

Introduction

Percy Grainger's Cosmopolitan Imagination

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In the aftermath of a controversial presidential election in the United States, the Brexit decision in the United Kingdom, and the spread of political instability across Europe, the role of cosmopolitanism in global politics has faced new scrutiny. In this context, the value of international partnerships in the twenty-first century, including NATO, the European Union and even the United Nations has been contested. Ross Douthat's editorial in *The New York Times*, 'The Myth of Cosmopolitanism', speaks to the ambient fear that continues to afflict many countries. In it, he declares, 'From now on the great political battles will be fought between nationalists and internationalists, nativists and globalists. From now on the loyalties that matter will be narrowly tribal – Make America Great Again, *this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England* – or multicultural and cosmopolitan'.¹ The problem, he states, is that 'people who consider themselves "cosmopolitan" in today's West ... are part of a meritocratic order that transforms difference into similarity, by plucking the best and brightest from everywhere and homogenizing them into the particular species that we call "global citizens"'. Daniel Drezner's rejoinder, 'The Truth of Cosmopolitanism' contests Douthat's assertions, claiming his observations to be a 'perfect cocktail consisting of one part insight, one part self-loathing and one part flagrant error'.² According to Drezner, the worthy insight is that widespread anxieties do, indeed, divide our contemporary societies. However, the error lies with the assumption that the 'nativist/ cosmopolitan' rift is the primary duality that plagues the West. A myriad of other factors, Drezner argues, are also responsible for creating socio-political fissures, including age, race and gender.

But these concerns are not unique to our own time. This debate could easily have occurred a hundred years ago. In fact, it did. During a similar age of anxiety at the end of the long nineteenth century, the American critic and composer Daniel Gregory Mason (1873–1953) recorded in 1918:

Whether we like it or not, we have to take our age and our country as they are; they are an age of rapidly accelerating intercommunication of all peoples and a country

¹ Ross Douthat, 'The Myth of Cosmopolitanism', *The New York Times*, 2 July 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/opinion/sunday/the-myth-of-cosmopolitanism.html.

² Daniel W. Drezner, 'The Truth of Cosmopolitanism', *The Washington Post*, July 5, 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/07/05/the-truth-of-cosmopolitanism/?utm_term=.2bcd92c2e1fd.

in which the internationalism that thus slowly results is being hastened by actual admixture on a heretofore unprecedented scale. Such a condition doubtless has its bad as well as its good aspects; but if those who bemoan our 'featureless cosmopolitanism' and advocate an impossible parochialism as the only remedy would try rather to see how a wider outlook and a larger sympathy may deepen our art and make it more truly human by laying less stress on local, national, or even racial types, and more on the untrammelled expression of the greatest possible variety of individuals, music would fare better. 'National literature': wrote Goethe to Eckerman[n] in 1827, 'the term has no longer much meaning to-day; the time for universal literature is come, and each ought to work to hasten its advent'.³

Mason may have been unaware of the paradox of evoking Goethe in this context. However, his acknowledgement of the 'good' and 'bad' aspects of cosmopolitanism, his pushback against attacks levied at cosmopolitan artists, and his championing of a 'universal' discourse are hallmarks of Mason's critical stance in particular and of early twentieth-century tensions in general. At the same time, the pressures that he exposes are uncannily similar to the present 'us versus them' and 'nationalist versus internationalist' debates that Douthat and Drezner lay bare.

Caught between the various imperatives to which Mason attests was the career of Percy Grainger (1882–1961), who similarly argued for the role of modern and universal impulses in music in an article of 1916.⁴ In it, he extolls the virtue of modernism, builds a theory of universalism in music based, in part, on the writings of Walt Whitman, and celebrates the creativeness of Anglo-Saxon, American and Nordic composers; and he reveals the various overlapping identities that influenced his life and career. Indeed, each of Grainger's self-imposed monikers – modernist, universalist, racialist, cosmopolitan – would require its own extensive line of inquiry in order to evaluate the objectives and outcomes of his ambitious agenda. How, then, are we to study and compartmentalize the case of Grainger?

