

中央音乐学院图书馆藏书

书号

Z2.15

总记登号

BK303578

PAUL CRESTON

A Bio-Bibliography

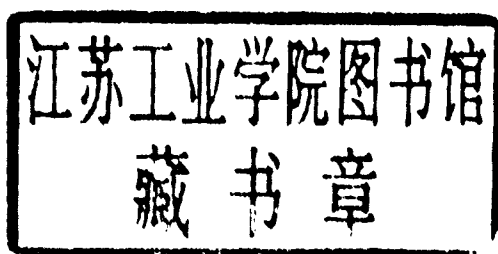
Compiled by
Monica J. Slomski

liography
on, P.)

PAUL CRESTON

A Bio-Bibliography

Compiled by
Monica J. Slomski



Bio-Bibliographies in Music, Number 55
Donald Hixon, Series Adviser



GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Slomski, Monica J.

Paul Creston : a bio-bibliography / compiled by Monica J. Slomski.

p. cm.—(Bio-bibliographies in music, ISSN 0742-6968 ; no. 55)

Discography:

Includes index.

ISBN 0-313-25336-6 (alk. paper)

1. Creston, Paul, 1906- —Bibliography. 2. Creston, Paul, 1906- —Discography. I. Title. II. Series.

ML134.C73S6 1994

780'.92—dc20

[B] 94-31649

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 1994 by Monica J. Slomski

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 94-31649

ISBN: 0-313-25336-6

ISSN: 0742-6968

First published in 1994

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Paul Creston

Photograph courtesy of the Creston family.

Preface

Paul Creston undoubtedly ranks among our foremost American composers. He therefore seems an especially appropriate subject for inclusion in the Bio-Bibliographies in Music series published by Greenwood Press.

The present volume consists of four main sections, as follows:

(1) a brief biography, prepared with the assistance of Paul Creston;

(2) a complete list of works and performances classified by genre and then arranged alphabetically by title of composition. Following each title is a listing of premieres and other selected performances, with references to commentaries from performance reviews cited in the "Bibliography." Each work is preceded by the mnemonic "W" (W1, W2, etc.) and each performance of that work is identified by successive lowercase letters (W1a, W1b, W1c, etc.);

(3) a discography of commercially-produced sound recordings. Each recorded work is preceded by the mnemonic "D" (D1, D2, D3, etc.). Reference is made to commentaries of the recordings cited in the "Bibliography;" and,

(4) an annotated bibliography of writings by and about Paul Creston, his style and his music, with annotations often taking the form of quotations extracted from his performance reviews. Each citation is preceded by the mnemonic "B." Entries in the bibliography refer back to the "Works and Performances" and "Discography" sections.

In addition appendixes provide alphabetical and chronological listings of Creston's works. A complete index of names (personal, corporate, and geographical) and titles concludes the volume.

A number of bibliographical citations, particularly those to newspaper articles, are based on material supplied to Louise Creston by various clipping services. While these notices proved exceedingly valuable in completing bibliographic coverage, occasionally,

publication dates of articles are either lacking or illegible, and pagination is rarely indicated. These are rather significant omissions for adequate bibliographic treatment, and attempts have been made to secure omitted detail by a variety of methods, including correspondence. However, there are instances where bibliographic detail remains incomplete. Happily, it was possible to complete most of the entries.

Acknowledgements

Many persons and institutions contributed to the preparation of this volume. I should like to extend special thanks to the librarians of Southwestern Connecticut Library Council, Anita Barney, Ann Neary, and Janet Weston. I have the highest respect for their professionalism, willingness, and ability to assist researchers and library users.

For providing specialized bibliographical assistance, I should like to extend thanks to: Rae Shepherd-Schlechter of the Louisville Free Public Library, Anne Denny of the Tucson Public Library, Kay Vyhanik of Washington State University Library, Pamela Vance of Gary Public Library, Ms. Mae Morey of Central Washington State University, the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, the Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library, the University of Connecticut Interlibrary Loan Department, the Fort Worth Public Library, the Dallas Public Library, Purdue University Library, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Library, the Cleveland Public Library, the Yale University Interlibrary Loan Department, Harold Samuel of the Yale Music Library for his encouragement and support, the Library of Congress.

