



Image Dario Acosta

# A Musical Warrior

**Percy Grainger's *The Warrior* brings the fight to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's concert**

If you thought Australian composer Percy Grainger's music was all about 'English Country Gardens' and pleasantly bubbling folk tunes, think again. Grainger's 20-minute 'music to an imaginary ballet' *The Warriors* must count as one of the craziest pieces ever written.

Sir Andrew Davis, Chief Conductor of the Melbourne SO, explains *The Warriors* origins during the First World War: 'The piece was originally intended for the Ballets Russes, but Diaghilev turned it down. It has a kind of flamboyant character that is so much part of Grainger's compositional signature, but it's not just a war piece. There is considerable music that one might characterise as 'love scene' music. It's actually a piece that has a wide emotional range.' And a huge, spectacular orchestral ensemble, too – including a 'gamelan' of percussion, bells and three pianos (which, Grainger warns, require 'exceptionally strong, vigorous players') and even offstage bands.

It shares the Melbourne SO's Festival programme with Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* and

*Four Last Songs* (from soprano Erin Wall), as well as Schumann's Cello Concerto, with cellist Truls Mørk as soloist. '*Don Juan* and *The Warriors* both share a certain exuberance of manner,' says Davis, 'whereas the Strauss *Four Last Songs* and Schumann Concerto are much more reflective and autumnal in style.'

**David Kettle** is a freelance writer and editor

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## Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

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Thursday 21 August 8.00pm  
Usher Hall  
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With additional support from  
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