singers' voices for posterity, as we would today. In those early days, the recordings were regarded primarily as an aid to analysis and transcription, and it was still the paper copies of the tune and words which mattered.

His attempts to replicate on paper what he heard on the cylinder were too complex for any but the most experienced musician to understand. Again, we are fortunate that his written material has survived. He used a hectograph (sometimes spelled hektograph) – a primitive but effective way of duplicating pages – which enabled him to make several exact copies of his transcriptions. One set of these transcriptions is in the British Library, and another in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, which be seen on their website.

In 1908, he persuaded the Gramophone Company to bring one of his favourite Lincolnshire singers, Joseph Taylor, into their studio, and nine of his songs were issued commercially – again a first in our field, and decades before any other attempt to issue real traditional singing on record for public consumption.

His Master's Voice,
6-2238 (British Library reference: 9CS0028758)

Grainger failed to persuade other folk song collectors to follow him in his quest for more detailed investigation of singers' performance, and nor did his radical re-thinking of the technical aspects of the music find favour with others in the field. He did no more collecting in Britain after 1909, and within five years he had left for America. But the heyday of folk song collecting in England was over anyway, and even if he had stayed it is unlikely he would have done much more fieldwork here.

Grainger published very little on folk song, although he continued to use the tunes in his compositions throughout his life. The 1908 volume of the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* was dedicated to his work, which included two articles by him, 'Collecting with the Phonograph' and 'The Impress of Personality in Traditional Singing', along with his transcriptions of 26 songs. He also contributed an article to the *Musical Quarterly* in 1915, also listed in the bibliography at the end of this article. These tell us something of his thoughts on the subject, and along with his manuscripts, published letters, and several general biographies, we can get a pretty good idea of what made him tick. But in the folk song research world he remains a controversial figure and there is still much more to be learnt and said.

Without wanting to detract from the achievement of the great collectors of the Edwardian era, it is only fair to say that they often had significant help from other folk song enthusiasts, often women, whose contribution often

remains unacknowledged and thus forgotten. All collectors faced similar problems if they were moving outside their own immediate circle and locality. How to find singers at a distance was a particularly knotty problem, and they were always concerned to arrange things to make the most efficient use of their limited time and resources. They needed someone on the ground who could find singers, organise trips, and arrange itineraries. These collaborators often provided a base of operations and a place to stay, and also wrote down the words while the visiting collector noted the tune. But most importantly, they had to be someone that the singers would trust and be comfortable with, even if they were normally shy of singing in front of strangers.

Grainger's reliance on a not-very-portable, fragile and temperamental phonograph, which even needed a certain ambient temperature to ensure that the wax remained at the right consistency, meant that he required a highly static and controlled environment in which to operate. Not for him the bicycling round the country lanes collecting from road-workers and farm labourers met on the way, like Cecil Sharp did, or popping into cottages or rowdy pub sessions on the off-chance.

In Lincolnshire, it was Lady Winefrede Cary-Elwes who provided the necessary local contacts and gave him a place to stay, and he was invited to Gloucestershire by Lady Elcho of Stanway. But the most important figure in Gloucestershire was Lady Elcho's friend and neighbour, Miss Eliza Wedgwood (1859-1947), the last surviving granddaughter of the famous eighteenth-century master potter Josiah Wedgwood. For much of her long life, Miss Wedgwood lived at Charity Farm, Stanton, and was long remembered for her extremely active participation in village affairs and local philanthropy. She also had a wide circle of friends which included the painter John Singer Sargent and his sister Emily, the novelists James Barrie and H.G. Wells, the ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour (who leant his car for one of the collecting trips), members of the Guild of Handicraft, and many others involved in the cultural and artistic life of the region.

Grainger wrote in a letter (published in Kay Dreyfus' volume of his correspondence):

"Miss Wedgwood who prepared the folk song ground for me was quite splendid. I am so certain of her gift for collecting that I hope to get her to collect in other places as well. Everything was faultlessly prepared for me. I phonographed without interruption all the days through." (9 Apr 1908)

And it is clear from the evidence of the cylinder recordings themselves that Miss Wedgwood's role was not simply administrative, because her voice is clearly heard telling the singers when to start, and it is clear she was actually operating the machine. Eliza also helped Cecil Sharp with contacts and local knowledge. For more on Eliza Wedgwood, see the article by Paul Burgess listed in the bibliography.

