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Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger

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Shortly before his death, Percy Grainger (1882-1961) lodged over twenty unpublished sketches in his Australian Museum. Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger draws exclusively from these sketches, revealing for the first time an illuminating portrait of the composers life. With such titles as The Aldridge-Grainger-Strom Saga, Thunks, Ere-I-Forget, The Love-Life of Helen and Paris, and Anecdotes, these manuscripts were intended as precursors to Graingers autobiography, My Wretched Tone-Life, which he only commenced in his final years. Expertly shaping these sketches, the editors have created a self-portrait along the lines that Grainger himself had intended. The volume first introduces Graingers forebears, parents, friends, wife, and himself before moving on to his views on composition, performance, and the musical world. In these sketches, Grainger addresses such topics as racial and national identity, the meaning of work, physical culture, language reform, sexual practice, and artistic patronage. Grainger also probes the nature of musical genius, discussing a broad range of composers including Igor Stravinsky, Thomas Beecham, Frederick Delius, Edvard Grieg, Charles Stanford, Cyril Scott, Fritz Kreisler, Donald Tovey, Ferruccio Busoni, and Balfour Gardiner. Among the works of his own that Grainger most featured are his The Warriors --Music for an Imaginary Ballet, Colonial Song, the Lincolnshire Posy series of band pieces, his greatest hit Country Gardens, and his many settings of English folk-music. Written in Graingers own self-created Nordic English as well as translated from Danish, the language of his most intimate confessions, Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger sheds light on some of the most revealing details of the composers life. The sketches trace Graingers changing self-perception, from the romantically tinged, even lustful, views of his forties and fifties, through a period of wistfulness in his sixties, to the bitterness and self-loathing of his old age. The volume also includes several of Graingers own drawings as well as both public and private photographs. A fascinating and revealing collection of vignettes, this extraordinary book will appeal to instructors, students, and enthusiasts in musicology, music history, cultural studies, and Australian, British, and American history.

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