

AN ASIAN GRAINGER FESTIVAL

Penelope Thwaites,
Pianist and Grainger scholar

The Grainger Festival in Tokyo, Sendai and Kyoto (27 November-1 December 2011), designed by Professor Junichi Miyazawa and his Committee, constituted only the second Grainger Festival in an Asian country. He and they are to be congratulated in arranging the wide-ranging event which included participants from the UK, Australia and the United States. The involvement at the Sunday Symposium of the excellent young Japanese musicians in the choir and orchestra, as well as the dynamic young piano duo, was an important factor – a youthful element that would surely have pleased Grainger himself. They all performed with great dedication and vivacity and it was a joy to see such involvement in the music of an Australian who always had an international approach in his music and in his methods.

For me, as a long-time exponent of Grainger's piano music, and fresh from new research as editor of *The New Percy Grainger Companion*, the power of Grainger's heartfelt music once again proved its value. Referring to my solo recital on Sunday 27 November, a number of audience members commented on the vividness of Grainger musical language and his use of folk-music to forge a bond with audiences, of whatever nationality.

It was particularly meaningful to be able to play for the audience in Sendai – many of whom had been tragically affected by the earthquake and tsunami disasters. Grainger's powerful and tuneful works go straight to the heart, and in being able to see the audience faces as I introduced the various pieces, I could see that the magic was once more at work.

Kyoto was a wonderful experience – playing in the beautiful old museum and then, on our final day, being shown some of the treasures of the city. What generosity we experienced from our kind hosts! It was my first visit to Japan – and I hope, not my last. The beauty and grace of the traditional ways was something to admire.

Mr Jun Kinoshita of the Sony Corporation spared no effort to help our arrangements run smoothly, and everywhere we were hosted with great warmth. Professor Toshie Kakinuma and Mrs Satsuki Murakami gave us a wonderful sight-seeing day in Kyoto.

It was gratifying to see the positive report in the press* and to have the opportunity to provide an interview for Japan's 'Gramophone' magazine.

There were several suggestions that audiences would like to hear more of Grainger's piano music, and to have the chance to study it in more detail. Perhaps support may be found in the future for such a worthwhile venture.

**"P. Thwaites, who is also a Grainger scholar, played pieces based on folksongs and others, a program that made the audience realize the relationship between the composer and folksong from many different angles. She drew Grainger's tuneful melodies at certain times lightly at other times densely. Her performance was wonderful." On Stage Weekly 6.1.2012*