

PHCD 149

Piano Music of

Aaron COPLAND Paul CRESTON
Mark ZUCKERMAN

PETER VINOGRADÉ
Piano



PHCD 149

Aaron COPLAND
Tk. 1 *Passacaglia* (1921-22)¹ (5:41)

Paul CRESTON
Seven Theses, Op. 3 (1933)^{**}
Tk. 2 *Maestoso* (2:38)
Tk. 3 *Scorrevole* (:44)
Tk. 4 *Espressivo* (1:22)
Tk. 5 *Giocoso* (:47)
Tk. 6 *Grazioso* (1:05)
Tk. 7 *Tranquillo* (1:36)
Tk. 8 *Feroce* (1:25)

Paul CRESTON
Tk. 9 *Metamorphoses*, Op. 84 (1964)^{**} . (18:19)

Aaron COPLAND
Tk. 10 *Piano Fantasy* (1955-57)¹ (28:10)

Mark ZUCKERMAN
Tk. 11 *On the Edges* (1996)^{**} (11:15)

¹World Premiere Recording



PETER VINOGRADÉ CRESTON/COPLAND/ZUCKERMAN

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Aaron COPLAND Paul CRESTON
Passacaglia Seven Theses
Piano Fantasy Metamorphoses

MARK ZUCKERMAN
On the Edges



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Piano

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Produced by: Peter Vinogradé, Walter Simmons, Mark Zuckerman, Joseph Paryeh, recording engineer
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Classical/Copland



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PETER VINOGRADÉ CRESTON/COPLAND/ZUCKERMAN

The composers featured on this recording come from widely divergent personal backgrounds, underwent widely divergent types of musical training, and developed widely divergent stylistic orientations. Indeed, perhaps the only factor that they share in common is that all three are men who spent most of their lives in and around New York City. However, of particular interest is the fact that each is represented here by works that are quite uncharacteristic of the music for which he is generally known. Yet it so happens that in these works the composers pursued aesthetic goals that were remarkably similar—i.e., to write music that would be meaningful and rewarding to listeners, while intentionally subjecting aspects of their compositional processes to especially strict disciplines, without compromising their fundamental artistic values. The result is a group of five compositions, in which the melodic and harmonic correlates of tonality are severely attenuated, placing the responsibility for musical interest on matters of rhythm, texture, harmonic sonority, contrapuntal development, and thematic variation.

During the 1930s and 40s, Aaron Copland emerged as one of America's two or three most widely and frequently performed composers. His easily identifiable evocations of small-town life in the American heartland, in ballets like *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo*, and *Billy the Kid* and in the scores for such films as *Of Mice and Men*, *The Red Pony*, and *Our Town*, have become indelible aspects of America's aural landscape, while sustaining Copland's broad popularity throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. However the two works presented on this disc respectively precede and follow Copland's "Americana" period, and bear little relation to it.

This creator of the sound of America's heartland was born in Brooklyn, New York, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. (His father had changed his name from Kaplan to Copland during the process of immigration.) In 1900, when young Aaron was born, his father owned a prosperous neighborhood department store. Exposed to music by his older siblings, Aaron began taking piano lessons and writing tunes before he entered his teens. His musical interests were further stimulated by similarly-inclined school friends. By the time he was 15, he was already entertaining vague notions of a career in music. In 1917, while continuing his piano studies, he decided to undertake formal training in composition, and sought out Rubin Goldmark. Copland worked with Goldmark, a Dvorak student, for four years, learning from him the classic Germanic approach to musical craftsmanship. But

none of his teachers shared the young composer's interest and enthusiasm for "new" music, such as that of Debussy, Ravel, and Scriabin. During those years Copland supplemented his study through frequent attendance at concerts and recitals, and through intensive study of scores borrowed from the New York Public Library.

When Copland graduated from high school in 1918, instead of going on to college, he decided to immerse himself in the professional music world. He worked as an accompanist for dancers and, in the summers, played the piano at hotels in the Catskill Mountains, outside New York City.

In 1919 a slightly older poet-friend went to study in Paris, and excitedly reported on his experiences there through letters to Copland, urging the young composer to join him. Learning of a newly formed music school at Fontainebleau, just outside Paris, Copland applied immediately, and was one of the first students to be admitted. Although his friend had returned to the States the previous year, Copland traveled to France in 1921, and began his study at the new school. Before long he discovered the harmony classes taught by Nadia Boulanger and was greatly impressed by both her profound mastery of traditional musical craftsmanship and her receptive attitude toward newer music. Through her Copland became acquainted with the French composers known as *Les Six*, finding himself in sympathy with their rejection of Germanic notions of "profundity," and with Igor Stravinsky, whom he felt was "the most exciting musical creator on the scene."