For providing English translations of foreign-language annotations: Mr. French of the Department of Music of Yale University (translations from Russian).

I should also like to extend special thanks to Dr. Marion Peterson of the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Her dedication, professionalism, and guidance has inspired and sustained me throughout this project.

For her expertise and assistance, I should like to thank Michele Jacobson of the Bridgeport Public Library who indexed this book. To Linda Soley Reed, who devoted countless hours toward the preparation of this manuscript, grateful thanks and appreciation.

I should like to extend my special gratitude to Louise Creston for all the invaluable assistance she has given so freely. She was enthusiastic about this project when I visited her in San Diego, California, and she provided me complete access to all of her scrapbooks. She accorded me helpful support and encouragement until her death.

Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Biography	1
Works and Performances	17
Discography	71
Bibliography	81
Appendix I: Alphabetical Listing of Compositions	179
Appendix II: Chronological Listing of Compositions	183
Index	187

Biography

Two Italian immigrants, Gaspare Guttovergi and his wife Carmela Collura, left their small Sicilian village of Prizzi for New York City in 1905. On October 10th of the following year, Mrs. Guttovergi gave birth to a son, who was baptized Giuseppe Guttovergi. Although the spelling of the family name was later changed to Guttoveggio, it was as Paul Creston that Giuseppe rose to prominence. The family lived at several East Side locations; however, they considered their residence on East 17th Street to be their New York home. Its environment typified that of many Italian immigrant families: conservative, unpretentious, industrious, and devoted.¹

Gaspare Guttoveggio (1883-1965) was a short, slender, blue-eyed, handsome man of immaculate appearance, a man of strength and self-discipline with an infinite capacity for work. In his efforts to provide well for his family, he did not limit himself to his field of painting and plastering, but also worked as a butcher and a traveling salesman.²

Carmela Collura (1886-1947) took in sewing from time to time when the family needed extra money, but she never told her husband for fear of hurting his fierce pride in being able to support her and the children. She was a beautiful woman with dark eyes and hair, and was tender, understanding and devotedly concerned with the health and happiness of her family.³

Charles Guttoveggio was three years older than his brother Giuseppe (Paul) and had been born in Italy. He resembled Gaspare in facial features, except that his eyes were brown rather than blue.⁴

In his reflections upon his childhood, Creston acknowledged his parents' influence on his musical development.⁵ He was introduced to music at an early age, because his parents appreciated music and were aware that their son was musically inclined. When Paul

reached the age of four, he learned Sicilian folk songs from his father, Gaspare, as the elder accompanied himself on the guitar. Two years later, a trip to Italy with his mother and brother carried one vivid memory for the youngster - the sound of his uncle Cola's clarinet, as he sat beside him in a circus band.⁶ Frequently, as Paul sat at the table waiting to be served, he would pretend he was playing the piano. His parents were finally convinced that his interest was genuine, and they purchased from neighbors a nineteenth-century square piano for \$10.00.⁷ His formal piano lessons began when he was eight.

Of his early instruction he said:

*The first six years of piano instruction were definitely of mediocre quality. My first piano teacher was one of those rare individuals who taught all instruments but played none, and my musical fare consisted mainly of operatic overtures, the Waldteufel Waltzes, all the waltzes that were popular at the time, and undying classics like 'Hearts and Flowers' or 'The Maidens Lust.'*⁸

His teacher taught no technique or interpretation and very little solfeggio. When he wished to hear a new composition, he would ask Paul to play it.⁹ Although Paul's older brother, Charles, was given violin lessons, it was the younger boy who diligently practiced his brother's lesson, and who reproduced or improvised on tunes he often heard played on the hurdy-gurdy outside their apartment window.¹⁰

Paul began composing soon after the acquisition of his first piano although he considered his work to be more of a diversion or pastime than a serious pursuit; his childhood compositions were modeled after the music he had heard and played.¹¹ He also engaged in literary activity for pleasure, completing his first poem when he was twelve years old. A year later, he began work on a novel, which he felt had an H.G. Wells touch, since it predicted the hidden microphone prior to its use. Entitled "The Brendon Mystery," the book's main character had a persecution complex and was always hearing mysterious voices; the fledgling author completed three chapters and blocked out twenty-five more before he abandoned the project.¹²

