

dBâle Program

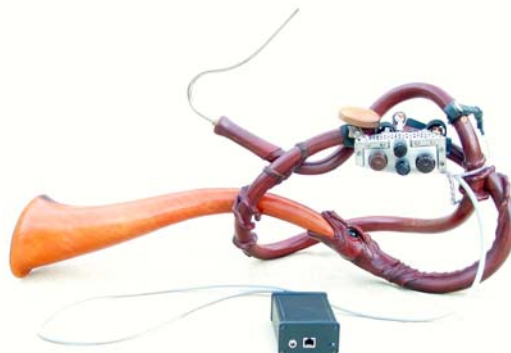
Bent Leather Band

Sunday, 1 June 2008 at 21:00

Children of Grainger

Exhibition and Concert

Bent Leather Band presents *Children of Grainger* concert/exhibition work exploring Percy Grainger's *free music* life and legacy. Grainger's *free music*; i.e. "music using gliding tones, very small intervals and irregular rhythms" [Grainger, 1951] is juxtaposed within the context of 21st Century music making. *Children of Grainger* features solo and duo performances of by the Bent Leather Band showcasing their incredible electronic leather instruments including the Light-harp, Serpentine-bassoon and Contra-monster.



Pictures by Bent Leather Band

Program Notes

Manifesto (by Percy Grainger)

.....Music is an art not yet grown up; its condition is comparable to that stage of Egyptian bas-reliefs when the head and legs were shown in profile while the torso appeared "front face" - the stage of development in which the myriad irregular suggestions of nature can only be taken up in regularised or conventionalised forms. With Free Music we enter the phase of technical maturity such as that enjoyed by the Greek sculptors when all aspects and attitudes of the human body could be shown in arrested movement.

Existing conventional music (whether "classical"; or popular) is tied down by set scales, a tyrannical (whether metrical or irregular) rhythmic pulse that holds the whole tonal fabric in a vice-like grasp and a set of harmonic procedures (whether key-bound or atonal) that are merely habits, and certainly do not deserve to be called laws. Many composers have loosened, here and there, the cords that tie music down. Cyril Scott and Duke Ellington indulge in sliding tones; Arthur and others use intervals closer than the half tone; Cyril Scott (following my lead) writes very irregular rhythms that have been echoed, on the European continent, by Stravinsky, and others; Schoenberg has liberated us from the tyranny of conventional harmony. But no non-Australian composer has been willing to combine all these innovations into a consistent whole that can be called Free Music.

It seems to me absurd to live in an age of flying and yet not to be able to execute tonal glides and curves - just as absurd as it would be to have to paint a portrait in little squares (as in the case of mosaic) and not to be able to use every type of curved lines. If, in the theatre, several actors (on the stage together) had to continually move in a set theatrical relation to each other (to be incapable of individualistic, independent movement) we would think it ridiculous, yet this absurd goose-stepping still persists in music. Out in nature we hear all kinds of lovely and touching "free"; (non-harmonic) combinations of tones, yet we are unable to take up these beauties and expressivenesses into the art of music because of our archaic notions of harmony.

Personally I have heard free music in my head since I was a boy of 11 or 12 in Auburn, Melbourne. It is my only important contribution to music. My impression is that this world of tonal freedom was suggested to me by wave movements in the sun that I first observed as a young child at Brighton, Vic., and Albert Park, Melbourne.

Percy Aldridge Grainger 1938