George William Louis Marshall-Hall (1862–1915) was a London-born maestro who in 1891 became the inaugural Ormond Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne. He founded the Marshall-Hall Orchestra in 1892. He remains an influential and compelling Melbourne identity, a Bohemian who created a scandal with his book of poems *Hymns ancient and modern* (1897), which was received as lewd and anti-clerical. He befriended musicians and artists alike, such as the Heidelberg school of painters, of which Tom Roberts was a member. In this portrait, Marshall-Hall’s ear is an important feature. Just as it was in his profession, it is one of Marshall-Hall’s best assets.

At the age of 12, Percy Grainger (1882–1961) gave a solo piano performance under the direction of Marshall-Hall. Decades later, Grainger bought Marshall-Hall’s collection from his widow, and this formed the first archive in his museum. The story of the acquisition of the portrait is revealed in a letter to Grainger from Hubert Marshall-Hall: “My well-meaning but asinine relatives have sent me a huge painting of my father by Roberts. If I had an ancestral hall it would be fine, but having only a tiny flat I don’t know what the devil to do with it. Would it be any use to you for your museum?”
Teaching ideas

The University of Melbourne’s curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, contact a collection manager.

Pathologies of the Auditory System
Make a case study of music composers and conductors and common diseases of the ear. Consider in particular the reasons for a patient having a hearing and/or balance disorder, and the effects of the different types of pathology on the patient’s life.

Anatomy and Physiology for Audiology
Study hearing in the context of music and poetry, to understand the anatomy and physiology of the peripheral and central auditory systems, and aspects of balance function and speech production.

Australian Art
Use the art collection at the Grainger Museum to examine the development of the concept of ‘Australian art’ and how it was constructed from the mid-19th century to the 1960s.

Music Learning, Teaching and Research
Study G.W.L. Marshall-Hall in the context of the historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological and methodological factors that provide a context for instrumental music teaching.

Chamber Music Performance
Think critically about Marshall-Hall’s compositional style (sonority, balance, ensemble, phrasing, blending and musical gesture) in considering the artistic awareness needed to prepare and perform chamber music repertoire selected from the 17th to the 21st centuries.

Studies in Musicology
Study composers represented in the Grainger Museum, to develop a critical knowledge of music history and literature.

Owning Ideas: Creation, Innovation and Law
Use music scores and recordings in the Grainger Museum to discover the law’s response to the rights provided to creators of literature, art, music and film.

Knowledge, Learning and Culture
Visit the Grainger Museum exhibitions and consider historical, social, political and cultural influences on knowledge and the analysis of information and ideas from multiple perspectives. Encounter objects to show how direct experience can lead to greater understanding and knowledge.
Intersecting objects

Marshall-Hall Orchestral Concert ... first concert of the season ... orchestra of 74 artists (concert program, 13 April 1912)
Melbourne: Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1912
Rare Music Collection
University of Melbourne Library

G.W.L. Marshall-Hall (English/Australian, 1862–1915)
An Australian national song, n.d.
manuscript; ink on printed music paper
Grainger Museum
University of Melbourne
M-H 4/1-1

To learn more, visit the websites of the Rare Music Collection and the Grainger Museum.

References