When Paul entered DeWitt Clinton High School in 1919 and began to mingle with other music students, he developed reservations about his own musical training. He was introduced to the music of Chopin when he heard a high school friend perform the "Military Polonaise" and to live opera performance when his English teacher gave him an extra ticket to *Madame Butterfly*.¹³ Paul's subsequent hunger for a deeper understanding of music led him to employ his extraordinary energy and self discipline toward this end. Since he was too poor to buy scores and attend concerts, he spent many after school hours in the public libraries of New York, reading and studying: thus came his real initiation into music. He learned orchestration by checking out scores of the music to be programmed on the WNYC Masterworks Hour, studying a score and marking it in his own way. Creston stated, "When it was played, I made note of it ... later on, I got to such a point that I could look at one note in a clarinet part and know how much power and brilliance it had."¹⁴

He also participated in the high school play, *The Fan*. His friends nicknamed him Cress after the character he had portrayed. The nickname stuck, and after he left school, he lengthened the name to Creston, chose Paul as his first name, and adopted Paul Creston as his permanent name.¹⁵

At the urging of a high school friend, Paul began studying piano, first with Gaston Dethier for three months, then with Carlo Stea for one year, followed by G. Aldo Randegger with whom he studied for three and one-half years.¹⁶

In 1921, when he was fifteen years old, financial difficulties compelled Paul to go to work and abandon his formal education. His employer was MacFadden Publications (Physical Culture Corporation), where after a month he was promoted to clerk-receptionist.¹⁷ During this time, Paul kept a demanding schedule. After work he practiced until about 11 p.m. and then studied until the early hours of the morning.¹⁸ He was relentless in his determination and self-discipline. He reasoned that,

*If Edison could get along on four hours of sleep, I thought I could too...But I paid the penalty in trying to keep awake at the rare concert I went to. And when I was working late, I would smoke ground coffee in a pipe to keep awake.*¹⁹

According to Creston, he was greatly assisted in his studies during this period by what Rameau called "the invisible guide of the musician," a force which guided him to appropriate material which satisfied his questions.²⁰ It was this process which lent him courage to challenge accepted beliefs and led him through eclecticism to his own brand of individualism. His studies extended in many directions – cryptography, natural therapeutics, literature and philosophy including Eastern and occult.

In 1923 Creston left MacFadden Publications to work for a short time as a bank clerk for the Foreign Exchange Department of the Irving Bank (Columbia Trust Co.); he then served as an insurance claim examiner for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company from 1924-26.²¹ While he was working at Metropolitan Life, Creston earned a diploma in accident, health, and life insurance through a correspondence course. Nonetheless, Creston's interests lay in the field of music.

The next segment in Creston's musical development came about because of a conversation between his father and a fellow parishioner who attended St. Malachy's Church on West 48th Street. Since she was aware of Creston's musical interests, she suggested that perhaps he should study the pipe organ. Further, she offered to arrange for him free practice time on the organ, as well as to introduce Creston to an organist friend, Pietro Yon. Yon was at that time organist at St. Patrick's Cathedral and an honorary organist at the Vatican. Creston found the idea much to his liking and began lessons with Yon in 1925 and continued as his student for about a year and a half.²²

Between 1926 and 1929, Creston's musical activities changed directions once again when a fellow organ student of Yon asked him to act as his replacement at the New York Coliseum Theater on 181st Street. He enjoyed being a theater organist and played in

several theaters, including the Cassello Theater on 159th Street and the Lynnbrook Theater in Lynnbrook, New York. Creston stated that it was in the theater that he learned to improvise. He said,

I learned to cue pictures...The way you did it was they had cue sheets that would describe the scene and give you one line of music appropriate for it ... You could use that or something similar to it...I just had it there and improvised most of the time...I still composed as a delightful pastime and still wasn't intending to be a composer. ²³