It was during his first two years of study with Mlle. Boulanger that Copland composed his *Pastorale*, which he dedicated to her. The *pastorale* is a variation form in which a theme, usually introduced in the bass, is repeated over and over—literally at first, later with more freedom—while suitable material is superimposed above. After the first few repetitions, the theme may modulate to other keys and may move to upper voices as well. Copland's *Pastorale* is clearly oriented in G-sharp minor, and, as is customary for this form, begins in a somber mood. While there are no obvious reminiscences of other composers, the entire work maintains a post-Romantic ebb and flow of mood and emotion, far afield from the crisp, dry sonorities, and nervous, angular athleticism that Copland adopted as his own mature language, based on the Neo-Classicism of Stravinsky.

By 1950, the self-conscious American populism of which Copland was the most prominent exponent had begun to lose its freshness. In the ascendancy was an approach to compo-

sition developed in Vienna during the early 1920s by the brilliant composer Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg, along with a number of his students and followers, had fled Europe to escape the Holocaust, seeking refuge in the United States, and bringing with them this new compositional approach, called the twelve-tone system. Stated simply, the proponents of twelve-tone music believed that tonality—the tendency of music to gravitate toward a particular “home” note, or tonic—had exhausted its creative utility. They offered their system as a means of creating and shaping music without tonality, by basing it on themes, called tone-rows, that comprised all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. However, unlike themes in tonal music, tone-rows are more than melodic ideas to be developed freely. Tone-rows, used in a variety of permutations, also provide the basis for harmony and sometimes for other parameters as well. Advocates of twelve-tone music—later called “serialism”—believed that their approach was the result of an inevitable evolutionary process. Their arguments, carrying the weight of European authority, were persuasive, and by the 1950s twelve-tone music was gradually supplanting Stravinskian Neo-Classicism and its nationalist-populist outgrowth as the dominant compositional style in America.

Although he saw himself as a proponent of modernism in music, Copland had resisted the twelve-tone system. He later recalled, “I was ... well aware that serial composition was the dominant method of composition during the years following the war.... I cannot say that I admired much of what I heard—so often it seemed that individuality was sacrificed to the method.” Verna Fine remembers his having said, “I don’t feel comfortable with the twelve-tone system, but I don’t want to keep repeating myself.” So, in 1950 Copland made his first serious attempt to apply the system in his *Piano Quartet*, attempting to adapt it to his own aesthetic needs and preferences. “Composing with all twelve notes of the chromatic scale can give one a feeling of freedom in the formulation of melodic and harmonic ideas. In addition to the fact that there are more notes to work with, taking a different perspective produces material you might not come up with if you were not thinking twelve-tone-wise. It’s like looking at a picture from a different point of view.... My use of the twelve-tone method in the *Piano Quartet* did not adhere strictly to the rules....”

In 1951 William Schuman, then president of the Juilliard School, approached Copland with a request for a major work to be presented as part of the celebration of the school’s fiftieth anniversary in 1956. At the same time he had promised to write a major work for the

gifted young pianist William Kapell, whose performances of Copland’s piano music had impressed him deeply. Although he had the idea of a large-scale work in free form, along the lines of a fantasy, Copland had considerable difficulty making headway.

“For the composer, a long and continuous one-movement form is one of the most taxing undertakings,” he wrote. In 1953, William Kapell was killed in a plane crash, and Copland decided to dedicate the *Fantasy* to his memory. However, he continued to work very slowly, encountering many dead-ends, in his attempt to create an impression of spontaneity—almost improvisation—while maintaining a tightly coherent structure. “The whole creative act, I think, is almost symbolized in the sense of not being in control, and yet being in control,” he wrote while occupied with the *Fantasy*. As it happened, much to Schuman’s frustration, the work was not ready for the 1956 celebration.

However, in January, 1957, Copland completed the *Piano Fantasy*. Schuman arranged for a special recital in October of that year, which would consist of only that work, to be played twice, with an intermission in between. The pianist was William Masselos, an extraordinary young musician with a deep devotion to contemporary music. In his program notes, Copland wrote that the *Fantasy* “makes no use whatever of folk or popular musical materials. I stress this point because of a tendency in recent years to typecast me as primarily a purveyor of Americana in music. Commentators have remarked upon my ‘simplicity of style’ and my ‘audience appeal’ in such a way as to suggest that that is the whole story, and the best of the story.”

