

Summer 1972

## The Structure of Paul Creston's Narrative No. 2, Op. 79 No. 2 for Piano

Myrna Evelyn Johnson  
*Central Washington University*

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THE STRUCTURE OF PAUL CRESTON'S NARRATIVE NO. 2

OP. 79 NO. 2 FOR PIANO

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A Covering Paper

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington State College

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Myrna Evelyn Johnson

July 1972

An integral part of this covering paper  
is a tape recording of a graduate recital  
performed on May 30, 1972, as part of the  
requirements for the completion of the thesis.

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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Howard Barr, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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Joseph S. Haruda

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Paul Creston



DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

*presents*

in GRADUATE RECITAL

M Y R N A    J O H N S O N    Pianist

P R O G R A M

I

Tocatta in G minor . . . . . J. S. Bach  
(1685-1750)

II

Sonata in A minor, K. 310 . . . . . W. A. Mozart  
Allegro maestoso (1756-1791)  
Andante cantabile con espressione  
Presto

III

Rhapsody in B minor, Op. 79 No. 1 . . . . . Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

I N T E R M I S S I O N

IV

Drei Klavierstucke, Op. 11 . . . . . Arnold Schoenberg  
Massige (1874-1951)  
Massige  
Bewegte

V

Narrative No. 2, Op. 79 No. 2 . . . . . Paul Creston

VI

Two Roumanian Dances, Op. 8a . . . . . Bela Bartok  
Allegro vivace (1881-1945)  
Poco allegro

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts Degree in Music

HERTZ RECITAL HALL  
May 30, 1972  
8:15 P.M.

Reception following in Room 123

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Paul Creston deserves special thanks for his helpful criticism and advice concerning the performance and structural analysis of his Narrative No. 2, Op. 79 No. 2. The inspiration provided by the Narrative, along with Mr. Creston's willingness to share his knowledge from the composer's viewpoint, made this study possible.

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Finally, warm appreciation is extended to the author's parents for their continuous support and encouragement.

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THE STRUCTURE OF PAUL CRESTON'S NARRATIVE NO. 2

OP. 79 NO. 2 FOR PIANO

by

Myrna E. Johnson

July, 1972

This paper presents an analytical discussion of the structure of Paul Creston's Narrative No. 2. An explanation of Mr. Creston's approach to composition is followed by a general description of the free-sectional form. Next, each section is investigated separately according to its rhythm, harmony, and melody. However, at the same time relationships between the sections are mentioned also.

Some characteristics of Mr. Creston's style which are revealed in this study are his use of various rhythmic structures, pantonality, the lydian mode, and tangential variation.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century music is a reflection of a twentieth-century world, which is probably best described as complex and pluralistic. In science, philosophy, psychology, economics, sociology, music and nearly every other discipline there are several conflicting schools of thought, which in addition are in a constant state of flux from within.

Music today illustrates this wide range of thought. There are those who will vouch that rock-music is the only significant contemporary music, and there are those who claim that anything that is not based on electronic sounds is completely outdated. In between those dichotomous views are many more diverse types of music including atonal, serial, neo-classic, nationalistic, as well as the continuation into the twentieth century of common-practice technique in the emotional attitude of Romanticism.

Even among performing musicians who have similar tastes, there is disagreement as to how music should be interpreted and performed. If one bypasses the numerous individual philosophies, there nonetheless remain at least two general philosophies of performance. The more individualistic performers believe that music should include the opportunity for conveying the

performer's emotions, and therefore to meet this end, the music need not be played exactly as written at all times. Their opponents, the classicists, answer that it is not the performer, but the music that is more important, and any personal alterations in rhythm, dynamics, or other elements serve only to alter the original meaning of the music.

## THE PROBLEM

### Statement of the Problem

One strong trend of music performers in recent years has been to adhere to the classicist philosophy, and to devote less attention towards virtuosic display and more towards bringing out the structural details in the music. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to use the opportunity of conferring directly with a leading American composer, Paul Creston, in order to find out exactly how he intends the structural elements of his Narrative No. 2 to be understood by pianists who perform the work.

### Importance of the Study

Mr. Creston, like other twentieth-century musicians, has his own definition of what constitutes music. He says, "In order of progressive importance, music is a science, an art and a language" (3:10). It is hoped that the material presented here will be beneficial to others who wish to learn more about Mr. Creston's conception of music.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several factors influenced the choice of Mr. Creston's Narrative No. 2 as the topic for this paper. First, this is a covering paper which is written as a supplement to the graduate piano recital presented at CWSC on May 30, 1972. A detailed paper on the entire recital would become too lengthy, and a shorter paper covering the whole program would necessarily be too general to be of primary value. The reasons for limiting the study to Mr. Creston's piece in particular are two: First, a quantity of material is available about music of composers before the twentieth century; second, and more important, of the three twentieth-century pieces on the program, Narrative No. 2 is the one which affords the possibility of conferring with the composer on his conception of the work. Therefore, it was decided that this paper should be an analytical discussion of Narrative No. 2 according to its basic elements: form, rhythm, harmony, and melody.