In July of 1927, Creston married Louise Gotto whom he had met at MacFadden Publications. She was employed there as a secretary in order to finance her studies in dance. Born in 1903 in Yonkers, New York, she was the seventh daughter of twelve children in a poor Italian family. Her parents were Joseph Gotto, a construction worker originally from Salerno, and Rosario Filpi.²⁴ Louise had been studying dance, first with Ruth St. Dennis and Ted Shawn and later with Martha Graham, and was one of the initial members of the Graham Company when they made their New York debut.²⁵ She remained with the company approximately ten years, and appeared in such performances as *Le Sacre du Printemps* under Stokowski's baton and *Appalachian Spring*, commissioned by and choreographed by Martha Graham.²⁶ Through Louise, Creston was introduced to the art of dance and gained a concomitant awareness of the importance of rhythm, the individualistic use of which would become a basic feature of his style. Louise was also musically talented. She had studied piano with her husband and his teacher, and had a keen ear. She could recognize, on hearing, any of Creston's works, and in addition, she remembered exactly from her childhood many songs she was taught in elementary school.²⁷ After their honeymoon in Woodstock, New York, they returned to New York to reside.

The stock market crash in 1929, which brought unemployment to so many Americans, made it even more difficult for the traditionally hard-pressed artist. With the advent of sound films in 1927, live music in theaters became obsolete.²⁸ The Crestons, too, were affected adversely by the depression, and Creston tried selling real estate and insurance. He stated,

I tried everything to earn money. Musically, the only way I could earn money was by becoming a member of the Musicians Emergency Fund...I was asked to accompany Pauline Pierce, a contralto, and Alli Ronka. We played in different elementary schools. I received \$3 for a performance and the singer received \$5. ²⁹

Creston also accompanied Alli Ronka in other performances.

In addition to his musical activities, Creston's literary interests continued, and between 1926 and 1929 he had several articles published in *Dance Magazine*: "The Crime Against Music" in December 1929, "The Three S's of Modern Music" in June, 1927, and "Is Dancing Art?" in August, 1927, as well as several articles in *Etude Magazine*: "Security

in Intermediate Notes: in January, 1928, "Daily Exercises for the Busy Teacher" in April 1928, "Building Scale Technic" in August, 1929 and "On Interpreting Bach" in September, 1931. He also wrote one unpublished essay: "The Philosophy of Musico-Therapy."³⁰

His music career took on an added dimension when, in 1932, he decided to become a composer. His first premiere was heard in June, 1933 with the performance of his incidental music to "Iron Flowers" at the Westchester County Center with the composer at the piano; this work, however, has since been omitted from his list of compositions.³¹

The next performance of his works was given at the New School of Social Research when his *Seven Theses* for piano, *Four Songs to Death*, *Suite for Eb Alto Saxophone and Piano*, and the first and second movements from the *String Quartet* were heard. Henry Cowell later said of the *Seven Theses* that

Each piece contains its own distinctive harmonic intervals, and the meters are employed in sequence. Thus, the first is based on triads and octaves in the right hand, and its metrical sequence is 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 5/4, 4/4, 5/5, 6/6, 5/5, etc. Thesis II uses broken chords in triplets. The pattern, which sometimes does change, closes with the retrograde of a major third followed by a fifth. The metrical scheme is 8/4, 2/2, 7/4, 3/4, 6/4, etc. Thesis III is a study in thirds and fifths with a metrical pattern of 2/4, 3/4, 5/4; Thesis IV has seventh chords lacking the fifth and meters of 4/4, 3/4, 2/4; the fifth piece has fourths in the left hand, thirds and sixths in the right, and meters of 4/4, 3/8, 2/2; the sixth uses parallel chords in first inversion and 2/8, 5/8, 3/8, 4/8 meters; and the last uses secundal chords and a metrical plan of 5/8, 11/16, 6/8, 13/16, etc. The pieces are atonal and dissonant in a virtuosic style and as difficult to listen to as they are to play.³²

Subsequently, Henry Cowell, then editor of *New Music Quarterly*, issued the "Seven Theses" in Volume VIII, Number 2, January, 1935, believing that Creston showed promise as an individualistic and innovative composer. Engraving on the score was begun in November.³³ It was a slim volume containing only eleven pages of music.