The *Piano Fantasy* is indeed no *Rodeo*. Nearly half an hour in duration, it utilizes a ruggedly harsh, dissonant harmonic language with little or no melody, in the conventional sense. It falls roughly into three large, connected sections—a lively, rhythmically alert central part framed by two slower, deeply reflective stretches. All the material is based on the tone row heard clearly at the outset, the two remaining tones serving as a sort of anchor at crucial points. Yet while serial techniques are used, they are not applied strictly. Indeed, tonality, though severely attenuated, is not altogether absent. Moreover, the work is unmistakably identifiable as Copland’s, especially the rapid middle section. And, though much of it may seem impenetrable at first, with greater familiarity nuggets of great beauty gradually emerge, leading to the recognition of an intangible yet compelling sense of both breadth and depth. In the words of composer Paul Rade, “The *Piano Fantasy* is, without question, the

greatest of Copland's piano works, and one of the grandest conceptions in American piano music," a statement that represents the general critical consensus at the beginning of the 21st century.

Paul Creston (christened Giuseppe Guttovveggiò) was born in New York City in 1906, the son of a poor Sicilian house-painter. Growing up on the lower east side of Manhattan, he took lessons on the piano and, later, on the organ, making his first attempts to compose at the age of eight. Forced to leave school at 15 in order to help support his family, he attempted to compensate for the premature termination of his formal education by subjecting himself to a strenuous regimen of independent study, which he pursued during long evenings at the New York Public Library, after working at menial clerical jobs during the day. Not only did he teach himself music theory and composition, but also literature, foreign languages, and linguistics.

Creston's independent, self-directed course of study resulted in what is essentially the opposite of a standard basic education: i.e., an idiosyncratic landscape of erudition that formed the framework for his own philosophy. Questioning all conventional or inherited wisdom, he painstakingly and systematically developed his own theories of music, embracing aesthetics, acoustics, harmony, form, notation, and—most of all—rhythm. Many years later, when asked to name those composers who most influenced his development, he cited J. S. Bach, Domenico Scarlatti, Chopin, Debussy, and Ravel.

Not until he was in his mid-twenties did Creston commit himself to a career as a composer, supporting himself at the time by playing the organ to accompany silent films. With the advent of the "talkies," he took a position as organist at St. Malachy's Church in Manhattan, which he held for more than thirty years.

Many of Creston's early pieces were experimental, as he explored techniques and ideas that intrigued him in search of his own identity and compositional voice. The piece he designated as his Opus 1 was *Five Dances* for piano, which he had written in 1932. Shortly thereafter his music came to the attention of Henry Cowell, then an enthusiastic advocate of the musical *avant-garde*. Cowell was impressed by the authenticity, integrity, and seriousness of purpose he found in Creston's early efforts. In 1934, Cowell gave Creston an auspicious showcase, presenting the young composer at one of his "Composers Forum" events at New

York City's New School for Social Research. Creston performed his *Seven Theses* for piano, which he had completed the previous year (and had already submitted to Arnold Schoenberg in support of a request to receive discounted tutelage from the recently arrived immigrant.) Schoenberg rejected the request because of Creston's modifications of conventional notation.) Cowell described the *Theses* as "atonal and dissonant in a virtuosic style and as difficult to listen to as they are to play." In a note in the score Creston writes:

These *Seven Theses* may be viewed as essays in contrapuntal devices and progressional meter. A particular harmonic interval is employed throughout [*sic*] a part (or voice) first with the idea of doubling the melody at other distances than the octave (as was done in Organum music which was doubled in fourth and fifths); and second for its harmonic potentialities when placed against the other voices, which are treated in free style. The meter of each thesis is rather a metrical sequence, instead of a static measure or an ever-changing measure.

As Creston indicated, each of the *Theses* features a particular harmonic entity, treated in relatively strict parallelism:

- I. *Maestoso*—triads and octaves in the right hand
- II. *Scorrevole*—perfect fifths in left-hand triplet patterns
- III. *Espressivo*—major thirds in the left hand
- IV. *Giacoso*—seventh-chords with missing fifths in the right hand
- V. *Grazioso*—perfect fourths in the left hand
- VI. *Tranquillo*—second-inversion triads in the left hand
- VII. *Feroce*—major seconds in the left hand

Cowell published the *Seven Theses* in his *New Music Quarterly* in 1935, and also released a recording of one of Creston's works on his *New Music* record label. Cowell's continued support contributed significantly to the validation of Creston's identity as a composer.