Further complicating the matter are many contradictions and peculiarities that plagued Grainger's career. From his reliance on Icelandic sagas to craft a style of modernism to his celebration of individualism as the foundation for universalism,⁵ Grainger's appetite for musical material was as large as it was limited. This overarching paradox has prompted some to dismiss his identification as a cosmopolitan artist as just another of his fanciful ideas. Notwithstanding these inconsistencies, anyone attempting to contextualize his career is faced with the obstacles that were a source of anxiety for Grainger himself: the problems afforded by circumstance and choice. His lifespan ensured that much of career evolved in the shadows of the nineteenth century, exemplified by his zeal for the writings of Walt Whitman and Rudyard Kipling as well as his interest in folk music. At the same time, his penchant for experimental procedures made him a proponent of

³ Daniel Gregory Mason, 'Folk-Song and American Music (A Plea for the Unpopular Point of View)', *The Musical Quarterly* 4/3 (1918), 332. See also my discussion of Mason's article in this issue.

⁴ Grainger, 'Modern and Universal Impulses in Music', reprinted in *Grainger on Music*, ed. Malcolm Gillies and Bruce Clunies Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 77–83.

⁵ See 'The Value of Icelandic to an Anglo-Saxon', 121–130, and 'Grieg: Nationalist and Cosmopolitan', 318–337, in *Grainger on Music*. Grainger also authored several essays during this period in which he uplifted the work of specific composers for their ability to forge a connection between the individual and the universal, including Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Natalie Curtis, Edvard Grieg, and others.

twentieth-century aesthetics. Thus, given the 'in-betweeness' of his career, what makes Grainger a worthy subject of our attention in the twenty-first century?

Answers to both of these questions can be found by unmasking his enduring relationship with cosmopolitanism; but isolating the utility of this concept has been no easy task for scholars. For instance, in their introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka describe a typology consisting of six categories: a socio-cultural condition; a philosophy/worldview; a political project towards building transnational institutions; a political project for recognizing multiple identities; an attitudinal orientation; and a mode of practice.⁶ The research by the many contributors to this volume contributes to the growing literature on cosmopolitanism in sociology, comparative literature and related disciplines. In the realm of musicology, scholars have increasingly used these points of entry to expand our understanding of the many functions that cosmopolitanism has played while laying the groundwork for future research. For instance, in a recent issue of the *Musical Quarterly*, Sarah Collins, Dana Gooley, Daniel Grimley and Derek Scott offer new ways of conceptualizing cosmopolitanism and the problems afforded by this condition.⁷

But if we are to understand where cosmopolitanism is going, we must continue to develop a deeper understanding of where it has been. This makes the study of Grainger particularly timely. Both now and in the past, the particular title of 'cosmopolitan' has been a vexing source of power and paradox for Grainger. On one hand, he has long been recognized for maintaining a 'democratic' approach to composing, collecting various folk musics from across the globe, and strategically crafting a transatlantic career that embraced modernist trends. Charles W. Perry, for instance, was among the first critics to declare Grainger's interest in subjects past and present 'complimentary halves of one thought' by endowing his evolving concept of cosmopolitanism with the power to synthesize these ideas.⁸ On the other hand, the often-incongruous list of curiosities that he pursued has complicated the emergence of a systematic analysis along disciplinary lines. For this reason, the most recent comprehensive study, *Grainger the Modernist*, has contributed to Grainger's resilience as a path breaking though controversial subject.⁹ The contributors to this volume expose the more experimental side of Grainger's artistic personality, one that absorbed a spacious capacity for harmonic innovation, stylistic ambivalence and a yearning for what he termed 'free music'.

Furthermore, cosmopolitanism has long been viewed as a concept chiefly concerned with geographical positioning, one that achieves agency by displacement

⁶ Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka, eds, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁷ See especially, Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism: Problems and Possibilities', *The Musical Quarterly* 99/2 (2016), 139–65. Their review of recent literature on cosmopolitanism is replete and requires no further repetition in this current issue. Of particular note also is Daniel Grimley's article, 'Vers un cosmopolitisme nordique: Space, Place, and the Case of Sibelius's "Nordic Orientalism"', 230–53. His analysis of the 'darker side' of cosmopolitanism is also applicable to Grainger's career as it contributes to the frequently under-studied consequences of patterns of reception.