Another Creston composition from this era is *Three Poems from Walt Whitman*, a work for cello and piano which was performed on November 20, 1934 by Ana Dittell and the composer. Further performances included *Bird of the Wilderness*, for high voice and piano and *Thanatopsis*, originally *Four Songs to Death*, dedicated to Alli Ronka; the former was performed on May 5, 1935 and the latter on December 1, 1935 at Roerich Hall in New York.

For a number of years prior to 1934, Creston was a freelance organist, primarily at St. Catherine of Sienna Church in New York; in 1934, he was appointed organist at St. Malachy's Church on West 48th Street, a post he maintained until 1967.³⁴ However, he continued to perform and compose as opportunities came.

Creston was a participant in the Composers Forum Laboratory Series. The CFL originated in the New York City Project in October, 1935 as part of the Music Education Division of the Federal Music Project. Although the Forum did not provide funding for new compositions, it gave composers an opportunity for public performance and discussion of their music.³⁵

In addition to his participation in the CFL series, he gained an active interest in music for dance. His *Five Dances for Piano*, written in collaboration with his wife, was performed in New York in 1935. Creston also wrote music for other dancers in the Graham Company, including Sylvia Manslow, Lils M. Tashamira, and Don Oscar Becque.³⁶

In 1936, Creston toured various cities of the Central and Southwestern United States with Cecil Leeson, a saxophone virtuoso from North Dakota in a Cadillac driven by a chauffeur. The tour was arranged by Leeson's manager Arthur Fernald; however, an Interlochen stop was added because of the performer's interest in the music education of young people.³⁷ The repertoire consisted almost entirely of transcriptions except for Creston's *Suite for Saxophone and Piano*.³⁸

During that year, Creston also participated in the Yaddo Festivals of American music in Saratoga Springs, New York. These eleven festivals, a series organized for the purpose of improving the economic and artistic status of the American composer, were held in 1932 and 1933, followed by nine festivals scheduled over the next two decades.³⁹ Works which were selected for performance at the festivals were chosen from scores submitted by composers and read in open rehearsals during the several weeks preceding the concerts.⁴⁰

In 1936 and 1938 respectively, Creston's *Partita* for flute, violin and strings, Op. 12, and *Two Choric Dances*, Op. 17 were performed at Yaddo. Concerning the latter, Rudy Shackelford stated that:

*The strongest pieces to emerge in 1938 were "Eight Epitaphs" for baritone by Theodore Chanler, "Two Choric Dances" by Paul Creston, Ross Lee Finney's "Sonata for Viola and Piano," and William Schuman's "String Quartet No. 2".*⁴¹

Creston's works were also premiered at Town Hall recitals during 1936 and 1937, with the composer performing. He accompanied Cecil Leeson in his Town Hall debut on February 6, 1937. In a Town Hall recital on November 27, 1937, the composer accompanied Julius Shaier, violist, in a program which featured the "Suite for Viola and Piano" by Creston, and was reviewed in *The New York Times*.

*Julius Shaier, a talented young viola player born and educated in this city, gave a successful first recital last night in Town Hall ... The Creston suite proved to be an attractive creation with a particularly ingratiating "Air" as its third movement. Save for a slip on the soloist's part near the beginning the work was delightfully performed. Mr. Creston, who provided the piano support during the evening, proved himself to be exceptionally gifted as an ensemble player. The audience was large and responsive.*⁴²

Pauline Pierce additionally premiered the *Three Sonnets* for voice and piano, Op. 10, on November 10, 1937 in Town Hall, New York City.

In 1938, Creston was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, which was renewable the following year. Although at that time a Guggenheim Fellow received \$2,000 and was expected to do his or her work abroad, the composer chose to remain in New York to await the birth of his first child, Joel Anthony, who was born on Thanksgiving Day. Nonetheless, this award and subsequent honors over the next few years served to bring Creston into national prominence. For example, his first orchestral work, *Threnody*, was performed by Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony on December 2, 1938. The work later received its New York premiere by Eugene Goossens and the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in 1941.