By 1937 Creston had abandoned his compositional experimentation, having arrived at the musical language that would serve him, essentially unchanged, for the rest of his life. This was a language dominated by kinetically charged interplays among heavily-accented, syncopated rhythmic patterns, and a richly robust approach to harmony owing much to the Impressionists.

ded at times within vertical structures and other textures. The work achieves a dramatic climax on a low-register cluster-chord, which is followed by a haunting, neo-Gregorian treatment of the theme, bringing the piece to an ethereal conclusion. In 1977 *Metamorphoses* was choreographed by Tomm Ruud, for presentation by the San Francisco Ballet.

Considerably younger than the other two composers represented, Mark Zuckerman has had to contend with a far more complex and fragmented new-music scene than that faced by his predecessors. Among the myriad styles vying for attention, he has sought to develop his own individual language—what he calls a "classical atonality"—using a straightforward rhetoric that frequently involves applying the rigorous precision of serial composition to sounds and combinations familiar from tonal music.

Born in Brooklyn nearly half a century after Copland, in 1948, Zuckerman took music lessons as a child, making his first attempts to compose when he was eleven. He spent his formative years in the environs of New York City, encouraged and stimulated by the intensive musical enrichment that flourished in suburban public schools during the Kennedy-Johnson years, while pursuing more advanced study of music theory and composition in the Preparatory Division of the Juilliard School.

Unlike Copland and Creston, Zuckerman undertook a formal liberal arts education at the University of Michigan, where he studied composition with George Wilson, and at Bard College, where he worked with Elie Yarden. Becoming intrigued with twelve-tone music, which was in 1970 the dominant force on the new-music scene, he went on to earn a Ph.D. under Milton Babbitt and J. K. Randall at Princeton, the epicenter of serialist culture. Zuckerman's compositions from this time, such as his 1971 flute solo, *Paraphrases*, reflect his immersion in the serial approach.

Zuckerman then embarked on an academic career, serving on the faculties of both Princeton and Columbia. After several years, however, he became disenchanted by the politics of academic life and found his compositional output slowing to a crawl. Leaving the university scene in the mid 1980s he undertook an intense re-examination of principles of musical structure—the sort of analysis that had fascinated him as a student. He emerged from this period of reflection determined to develop a means of musical expression that would be meaningful to others while also satisfying his own creative interests.

Just one year later, in 1938, Fritz Reiner led the Pittsburgh Symphony in the premiere of Creston's first orchestral work. The lively exuberance of Creston's music appealed greatly to audiences and, within less than a decade, his work was being programmed regularly by the nation's leading orchestras, under such conductors as Toscanini, Stokowski, Ormandy, Rodzinski, Monteux, and Szell, many of whom played his music on international tours. By the 1950s Creston had joined Copland as one of America's most widely performed composers.

But Creston's popularity was not as deeply entrenched as Copland's. While the older man's reputation endured the vicissitudes of musical fashion, Creston's did not. By the end of the 1950s performances of his major works had dwindled significantly. Nevertheless, he continued to compose, as well as write articles and books on the theoretical subjects that interested him. Like Copland, Creston was reluctant to embrace serialism, while insisting that his approach to harmony made his music "pantonal," rather than either tonal or atonal.

However, during the 1960s—somewhat later than Copland—he did adopt aspects of the twelve-tone technique in several works. One such work is *Metamorphoses*.

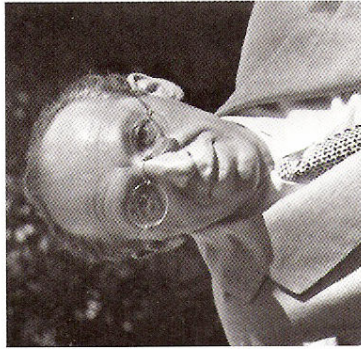
In comparison to the harsh, brittle sonorities and angular gestures of Copland's *Fantasy*, Creston's *Metamorphoses* is more thoroughly grounded in traditional piano figuration and sonority. Completed in 1964, it is the composer's most tightly structured large-scale work for piano, comprising a series of twenty variations on a 28-note theme that contains all twelve tones played at least twice. Yet despite this fact, and despite the relatively dissonant harmonic vocabulary and absence of an implicit tonal center that thereby resulted, Creston did not compose *Metamorphoses* according to strict serial principles. Rather, he created a twelve-tone theme for the purpose of establishing a starting point of expressive neutrality from which the variations evolve, illustrating diverse transformations of character, as implied by the title. As with Copland's *Fantasy*, the use of some twelve-tone devices in no way camouflages or conceals the audible identity of the composer.