⁸ Charles W. Hughes, 'Percy Grainger, Cosmopolitan Composer', *The Musical Quarterly* 23/2 (1937), 136. See also the discussions of this article by Malcolm Gillies and Peter Tregear in this issue.

⁹ Suzanne Robinson and Kay Dreyfus, eds, *Grainger the Modernist* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

from a particular longitudinal/latitudinal standing.¹⁰ Yet the very bifocality of Grainger's life and works is an important reminder that cosmopolitanism also occupies a temporal dimension. Therefore, any conceptualization is subject to both the corrosive and additive properties of time. For this reason, each of the four articles in this special issue focuses on events that chiefly transpired between 1895 and 1914, or resulted from events that occurred during this period. In this way, we seek to illustrate how the experience of being in a specific place *and time* contributed to the evolution of Grainger's cosmopolitan imagination. Because Grainger was profoundly influenced by nineteenth-century idealism, Anne-Marie Forbes examines the causal connection between his interest in the writings of American transcendentalists (such as Emerson and Whitman) and his interests in folk-song collecting that first began around 1905. While many scholars have deduced that such widespread attention to folk music is an endorsement of national affiliation, Forbes argues that, for Grainger, it was key to unlocking a wider, more universal aesthetic in music. Her article thereby sheds light on Grainger's belief that a cosmopolitan imagination could reach the masses as effectually as any national approach by ironically looking to the past to forge a musical language of the future.

Conversely, Peter Tregear's contribution reminds us that Grainger's oeuvre did not always lend itself to the 'positive' goal of universalism. As a figure whose professional career flourished at height of the 'age of nationalism', the often-unresolved tensions between locality and internationality persisted alongside his modernist ambitions. Tregear illustrates how detachment from national moors without a satisfying attachment to other modes of belonging left Grainger with a sense of 'bitterness' and 'resentment' towards the end of his career, which was expressed through recurring topics of suffering, loss and alienation in his music. Tregear's conclusions peel back the layers on the nativist/cosmopolitan debate that is synonymous with modernity itself. For this reason, the agony Grainger's music addresses might be interpreted as his protest against the rise of a 'featureless cosmopolitanism'. But it also demonstrates the composer's ability to exploit these tensions and unlock new expressive pathways. Indeed, any ideology faces the requisite challenge of finding an appropriate binding agent between part and whole, individual and society. This is why Grainger initially turned to folk music in the first decade of the twentieth century even as he transformed the nature of the essentialist values he derived from it by cosmopolitanizing these emblems of 'national propriety'.¹¹

As if fighting back against the same claims of parochialism that Daniel Gregory Mason eschewed, Malcolm Gillies's article sheds light on another binding agent in Grainger's career: his American identity. While his physical displacement from Australia to England and then to the United States may have served as proof of his cosmopolitan status in the eyes of many critics, geographic displacement does not automatically endow one with international sympathies. Gillies therefore asks, 'How American was he?' In doing so, he demonstrates the 'rooted' nature of Grainger's American allegiances, including the many empirical factors that

¹⁰ See Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹¹ For a discussion of similar case studies, see Daniel S. Malachuk, 'Nationalist Cosmopolitics in the Nineteenth Century' in *Cosmopolitics and the Emergence of a Future*, ed. Diane Morgan and Gary Banham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 139–62. See also the discussion of this article in Collins and Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism', 139–65, wherein they elucidate the problem of finding a binding agent that I allude to here.

shaped his musical style. In keeping with the findings of Forbes and Tregear, Gillies's contribution supports the notion that Grainger's early career was, as Delanty has noted, a 'critical moment in which changes to self-understanding occur as a result of global challenges'.¹² This vantage point, which problematizes the relationship between self and Other, places nationalism and cosmopolitanism not at opposite ends of a political spectrum, but as co-mingling partners in an ongoing process of negotiating identities. Gillies's article also reminds us that the discursive space created by his experience as a double expatriate was also subject to the corrosive forces of his time. Consequently, it contributed to the erosion of the humanistic side of Grainger's cosmopolitan imagination when race became the binding agent for a more exclusive set of imperatives.¹³ This may lead us to question, 'How cosmopolitan was he?'