For this first Stadium novelty, a work by a New Yorker was an appropriate choice. Mr. Creston's "Threnody" was not designated as a local premiere, but, so far as we know, had not been heard here before in concert. It was first played in December, by the Pittsburgh Symphony under Fritz Reiner, and introduced to Cincinnati by Mr. Goossens last January.

The title needs no explanation, and indicates the general expressive character of music which succeeds in being both emotional and dignified. The principal theme has profile, and is dealt with skillfully; the work as a whole gives an impression of command of form. There is nothing in its harmonies which should irk a conservative-minded listener, although the composer does not deny the present; the style is homogeneous, and such influences as it may possess are not obvious. Concerted strings dominate in the scoring, apart from certain episodes, and sometimes there is overmuch uniformity of color. At the same time, the orchestration tells of the composer's ability in this field. There was much applause, and Mr. Creston was called upon for acknowledgement.⁴³

A full orchestral version of *Two Choric Dances*, Op. 17A, was performed by the Cleveland Federal Orchestra with Arthur Shepherd conducting on February 20, 1939, since at the time the work was premiered in a chamber orchestra version at the Yaddo Festival in 1938, Quincy Porter and Richard Donovan had suggested that it would get more performances if it were scored for full orchestra, and when critic Harold Taubman had reviewed the performance, he, too, had agreed that it called for a larger orchestra.⁴⁴

Creston performed in a Town Hall recital with violinist Rachmael Weinstock on October 18 of 1939 in which Creston's "Suite" for violin and piano was premiered.

Rachmael Weinstock ... gave a recital last night at Town Hall. He played the Brahms D Minor Sonata, the Mozart A Major Concerto, the Bach solo sonata in G Minor, a Polonaise of Wieniawski, and the

first performance of a "Suite" by Paul Creston, the pianist of the evening.

Mr. Creston's unpoised performance of the Brahms sonata and particularly his curiously wooden accompaniment of the Mozart did not whet anticipation of his own music. However, it turned out that he is a far better composer than pianist. The "Prelude" of the suite may be traced to Hindemith both, in its muscularity and in its disdain of the sensuous ear. It was received in silence. Not so the "Air," a contemplative tune over a simple accompaniment nor the final "Rondo, which fuses energy and good nature with neat craft. ⁴⁵

In 1940, Creston accepted a teaching appointment at the Cummington School of the Arts in Massachusetts, and taught piano and composition during the summer session. After this appointment, Creston began to accept private students in both specialties.

The same year also brought Creston several first performances: the *Sonata* for saxophone and piano, Op. 20, and the *Concertino* for marimba and orchestra, Op. 21, first performed by Ruth Stuber and the Orchestrette Classique with Frederique Petrides conducting on April 29, 1940. Stuber became associated with the conductor when she came to New York to study with George Hamilton Green.⁴⁶ Together they requested that Paul Creston compose a piece for marimba. The result, "Concertino" for marimba and orchestra, was included on a concert of the Orchestrette Classique at Carnegie Hall on April 29, 1940. Louis Biancolli of the *New York World Telegram* was one of several critics who reviewed the premiere:

Under cover of night, the soft-toned marimba slipped quietly into classic port yesterday at the Carnegie Chamber Music Hall...

Mr. Creston has known how to keep a small orchestra supporting the marimba's timbre. The concertino is well made. Simplicity itself, it goes its lush, purling way in one or two veins, chiefly Ravel and Mr. Creston's mildly modernistic self.

The second movement grazed suavely through Ravel's Pavanne pour une Infante Defunte, probably unintentionally. The last movement is all Creston. The concertino has real sensuous appeal. Of course, with the marimba one always feels that given the marimbist, it plays itself. In other words, everything that comes from it sounds right. ⁴⁷

This was one of Creston's earliest associations with "the neglected instruments" and he continued to contribute to the original literature of these instruments over the next decades.

His first symphony, Op. 20, completed in 1940, was premiered the following year on February 22, 1941 by the NYA Symphony Orchestra with Fritz Mahler conducting. It was this work which won him the New York Music Critics Circle Award for the 1942-43