## PROCEDURE USED IN THE STUDY

The preparation of this paper involved, first of all, developing a thorough understanding of Narrative No. 2. This included the following: 1) practice sessions with Mr. Creston in which he offered suggestions and constructive criticisms for performance of the piece; 2) interviews with him during which he answered questions and explained important points about the structure of the Narrative; 3) studying literature

about Mr. Creston, and literature written by him about the meaning of his music.

After sufficient background knowledge was obtained, this paper was organized according to the following plan. Chapter 1 contains introductory material, including the definition of important terms used by Mr. Creston. Chapter 2 begins the body of the investigation, to explain the composer's abstract philosophy of music and to show how his concern with the element of rhythm is reflected in Narrative No. 2. Chapter 3 analyzes the form of the Narrative and presents an analysis of each section in terms of its rhythm, harmony and melody. The fourth and final chapter unifies the main points discussed.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to understand Paul Creston's music, one must become familiar with his musical terminology. Mr. Creston believes that rhythm is the most important element of music, and therefore, the majority of terms associated particularly with his music deal with rhythm. The following terms are discussed more fully in his book, Principles of Rhythm.

##### Elements of Rhythm

Rhythm. Rhythm is "the organization of duration in ordered movement" (11:1).

Meter. "A meter is a grouping of pulses or units within a single measure or a frame of two or more measures" (11:3).


Pulse. "Pulse is the term used . . . to designate what is commonly called 'beat'. For example,  $3/4$  meter consists of three pulses to a measure, . . .  $6/8$  meter consists of two pulses to a measure . . ." (11:3).


Beat. A beat is "the actual rhythmic beat which may or may not coincide with the metrical pulse" (11:3).

Unit. A unit is a subdivision of a pulse or a beat. The two types of units are: 1) metrical, subdivisions of the pulse; 2) rhythmic, subdivisions of the beat (8).

Example 1 (11:3).



Binary meter. In binary meter the "primary units" (the division into the next smaller unit) of each pulse are two (11:14). An example of binary meter is  $2/4$ : .

Ternary meter. In ternary meter there are three primary units in each pulse (11:14). Traditional  $6/8$  is a ternary meter: .

### Rhythmic Structures

According to Mr. Creston, five rhythmic plans, called rhythmic structures, are found in music of Western Civilization from 1600 to the twentieth century. He defines them as follows:

First structure: Regular Subdivision. "Regular subdivision is the organization of a measure into equal beats, i.e., beats of equal duration different than the number of pulses" (11:53), e.g.  $\frac{3}{4}$  ♩. ♪ | .

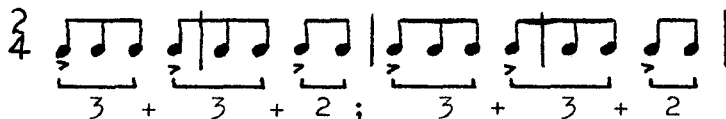
Second structure: Irregular Subdivision. "Irregular subdivision is the organization of a measure into unequal beats, i.e., beats of differing duration" (11:76). (See Example 3.)

Third structure: Overlapping. "Overlapping is the extension of a phrase rhythm beyond the barline" (11:96). (See Example 7.) It results in changing meters, and in most twentieth century music it is notated as multimeters or changing meters.

Fourth structure: Regular Subdivision Overlapping. Regular subdivision overlapping is "the organization of a group of measures into equal beats overlapping the barline. The difference between it and simple regular subdivision is that the beats are contained within a frame of two or more measures instead of a single measure" (11:111). It is a combination of first and third structures. (See Example 4.)

Fifth structure: Irregular Subdivision Overlapping. Irregular subdivision overlapping is "the organization of a group of measures into unequal beats overlapping the barline. It is a combination of the second and third structures" (11:129).

What distinguishes it from third structure overlapping is the presence of a repeated pattern. Mr. Creston states that it is a phenomenon peculiar to twentieth century music.



### Additional Terms

Figuration. "A rhythmic figuration is the melodic and harmonic form of a rhythm" (8).

Free-sectional form. Free-sectional form consists of "a series of contrasting sections in any order (A B C D - A B C B A B - A B A C D - etc.), but the sections must be unified by some element" (8).

Tangential variation. The tangential variation is a type of melodic variation which is a trademark of Paul Creston, as it was with Bach, although the term itself is Creston's. "A tangential variation of a melody begins a phrase with any segment of the melody, and then develops it differently than in the original statement" (8).



## Chapter 2

### CRESTON'S APPROACH TO COMPOSITION

An explanation of Mr. Creston's philosophy of music is necessary in order to understand his compositional techniques. As quoted earlier, he believes music to be a science, an art and a language. He continues, "Science is to know, art is to do, and language is to communicate" (3:10). The first of these categories, the science of music, requires a knowledge of acoustics, a subdivision of the science of physics which deals with the phenomena of sound. Although much attention has been given to the transmission and reception of sound, Mr. Creston feels that the art and particularly the language of music are more important, and therefore it is these two factors which have the greatest influence on the structure of his music.

