

Percy Grainger's Recital Transfixes His Audience

From First to Last, Pianist Shows Excellence,
Holding Hearers Spellbound—'Country
Gardens' Enthralls Listeners

By RAY A. MOWERS

Transfixed is the word for it.

Nothing else in English will adequately describe the awed attention accorded Percy Grainger in his recital last night at Chancellors Hall.

With the determined stride of a British workman approaching a particularly engaging labor, the slender, bushy-haired pianist strode upon the stage about 8:40 and for the succeeding hour and a half he held his audience enthralled by sheer virtuosity.

Of course, this is nothing new for Percy Grainger. He does it every-time he appears before an Albany audience. But that is the astounding thing about it—the fact that he never fails.

It was not until he announced the title of what proved to be his final encore, however, that a concerted "Ah" of expectancy and approval swept upward from the seated throng before him. He had merely said, "I'll play 'Country Gardens' for you," but that was enough. It was what many had come to hear, and they would have felt well satisfied had they heard nothing else.

The number is coupled in the minds of thousands with the name of Grainger—like "Rosemarin" and Kreisler, like "Mother Machree" and John McCormack, like "Stars and Stripes Forever" and John Philip Sousa.

Yes, Grainger played "Country Gardens" and he played "Molly on the Shore" and he played Guion's "Old Fiddler's Breakdown" to the delight of everyone present, but it was not in any of these that he proved his right to a place among the great at the keyboard.

He did that very definitely and with a finality that left absolutely no room for argument in his very first number—the Liszt arrangement for piano of Bach's powerful pipe organ Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor. Seldom will it be the privilege of Albany musicians to hear that supreme creation played as it was heard last night. Words to describe it are futile.

After an interlude of Brahms, Grainger climbed the artistic heights to dizzy pinnacles again with Grieg. It was superb. He was to do it again before the recital ended with his own paraphrase on Tschaikowsky's "Flower Waltz."