Creston's theme is initially presented unadorned and unaccompanied, *senza espressione*, in even quarter-notes—again not unlike the presentation of the row in Copland's *Fantasy*. The variations that follow embrace the full range of Post-Romantic and Impressionistic keyboard figuration, as the theme is explored from a variety of perspectives, proceeding in successively more remote directions. In each of the first twelve variations the theme is transposed up successive half-steps. The subsequent variations present the theme in inverted form, and embed-

Returning to composition around 1990, Zuckerman began building two distinct bodies of work: one consisting of tonal music, exemplified by an internationally-respected collection of choral arrangements of Yiddish songs, and the other comprising atonal music of a novel and highly individual sort. In this portion of his work Zuckerman subjects classical forms and traditional themes and motifs to manipulations derived from serial theory, with the result that sounds and combinations familiar from tonal music take on new and unusual meanings. An excellent example is *On the Edges*, composed in 1996. Concerning the work the composer has written:

On the Edges goes by in six sections contrasting in pulse and energy. The first section is a toccata with two-handed arpeggios gradually turning in to chords that get thicker and thicker before returning to the opening arpeggio motive. A dialogue follows where slow-moving chords are in counterpoint with quicker, arpeggiated figures derived from the toccata's opening figure. Then there's a quiet lyrical reflection—again based on the opening motive—eliding into a cadenza with arpeggiated figures that increase in range and intensity before dissolving into a trill. The next section turns the toccata's opening motive into the subject of a four-part invention, the first in a series of three linked by thematic rotation: the counter-subject of one invention becomes the subject for the next. This cycle completes as the subject of the first invention becomes the counter-subject of the last, and ends as the three subjects are combined, segueing into an extended return of the opening toccata.

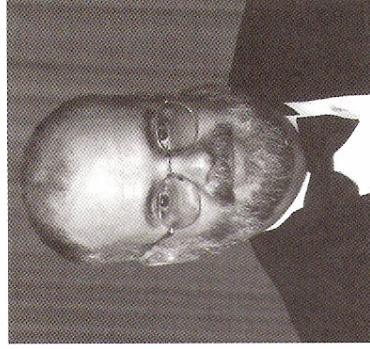
NOTES BY WALTER SIMMONS



Aaron Copland
Composer



Paul Creston
Composer



Mark Zuckerman
Composer

Peter Vinogradé's annual tours of the United States, Canada, and Asia inevitably feature the music of J. S. Bach and living composers. Early studies with David Burge and coaching with William Masselos (who premiered the Copland Piano Fantasy heard on this recording) ignited an ongoing interest in promoting new and unjustly neglected works. Dr. Vinogradé's numerous distinctions include First Prize in the J. S. Bach International Competition, East-West Artists' presentation of his New York debut at Carnegie Recital Hall, and an NEA-sponsored Tully Hall recital that featured Bach's Goldberg Variations, along with 20th-century American works. His programs at the National Gallery are often aired on Performance Today, and his performances are heard regularly on National Public Radio; he was also featured on CBC-TV's The Journal. As a chamber musician, Dr. Vinogradé has appeared at the Bard Festival, at the Caramoor Festival with the St. Luke's Players, and with the Canadian Chamber Ensemble. Recent performance highlights include world premieres of Hal Campbell's Piano Concerto in Utah, and of Nicolas Flagello's Piano Concerto No. 3 in Kentucky, as well as a recital tour of China. Compact disc releases include a CBC recording of Canadian composers Martheves and Fisher, an Albany recording of solo and chamber music by Nicolas Flagello, and Carolina recordings of the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 and the Seven Toccatas of Bach. Born in Ames, Iowa, Dr. Vinogradé studied with Zenon Fishbein at the Manhattan School of Music, where he has also been a member of the faculty since 1981.



Photo taken by Jeff Langford.

"The premiere of Flagello's *Piano Concerto No. 3* was absolutely superb by any possible measure. Vinogradé was perfectly comfortable in his role as protagonist for the late composer, as were Palmer and the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra as they led the audience through three movements of high 'verismo' drama in a style not unlike that of Puccini and a mystery akin to that of Barok."

"New York pianist Peter Vinogradé took the spotlight in the Rachmaninoff [*Concerto No. 2*], turning in a luxurious, technically assured reading that stood nicely outside sentimentality."

"The highlight of the symphony's performance was the Rachmaninoff *Concerto No. 3*... Vinogradé didn't falter ... he attacked the frenzied presto passages with fiery passion and precision, ... an immense talent."

"Instantly impressed as a pianist with a big technique, a lively mind, and a passionate commitment to the music ... an excellent recital."

"Striking clarity [Bach]... exquisitely sultry playing [Albeniz] — It was playing always musical, always intelligent, and panoramic in scope. There was no question of technique, really; the fire and fury consumed everything in sight. For doing things in his own way, he has few peers."