### THE ART OF MUSIC

Mr. Creston says that, as an art, music requires practice in the analysis and performance of rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, and form. His philosophy illustrates this approach:

My philosophic approach to composition is abstract. I am preoccupied with matters of melodic design, harmonic coloring, rhythmic pulse and formal progression, not with imitations of nature, or narrations of fairy tales . . . .

Not that the source of inspiration may not be a picture or a story; only that, regardless of the origin of the subject, . . . a musical composition must bear judgment on purely musical criteria (7).

He feels that people are making a mistake when they think that appreciation of a piece of music is dependent on extra-musical factors such as the title. The title need not tell anything about the musical structure of a piece unless it designates a particular form or dance rhythm.

In the case of the three Narratives composed by Paul Creston in 1962, the title "Narrative," decided upon after the compositions were written, merely indicates that the music tells some kind of a narrative or story, and therefore is lyric-dramatic in style. The story it tells, which cannot be expressed in words, is left to the imagination of the listener.

## THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

### Language Elements in Music

"As a language, music requires comprehensive knowledge of notation, the semantics of harmony, and the various areas in which the purpose is to communicate ideas . . ." (3:10). Mr. Creston has observed that composers and musicologists often mislead the public into believing that music is a mystery because they themselves wish to appear as individuals with some magical knowledge beyond ordinary human understanding. However, he believes that music, except to the musical genius, is like a foreign language which once its basic elements are learned is not impossible to understand. Some of these basic

structural elements are chords and harmony (words and diction), phrases and periods (sentences and paragraphs), phrasing marks and cadences (punctuation), and harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic principles (grammar).

In composing his music, Mr. Creston proceeds step by step from one of the elements to another. He always begins by selecting the particular mood. Next, he chooses the appropriate rhythmic plan, and then the appropriate harmonic plan. Lastly, he creates the melody. The reason for designing the melody after the harmony is that, according to Mr. Creston, a chord gives a feeling of mood more quickly than a melody.

The one important difference between music and language is that "whereas verbal language can express philosophical ideas, relate historical events, describe scenes, etc. . . . the primary function of music is the expression and the engendering of emotions . . ." (5:9). Mr. Creston believes that one of the real mysteries of music is not how it is created, but why it creates such psychological responses as fear, amusement, and tranquility.

The sooner one learns to be attentive to melodic lines, harmonic coloring, rhythmic motion, formal organization and style characteristics, the sooner will one be really listening to, and correctly appreciating, the composer's music (5:44).

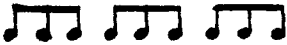

### The Notation



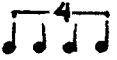
Proper rhythmic notation is as important in music as spelling is in language. Narrative No. 2 is written in 9/12 with a footnote which reads, "Revised notation for the traditional 9/8." A brief explanation in Mr. Creston's Rhythmicon

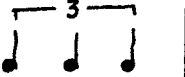
states:

The basis of the revised notation is the correct mathematical terminology of note values, particularly in ternary . . . meters . . . . A whole note can be equally divided in 2 half-notes ( $2/2 = 1$ ), 4 quarter-notes ( $4/4 = 1$ ), 8 eighth-notes ( $8/8 = 1$ ), etc. but not in 12 eighth-notes because  $12/8 = 3/2$ , not 1. . . . A whole note divided in 12 equal units is 12 twelfths ( $12/12 = 1$ ) (12:92).

In Narrative No. 2 there are three pulses per measure ( $\downarrow = 48$ ) with three units to each pulse, or nine units in each measure. Therefore, the meter is  $9/12$ , and in  $9/12$  meter we have the following note values:

Units		nine $1/12$ notes ( $9/12 = 3/4$ )
Pulses		three $1/4$ notes ( $3/4$ ).

Traditional notation ignores as symbols of duration the dot, the tie, and the numeral and calls ( $\downarrow$ ) a dotted-quarter, ( $\downarrow$  ) a quarter tied to an eighth, and  or , quarter-notes. Mr. Creston's terminology, on the other hand, calls every note according to its fractional duration value of a whole-note. It follows that in  $3/4$  meter where the quarter-note is the pulse, the commonly called dotted-half-note would properly be called a three-fourth-note. Likewise, the notes in the following example should be called sixth notes rather than the traditional quarter-notes.

$\frac{2}{4}$			$1/3 \times 2/4 = 2/12 = 1/6.$
---------------	---	--	--------------------------------

If Narrative No. 2 had been written in a slower tempo in which the eighth-note ( $\downarrow = 48$ ) would indicate the pulse instead of the primary unit, then the correct metric signature would be a true  $9/8$ . In order to avoid confusion, the remainder

of this paper will refer to twelfth-notes, sixth-notes, etc., according to their graphic aspect and not their durational value.

## Chapter 3

### NARRATIVE NO. 2: BASIC STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Mr. Creston defines form as "the organization of the elements of music into a unified whole" (9). The elements he refers to are: rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, texture, agogics, and style. This chapter discusses how three of these elements, rhythm, harmony, and melody, are organized "into a unified whole" in Paul Creston's Narrative No. 2, Op. 79 No. 2.

