

Douglas Lilburn and Percy Grainger

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The Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust, with the assistance of the New Zealand Composers' Foundation, has recently given new impetus to the study of New Zealand music history by publishing two addresses by Douglas Lilburn.¹ These illustrate the composer's development and his concern with establishing an authentic New Zealand musical language. A letter from Douglas Lilburn to Percy Grainger now in the Grainger Museum, Melbourne,² can profitably be read in conjunction with the two addresses, and is printed below. It adds further insight into the development of New Zealand's foremost living composer, and also offers a glimpse of musical life in New Zealand in the 1930s. The letter was written by Lilburn in 1936 after he had won the first prize in the Percy Grainger competition for New Zealand compositions. In it he thanks Grainger for sponsoring such a competition, describes his own musical studies and activities, comments briefly on his prize-winning tone poem *Forest*, and shows that winning the Grainger competition was of great significance because it gave him the chance of hearing *Forest*, the first of his orchestral works, in performance.

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17 Peakes Rd
St. Johns Hill
Wanganui
Jan 1st [1937]

Dear Mr. Grainger,

This is rather a difficult letter for me to be writing so I must ask your tolerance. By way of introducing myself I should like you to read the enclosed cutting³ which gives a few biographical details in lyrical journalese. It will be more valuable though in giving you the full report of the judge on my work. I presume the Director of Broadcasting has sent you a full report of results some time ago. At that time I was preparing for a full quota of university exams so hope you will forgive my delay in writing.

First I must thank you for your generous initiative in sponsoring such a competition. I find it hard to tell you, without being effusive, just what value it has been to me. It must be a rare thing for anyone