I take up this issue when investigating another aspect of Grainger's American experience by offering an intertextual analysis of his music alongside that of his contemporary, Edward MacDowell. Though seldom acknowledged in existing literature, Grainger admired MacDowell for his kindred interest in Nordic culture and for his goal of creating an American style that did not cater to the parochial concerns. I argue that viewing their lives and works in counterpoint with each other reveals a similar stance towards cosmopolitanism that was fuelled by their search for hybridity. On one level, hybridity represented a solution for tempering romantic nationalism with broader concerns, by serving as a strategy of mediating identities and negotiating power. On another level, it represented a practical approach to compositional style.¹⁴ I illustrate how the temporal dimension of cosmopolitanism conditioned their compositional procedures by offering a synchronic comparison between these figures while situating their efforts within a diachronic trajectory stemming from the work of Carl Maria von Weber. Yet, as Andy Fry has observed, the history of the term hybridity is fraught with a complex history of both positive and negative connotations.¹⁵ Accordingly, because MacDowell and Grainger were separated by a generation, cosmopolitan became for the latter a veil for a philosophy of exclusion animated in part the rise of eugenics in the 1920s.¹⁶

¹² Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

¹³ While this period of Grainger's thinking is beyond the scope of this issue, see also Malcolm Gillies and David Pear, 'Percy Grainger and American Nordicism' in *Western Music and Race*, ed. Julie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 115–24.

¹⁴ For an overview of Grainger's significant departure from national-Romantic agendas when it comes to the handling of English folk-song, see 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), 410–36.

¹⁵ Andy Fry, 'Rethinking the *Revue Nègre*: Black Musical Theatre in Inter-war Paris' in *Western Music and Race*, 258–275.

¹⁶ This process represented an inversion of many nationalist agendas by which certain ethnic 'minorities' were repressed. Instead, Grainger's efforts throughout the latter part of the twentieth century became focused on freeing those (Nordic) cultures that resided outside the grasp of the hegemonic powers and reviving their relevance on the world stage – a practice common to certain strains of eugenics. Though this chapter of Grainger's career is beyond the immediate scope of this issue, see Alison Bashford, 'Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Eugenics', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 154–72. For an applicable discussion of the role of eugenics in shaping modernism, see Philippa Levine's article in the same volume, 'Anthropology, Colonialism, and Eugenics', 43–61.

Taken together, the articles in this issue of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* reveal that Grainger's unstable concept of cosmopolitanism was rooted in forms of nineteenth-century idealism, but branched out to numerous facets of twentieth-century aesthetics. By offering perspectives that hail from both sides of the Atlantic, our aim is to offer a critical evaluation of his transatlantic cultural dialogue during a period that came to represent both points of arrival and points of departure for Grainger. In many ways, activities such as folk-song collecting represented an arrival at latent nineteenth-century ideologies for the nascent artist. At the same time, his relocation to the United States at the outbreak of World War One, accompanied by a growing fascination with Nordic culture, denotes a departure from the humanistic discourse he earlier eschewed. The transformation of Grainger's cosmopolitan imagination during this period is therefore emblematic of the conflicting priorities of artists who endured the perpetual expansion and contraction of identities. It also sheds light on the fact that cosmopolitanism can be as limiting as it is liberating. Living in a similar age of anxiety, investigating Grainger's procedures for mediating these conflicts can provide us with further methodologies for evaluating the temporal dimension of cosmopolitanism, the motivations behind its cyclical emergence, and the consequences brought forth by its unstable definitions. Above all, the case of Grainger signifies that the fuzzy borders of belonging created by the interaction of nationalism and cosmopolitanism remain not merely a problem to be solved, but also a creative tension to be exploited.