#### FREE-SECTIONAL FORM

##### The Six Sections

Narrative No. 2 is in free-sectional form and is divided into six sections: A B C D C' A'.

A = measures 1-30 (30 total).

B = measures 31-50 (20 total).

C = measures 51-64 (14 total).

D = measures 65-76 (12 total).

C' = measures 77-97 (21 total).

A' = measures 98-120 (23 total).

Section A, the exposition, is divided into two subsections: the first one being measures 1-13; the second, measures 14-26. Measures 27-30 form a bridge to the B section.

Sections B, C, and D, each one progressively shorter in length, are development sections leading up to Section C', the final and largest development section. This section contains the major climax of the piece, which occurs at measure 88. Section C' is the only section which begins fortissimo. All the other sections begin pianissimo, and although they each have their own minor climaxes, none of these are greater than a forte.

Section A', the dénouement, returns to the original tonal center of D-flat. It repeats the A theme, develops by means of tangential variation, and finally closes with a codetta beginning at measure 114. The twenty-three measures of this section make it significantly larger than any of the first three development sections, slightly longer than the climax section, and nicely balanced with the opening section.

#### Elements of Contrast

One can see at a glance where one section ends and a new one begins. First, one notices the changes in the accompanying figuration. In Section A it consists of eighth-notes over a tremolo of thirty-second notes. In Section B it becomes a running pattern of sixteenth notes. Section C begins with an accompaniment pattern which is predominantly eighth notes, and so on.

The melody also changes in each section. In A it is a long, sustained single-note melody. In B it becomes a quicker, double-note melody. In C it is triads in the right

hand; in D it switches to triads in the left hand. The thickest texture arrives in the climax section where the melody sounds out in full octave chords. In the dénouement the single-note melody returns, an appropriate conclusion of the sequence.

### Elements of Unity

The melodic sequence discussed above illustrates that even the elements of contrast are accompanied by elements of unity. Similarly, although the rhythm of each section is different from the one preceding it, the third structure is used throughout most of the piece.

Another unifying factor is the harmony. Mr. Creston describes his harmony as being always pantonal, the use of key signatures being only for convenience sake. In addition, Narrative No. 2 is dominated by seventh-chords, ninth-chords, and polychords, with other chord-types inserted for contrast, emphasis, or punctuation.

A third important element of unity is the nature of the melodic line. Mr. Creston shows a preference for the lydian mode in his music because it is more "harmonious" than the major mode; he is referring to the smoother dissonance produced when the lydian mode is used.

### Example 2.

The image shows a musical score for Example 2, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'Major' and the second is labeled 'Lydian'. Both systems feature a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The Major mode is shown with a natural F, and the Lydian mode is shown with a sharp F. The notation includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bass clef part shows chords corresponding to the modes.



Furthermore, the melody of each section of Narrative No. 2, although beginning a new theme each time, has its germ in the A theme. All the themes are further unified by being simple, as opposed to florid, in style.

### SECTION A

#### Rhythm

The rhythm of the accompanying figuration established in the first two measures is in the second rhythmic structure (irregular subdivision).

Example 3. Narrative No. 2, meas. 1.

The musical notation for Example 3 shows the first measure of Narrative No. 2. It is in 4/2 time, marked Lento (♩ = 48), and begins with a piano (pp) dynamic. The notation is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with irregular subdivisions, indicated by brackets and the number '2' above the notes. The first two measures are shown in a larger font, and a smaller version of the same notation is shown below them.

In measures 9 and 10 (Example 4) this figure changes to the fourth structure (regular subdivision overlapping) for a few measures. The eighth-note pattern over a flutter of thirty-second-notes is continued without pause from measures 1-26, although in measure 14 the figuration is transferred to the right hand, slightly altered.

## Example 4. Meas. 9-10.

This rhythm is suddenly altered by the block chords of the transition beginning in measure 27. Measures 28 and 29 are in the fourth structure (Example 5). Measure 30 returns to the second structure.

## Example 5. Meas. 28-29.

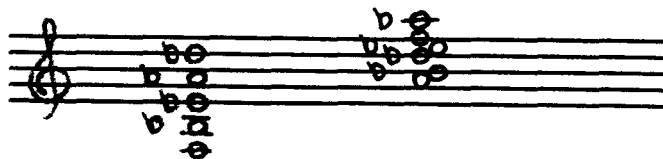
The melody, which enters in measure 3 in the left hand, is in the third structure (overlapping). (See Examples 7-11.)

## Harmony

The tonal center, in the beginning at least, is D-flat. The D-flat major triad is outlined in the first three notes and is part of the quartal chord figuration until measure 6. The melody reinforces the feeling of D-flat by beginning on F and outlining a D-flat major seventh chord for two measures. The static harmony of the first five measures produces a feeling of calmness, setting the mood for the piece.

The opening chord, shown below, is a quartal added tone chord. The reason for calling it a quartal chord rather than a minor seventh with an added tone is that the original root position is F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db, and by permutation it becomes an added tone chord.

Example 6.



"root" position      "added tone" form

In measures 6-11 the static harmony of the opening is replaced by pantonality consisting primarily of seventh and ninth chords until measure 12 where the original D-flat harmony is restored for two measures.