Leader Records, LEA 4050 (British Library reference: 1LP0157546)

A note on the numbering of the Grainger recordings

Several numbering systems exist within the Grainger collection, and they present quite a challenge to the cataloguer, and the user. The three main sequences are **Cylinder number**, **Disc number**, and **Melody number**, which are explained below. It is also helpful to distinguish **Performances** from **Parts.**

Grainger started collecting with pencil and paper, but in 1906 he acquired the phonograph which recorded onto wax cylinders, and from then on this was his preferred method of noting songs. Armed with the phonograph, he re-visited some of his early singers, and recorded them singing the same songs, and he subsequently transcribed these cylinder performances onto paper. He also made multiple recordings of some songs, so that the same song from any particular singer can appear more than once – on paper and on more than one cylinder. He documented these multiple recordings as '1st **performance'**, '2nd performance', and so on.

Each **cylinder** has a number (1 – 216). Phonograph cylinders last a little over two minutes, so one cylinder can include several short songs (e.g. one verse from each), or the same short song sung more than once, or, most commonly, half of a longer song, with the rest of it continued, if we are lucky, on the next cylinder. The sections of these songs split onto different cylinders were designated '**part** 1', 'part 2', etc. These numbers can be combined with the repeated renditions already described, so that we can get '1st performance, part 1', '2nd performance, part 1', and so on.

In 1940, the surviving cylinders were copied onto lacquer **discs** at the Library of Congress, and it is copies of these discs which were digitised to create the sound files offered on British Library Sounds. These discs also have numbers, and two **sides**, designated A and B. They can take up to five minutes of sound on each side, so the most common scenario here is for two cylinders to be dubbed onto each disc side. Occasionally the transfer from cylinder to disc did not go well, or, even more infrequently, the engineer made a mistake, so some tracks appear twice on the discs – usually with one track labelled 'poor copy' or 'incomplete', and the other 'good copy' or 'complete'. We have not included these substandard transfers online when a better one exists.

When Grainger organised his collection, he assigned numbers to the songs. He gave the same number to all versions of a song from a particular singer, so that, for example, all versions of 'Brigg Fair' by Joseph Taylor are assigned the number 200. These are usually referred to as '**Melody'** numbers, and are included in our catalogue, for reference. Unfortunately, they are not always as helpful as they might be. Grainger started re-organising, but never finished and some items were re-numbered, and others were left un-numbered.

Image of disc label (British Library reference: 1LL0010255)

The Library of Congress disc labels, shown above and included on British Library Sounds, show the disc and side number. They typically also show the

titles of the songs, the name of the performer, and the year of recording, plus the relevant cylinder numbers, and Grainger's melody numbers. The disc series starts at 12, because numbers 1-11 are assigned to his Danish recordings. Also included are dubs of the 78rpm records of Joseph Taylor's singing issued by the Gramophone Company in 1908.

The best way to see a comprehensive listing of the whole English collection, organised by Grainger's Melody number, is to consult Jane O'Brien's published catalogue, *Grainger English Folk Song Collection* (University of Western Australia Music Dept., 1985).

Roud numbers

One more set of numbers appears in our catalogue entries, the 'Roud number'. This number refers to songs as listed in the online databases **Folk Song Index** and **Broadside Index** (both available on www.vwml.org). Because folk songs can appear in many places (books, records, manuscripts, and so on), and because the same song can appear under a multitude of different titles, the Roud numbers are designed to help researchers find 'other versions' of a song. So, for example, all the versions of the song variously called 'The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies', 'The Gipsy Laddie', 'Gypsy Davy', 'Seven Little Gipsies' (and more than 50 other titles and spellings), are assigned the number Roud 1. By searching for 'Roud 1' in the Folk Song Index, the researcher can find all the available versions, including those now published on the British Library Sounds website.