At measure 14 a new tonal center appears, but after only one measure on an A major triad, key feeling is lost, and pantonality again takes over as the bass line leads the harmonic progression downwards in stepwise motion. Measures 14 and 15

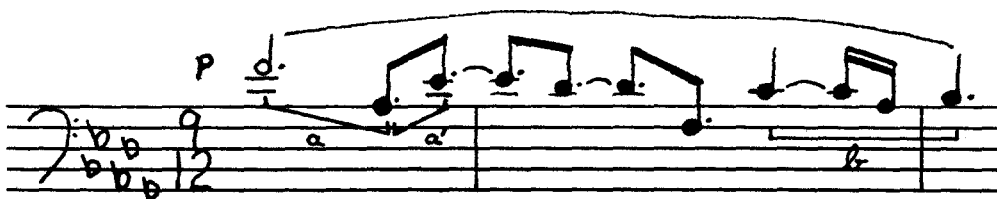
begin with added tone seventh chords on A and G-sharp, but measures 14-26 are basically all seventh chords with non-chordal tones between.

The last measure of Section A returns to a D-flat chord like the beginning, but it disappears during the transition, a series of parallel polychords (Example 5).

### Melody

The melody of the A section is a legato, single-note melody in two subsections. The first subsection (measures 3-13) is all for the left hand. It is basically a disjunctive (moving by skips) melody, as Example 7 shows, but the range of the entire first subsection yet is no more than a tenth, and it begins and ends on the same tone F above Middle C. The first phrase is a 'long-line' melody, although only three measures in length.

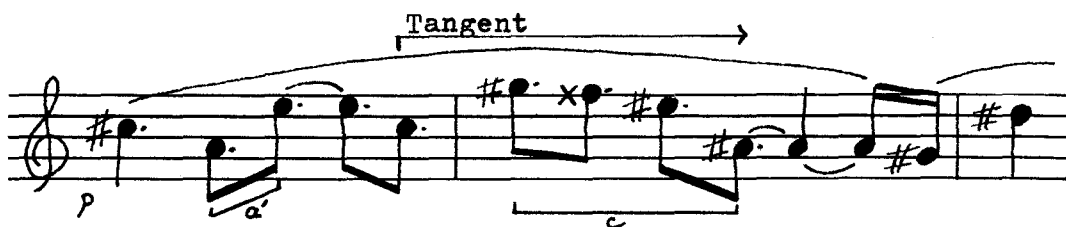
Example 7. Meas. 3-5.



The second subsection enters in the right hand at measure 14. This theme is a tangential variation of the first one. Therefore, after the upward fifth, new melodic material is added on (Example 8). Despite the fact that this is also a 'long-line' melody within the range of a tenth, it manages

to build up to the climactic point of the A section at measure 21 (Example 9). This climax reveals two similarities with the opening phrase motive "b": 1) the rhythm of a quarter-note tied to two sixteenths; 2) the three-note cadence around a third.

Example 8. Meas. 14-16.



Example 9. Meas. 20-21.



Another excerpt from the first subsection illustrates one more relationship between the two subsections of Section A. It is motive "c" in Examples 8 and 10.

Example 10. Meas. 8-10.



Because it reappears so frequently in other sections of the piece, one additional motive is included here for later reference. Measures 18-19 introduce a scalewise passage which descends from A down a minor seventh to B. At measure 24, shown below, this interval is shortened to a sixth. However, a measure later it does finally cadence on the enharmonic seventh below, C-natural.

Example 11. Meas. 24.



#### SECTION B

#### Rhythm

Both the accompanying figuration and the melody are in the third rhythmic structure (overlapping), but as Example 12 shows, they do not overlap at the same points. (Note the E-sharp of the lydian mode on a B scale.)

Example 12. Meas. 31-32.

*poco più mosso*

*pp*

Section B feels less calm than Section A because there is more rhythmic motion. The accompaniment, which has changed to sixteenth-notes, nevertheless feels faster because it is not offset by a perpetual eighth-note pattern as it was in Section A. Along with more motion in the left hand figuration, the melodic motion in Section B increases also.

### Harmony

No single tonal center is established well enough to be clearly recognizable. Thus, here again Mr. Creston is using his favorite harmonic device of pantonality. For example, in measures 46-50 he goes through the following series of chords: E-flat dominant seventh, G-flat major seventh, E ninth, F-sharp major, B major, D-sharp minor, and D dominant seventh.

The types of chords in this section are chiefly triads, sevenths, and ninths with non-chordal tones interspersed. The non-chordal tones often include, as illustrated in Example 12, the raised fourth degree of the lydian mode. The minor climax at measure 45 is a dominant raised eleventh chord on A; its harsher harmonic quality creates more tension than the preceding sevenths and ninths. However, the major climax of this section is at measure 49 where a widely-spaced B major chord (with a raised fourth in the figuration) returns. This is the same chord as the one with which this section began. Thus, the B section, like the opening section, makes a sort of twentieth century harmonic cycle.

At the end of measure 50 are three chords which prepare for the C section. This short transition is like the first one between A and B in that it consists of polychords, but this time they move convergently.

### Melody

A new theme appears at the beginning of the B section. It is a double-note melody, alternating mostly between thirds and sixths. The subject of Section B is similar to those of the A section, but it begins with a conjunctive rather than disjunctive melodic line. This theme (Example 12), which is much shorter than the A theme, being only a little over a measure long, reappears every third phrase and goes off on a new tangent each time. The last tangential variation enters pianissimo immediately following a forte climax and, melodically and rhythmically, resembles the original theme more than any of the other variations. Their similarity is seen by comparing Examples 12 and 13. This sudden return to the quiet mood of the opening before surging up to the final climax of the section in measure 49 results in a very effective, coherent section.

Example 13. Meas. 46-47.

The musical notation for Example 13 shows two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The upper staff begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. The melody consists of double-note chords, primarily thirds and sixths. A bracket labeled "Tangent" with an arrow points to the end of the phrase in measure 47. The lower staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.



The range of the theme is only a minor seventh, but the range covered during the entire B section is two octaves. The climax in measure 49 is again the highest point in the section, a high F-sharp, a fourth higher than the climax of Section A.

Although the theme in B is a new theme, its origin can be found in Section A. For example, the descending six-note scale pattern which opens the B section was introduced in measure 24 of Section A on A-sharp (Example 11). Perhaps it is coincidental, but in measures 33 and 34 this same motive reappears on the original tones (noted by asterisks) varied by rhythmic and melodic interpolation. (The composer has said that such similarities were not planned consciously but felt intuitively.)

Example 14. Meas. 33-34.



Other similarities are in the occurrence of melodic skips of fourths and fifths throughout this section. In addition the cadential motive from the A theme (Example 7) appears on the first climax of the B section on the notes D-sharp, B, C-sharp. Other relationships can be found, but the above are enough to show the unity between the first two sections.

## SECTION C

Rhythm

The rhythm of Section C is, as usual, the third structure (overlapping) in both the melody and the accompanying figuration. In this section, for the most part, the overlapping meters are very pronounced because, for the first time, the melody and the accompaniment have the same rhythm, as shown in Example 15.

Example 15. Meas. 51-52.

*a tempo*

*pp poco rubato*

*(Pedal on each chord)*

Harmony

The harmony is once again pantonal. The chords are nearly all seventh chords until measures 59-63, at which point they change to added tone chords. In measure 63 the rhythm becomes more forceful, and a chain of suspension chords appear to build up excitement leading to the climax. The climax and last measure of Section C is a big, arpeggiated, added tone suspension chord on F. One characteristic which makes suspension chords like those in Example 16 easy to spot is the interval of a fourth in the two highest voices.

## Example 16. Meas. 63-64.

Melody

The new theme which enters at the beginning of the C section is a three-tone, chordal melody. It consists chiefly of triads which, when combined with the single notes in the bass, produce the seventh chords. In measure 59 where the melody changes to added tone chords the bass becomes a legato line of sixteenth-notes.

The character of this melody is in striking contrast to the flowing ones that preceded it. Mr. Creston describes it as clumps of bell-like sound (measures 51-58) becoming clusters of louder-sounding bells (measure 59). Although Mr. Creston generally leaves pedaling up to the discretion of the performer, here he has indicated "Pedal on each chord" for this special effect.

The C theme (Example 15) begins with a downward skip of a major sixth, like the opening A theme, but then it moves upward by step. The following phrases are all tangential variations of the first phrase. For example, the second phrase begins with a downward fifth which then moves up again by step. Then a few phrases develop the theme until measures

57 and 59 which begin with downward leaps of a sixth and fifth respectively. The intervallic skips which begin or end nearly every phrase in Section C are clearly derived from the opening theme in Section A, therefore unifying this section with the first one.

It is interesting to note one further similarity between the melodies of Sections A and C. The climax of this section (Example 16) is almost note for note the same descending scale motive, altered rhythmically, as measure 24 in Section A and measures 33-34 in Section B (Examples 11 and 14).

#### SECTION D

##### Rhythm

The rhythmic structure of the D melody is, once again, overlapping. The opening phrase begins with exactly the same rhythm as that of Section B at measure 31 (Examples 12 and 17). The accompanying figuration consists of rippling runs of sixteenth-note triplets, a rhythmic pattern which appears for the first time.

Example 17. Meas. 65-66.

The musical score for Example 17 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains the melody. It begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The melody starts with a descending line of notes, with two triplet markings over the first sixteenth notes of the first and second measures. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains the accompaniment. It begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and is marked *cantabile*. The accompaniment consists of a series of chords and dyads, with a long slur over the first two measures.

## Harmony

The harmony in this section is found in the chordal melody of the left hand, parallel six-four chords. The running thirds in the right hand figuration are mostly non-chordal tones but sometimes forming seventh and ninth chords.

Although the left hand melody is made up of triads, and the right hand of scale passages in thirds, together they actually form two-part writing, with multiple voices in each part. Mr. Creston notes that the idea of a melody in second inversion triads is really an extension of the practice of organum in which one voice was harmonized in parallel fourths and fifths by a second voice.