Bibliography –

There has been a great deal written about Percy Grainger's life and works, but the following references concentrate solely on his folk song collecting in England. For the Grainger items included on the Vaughan Williams Memorial (VWML) website, see: https://www.vwml.org/archives-catalogue/PG

By Grainger himself –

'Collecting with the phonograph' and 'The Impress of personality in traditional music', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 3 (1908) pp.163-169.

'The Impress of personality in unwritten music', *Musical Quarterly* 1:3 (Jul 1915) pp.416-435.

By others –

C.J. Bearman, 'Percy Grainger, the Phonograph, and the Folk Song Society', *Music & Letters* 84:3 (2003) pp.434-455.

John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (Rev. edn., Oxford Univ. Press, 1999).

John Blacking, *A Commonsense view of all music. Reflections on Percy Grainger's contribution to ethnomusicology and music education* (Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Gwilym Davies, 'Percy Grainger's Folk Music Research in Gloucestershire,

Worcestershire, and Warwickshire 1907-1909', *Folk Music Journal* 6:3 (1992) pp.339-358.

Paul Burgess, 'Eliza Wedgwood and folk song collecting in Gloucestershire', *in* David Atkinson & Steve Roud (Eds.), *Proceedings of the English Folk Dance & Song Society folk song conference 2013* (Camsco Music, 2015) pp.22-34.

Kay Dreyfus (Ed.), *The Farthest north of humanness: The Letters of Percy Grainger 1901-1914* (Macmillan, 1985).

Graham Freeman, *Percy Grainger: Sketch of a new aesthetic of folk music* (unpub. PhD thesis, Dept. of Music, University of Toronto, 2008).

Graham Freeman, 'It wants all the creases ironing out: Percy Grainger, the Folk Song Society, and the ideology of the archive', *Music & Letters* 92:3 (2011) pp.410-436.

Note: Percy Grainger's legacy is scattered across the world in various repositories such as the Grainger Museum (Melbourne, Australia); The Library of Congress (Washington D.C., U.S.A.); The Grainger House / International Percy Grainger Society (White Plains, NY, U.S.A.); The UK Grainger Society (Huntly, Aberdeenshire, Scotland); the Royal Danish Library (Det Kgl. Bibliotek, Copenhagen, Denmark) and the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh, Scotland). Aside from Grainger's unpublished sound recordings, the British Library also holds manuscript scores of Grainger's original compositions and arrangements (Add MS 50867-50887 and Add MS 50823), and a collection of concert programmes relating to performances of his music (MS Mus. 1812). A collection of Grainger's hectographs is now also available at MS Mus. 1772.

Recording of the week: Mike Leigh

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings. Film-maker Mike Leigh in conversation with novelist William Boyd, 22 March 1991, at the ICA, London, around the time of the release of Life is Sweet, Leigh's critically acclaimed comedy-drama about the trials of an ordinary…

Recording of the Week: The Listening

Project Symphony

Paul Wilson, Curator Radio Broadcast writes:

This week's selection celebrates World Radio Day 2018 (13th February) and is an example of the art of radio at its best: blending creativity with actuality to illuminate aspects of our life and times and, in this instance, one of the moral dilemmas of our day. It's an excerpt from the *Listening Project Symphony*, a beautiful composition by Gary Carpenter for the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, first broadcast live from Manchester in December 2012. The piece incorporates extracts from some of the intimate and often surprising conversations which have emerged from The Listening Project, a collaboration between the BBC and the British Library in which family members or friends are invited to share their stories, private thoughts and feelings with an unseen radio audience.

The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra at Salford Quays, 2012. Photo courtesy of the BBC

In this extract we briefly hear voices from three separate conversations, each poignant or moving in its own way even in this edited form. The third – part of a conversation between a young British Muslim woman of Indian/Pakistani descent and her India-born mother – will hold a particular resonance for some. The daughter begins by gauging her mother's response to a hypothetical question about marriage: how would you feel if I were to marry a man of a different religion? She then takes the hypothetical situation a step further – how would you feel if my partner were another woman?

The Listening Project Symphony (excerpt)

The complete *Listening Project Symphony* can be heard on the BBC iPlayer here and the Listening Project's BBC homepage is here. The complete collection of unedited Listening Project conversations can be explored at the British Library's Sounds website.