By following the chordal melody for a few measures, one notes that this section, like the preceding ones, is an example of pantonality. The chords in measures 65 through the first pulse of 71 are all second inversion triads accompanied by the lightly-moving thirds in the right hand, but in the second pulse of measure 71 the right hand thirds change to single notes alternating with added tone chords. This is in preparation for the transitional measures which begin with measure 72. The transition, measures 72-76, is a bravura passage in which the figuration becomes more prominent, and together the two parts steadily crescendo to the climactic section of the piece.

## Melody

The rhythmic relationship between the opening themes of Sections B and D has already been cited. However, by examining the contour of the two melodies one discovers another similarity, namely, that the D theme is an inversion of the B theme which, after the first measure, develops into a new tangential variation.

Not only is this theme related to the B theme, but it also has several motives which stem from the A theme. For example, motive "d" from the A theme (Example 10) reappears at measures 66 and 67 on G-sharp, A-sharp, B, E-sharp, and also in measure 71 shown below.

Example 18. Meas. 71-72.

Example 18 brings up one other point. The theme ends at the beginning of measure 72. The melody cadences on F-sharp, G-sharp, F-natural. The cadence of the A theme in measures 11-12 ended on the same three notes: G-flat, A-flat, F-natural. Actually, this motive is simply a variation of the "b" motive which ends the opening phrase of the A theme (Example 7).

### SECTION C'

#### Rhythm

As Section C' indicates, this section has many things in common with Section C, including the rhythmic structure. Measures 77-82 are phrased in the same overlapping rhythm as measures 51-58 of Section C. However, the accompanying figuration continues on with the sixteenth-note triplet rhythm that was introduced in Section D, the only difference being that now it has single notes interspersed with the thirds. The original rhythm is also slightly altered by the tempo indication at the head of this section, "a little broad and rubato."

In measures 83-91 the original C rhythm is completely abandoned and replaced by dramatic arpeggios, scale passages, and a combination of several figurations. This results in a triumphant climax section reaching its peak in rhapsodic fashion.

#### Harmony

The texture of this section is thicker than that of any of the preceding sections, partly as a result of the thick

polychords and added tone chords which make up the harmony. The first chord, for example, in measure 77 is a raised eleventh chord built on A-flat, or a polychord of an augmented G-flat triad over an A-flat major triad. (See example below.) Then follows a restatement of the C section, except that its proportions are greatly magnified by the heavier chordal melody and thicker figuration.

Example 19. Meas. 77.

The C theme is interrupted in measure 83 by a huge broken raised ninth chord built on E. After a short snatch of melody, another sforzando, broken chord strikes in measure 84. This one is a raised eleventh chord with C-sharp as its prime. The climax of the entire piece is at measure 88. Although not quite as obvious as the preceding chords, the following example shows that the climax chords are also formed as polychords. The chord on the first two pulses is a D-flat Dominant Seventh superimposed over an E major triad. The third pulse is a C augmented triad over a D Dominant Seventh. This is the second instance where Mr. Creston has added a pedal marking for a special effect.



## Example 20. Meas. 88.

$\text{Db}_7 + \text{EM triad}$ 
\*
 $\text{D}_7 + \text{C Aug. triad}$

Melody

The subject for the melody of this section is the theme from the C section. As in Section C, the theme is a chordal melody in the right hand, but unlike the original C theme, this one consists of full-sounding octave chords played fortissimo.

From measures 77 to the second pulse in measure 80, the theme is a reprise of C, measures 51-54. Measures 81-82 are parallel to measures 57-58. The highest point in the piece is the high B at the climax in measure 88. The scale which descends a seventh to C-sharp, and then moves immediately down another seventh, is parallel to the similar passage in measures 63-64 of Section C. Both are derived, of course, from the original motive in Section A.

Near the end of the transition measures appears a clever little motive which prepares the work for the recapitulation of the A theme. A comparison of these two measures

with the very first measure of the introduction (Example 3) reveals an obvious motivic relationship.

Example 21.

The image shows a musical score for Example 21. It consists of two staves. The top staff is marked *a tempo* and contains a cantabile melody with a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, some beamed together. The bottom staff is marked *poco rit.* and contains a legato arpeggio of thirty-second notes, starting from a low bass tone and moving up to a high treble tone. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

#### SECTION A'

##### Rhythm

Section A' returns to the same rhythm as that which was used in the beginning of the piece, an overlapping melody accompanied by thirty-second notes. However, this time the figuration is a legato arpeggio floating from the low bass tones up to the highest treble ones in a continuous, unbroken line. Embedded in the middle of this flowing figuration is the cantabile melody of the opening section.

##### Harmony

The tonal center is D-flat, as it was in Section A. The chord progression is also repeated and, therefore, will not be discussed again.

However, the final cadence in measures 117-120 presents some unusual harmony. The cadence and its analysis are illustrated in Example 22 a and b. The smooth voice-leading going from the dominant raised eleventh chord to the major triad at

the end make it one of Mr. Creston's favorite cadences. The last chord is a traditional D-flat major triad, but its approach and its spacing are certainly not traditional.

Example 22. Meas. 117-120.

a.

pp 5 6 5 5 5 8

rall.

edmands

118 119

20559

Lento

120

7

ppp

## Example 22 (contd.).

Each chord is shown first in its original distribution, then in close position:

b.

Dom. added tone  
ninth.

Dom. added tone  
seventh.

Dom. raised  
eleventh

D-flat  
Major.

A little closer look at the cadence discloses an element of unity which demonstrates the part intuition must play in composition. The primes of the four cadence chords are G-flat, A, F-flat, D-flat. However, the high E-double-flat in measure 119 is held so long that it is heard as much as the primes of the chords which come before it. Now, if these five tones are re-spelled enharmonically and the octaves transposed, the surprising result is the opening theme:

## Example 23.

Melody

As at the beginning, there is a two-measure introduction before the melody enters in measure 100. Measures 100-109 are an exact recapitulation of the opening theme, but in measure 109 the harmony in the figuration beneath the melody is new. This marks the beginning of a final tangential variation. At measure 114 the melody ends and a codetta begins. It is filled with florid passage work which leads directly into the final cadence arpeggios discussed above.

The cadence comes to a close on the soft D-flat harmony, and the music of Narrative No. 2 fades away.

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY

This study was begun with the intention of determining the structure of Paul Creston's Narrative No. 2, Op. 79 No. 2 for the purpose of better understanding the music and its interpretation. Later, it was discovered that this approach to the study of music is what Mr. Creston recommends for the study of any language.

One of Mr. Creston's main concerns is the importance of music as a language. At one time, he waivered between a literary and a musical profession, but fortunately, decided to use his creative talent for music. He believes that no language, including music, is impossible to understand if one is willing to learn the basic elements of that language. Unfortunately, metric and rhythmic notation is in a very confused state. Therefore, Mr. Creston has devised his own system which was explained in relation to Narrative No. 2.

The rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structure of Narrative No. 2 discloses the fact that, although in free-sectional form, it is a tightly organized piece of music. Rather than six independent sections, there is an exposition, a development to the climax, and a dénouement or recapitulation. True, the sections have enough contrasting elements to be recognized as such, but they are not freely independent and disconnected.

Mr. Creston's three principles of form are: 1) repetition; 2) variation; 3) contrast. Each of these is very evident in Narrative No. 2. The clearest examples of repetition are the melodies of sections A and A' and C and C'. Among the other sections, several examples of repetition of rhythmic motives occur.

Elements of contrast also exist between the sections. One of these is the figuration which varies from a static thirty-second-note pattern in one section, to scale patterns of sixteenth-note triplets in thirds in another. Registers are also contrasted. In one section the melody is in the left hand and the figuration in the right; in another they appear in reversed positions. The texture also changes in each section, the thickest one being arrived, most appropriately, at the climax where the melody is reinforced with heavy chords.

The principle of variation lies at the heart of Mr. Creston's composition. One of his favorite axioms is that with every repetition there should be an element of variation, and with every variation there must be an element of repetition. One of the most important variation devices found in Narrative No. 2 is the tangential variation. Every theme originated by taking some idea from the first one and then developing it, by means of tangential variation, into a new idea.

Variation of rhythm and harmony are other factors which provide contrast and unity at the same time. Although there is contrast of rhythmic motion in each section, the structure of overlapping meters is preserved in the melody. The harmony

remains pantonal and in sevenths and ninths throughout, but it is varied occasionally with contrasting chord-types, especially at points of climax.

An understanding of the structure of music is valuable for nearly every aspect of performance. For a pianist, the essentials for a good performance are a good memory, intelligent and meaningful interpretation, and competent technique. In Narrative No. 2 an awareness of the harmony is a helpful memory aid. For example, in Section C, if one knows that the chordal left hand melody is all major second inversion triads, he needs only to learn the melody, not each separate chord.

This author advocates that music should be interpreted according to the composer's intentions. Therefore, if one has the opportunity of studying directly with the composer, as in this case with Paul Creston, one is very fortunate. In his Narrative No. 2 an understanding of the overlapping rhythm can be of importance for correct phrasing of the melody. Any use of rubato must, of course, be in keeping with the overlapping phrases. In a similar manner pedaling must serve to make the phrasing clear. A knowledge of the harmony is a must at points such as the climax, where recognition of the polychords immediately explains Mr. Creston's particular pedal marking.

A pianist unacquainted with the structure of Narrative No. 2 might misinterpret the piece by blurring harmony and melody where the changes should be clear, and breaking harmony where it should blend together, as in the polychords cited



above. He might also fail to notice the phrasing, and therefore phrase it as he would a metrically-written piece of music.

Perhaps the only aspect of performance which cannot be significantly affected by a knowledge of its structure is technique. In Narrative No. 2 the reach of a tenth is a tenth regardless of what kind of chord it is! However, for interpretation and understanding of Mr. Creston's music, this study has proved to be very worthwhile to the performer. It is hoped that others who perform his music may benefit to some degree by this documentation of Mr. Creston's own stated views of the structural elements in this significant addition to the piano repertoire of the mid-twentieth century.

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