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Guide to the Cyril Felix William Creque Collection

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CENTER FOR BLACK MUSIC RESEARCH COLLECTION

The Cyril Felix William Creque Collection, 1937-1959

EXTENT

1 box and 1 volume, 1 linear foot

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Cyril Creque (1899 – 1959), was a poet, composer, and Health Department officer, born on St. Thomas (then the Danish West Indies) in 1899 and he was one of the forerunners of the Virgin Islands poetic tradition. The collection contains six music manuscripts, sheet music for one published song, and one book of poetry.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Cyril Creque, poet, composer, and Health Department officer was born on St. Thomas (then the Danish West Indies) in 1899. He attended the best schools available on the island, and as was a common practice at the time, continued his education by correspondence. Creque took courses in Poetics and Versification with the Home Correspondence School in Springfield, Massachusetts, and studied psychology and harmony as well, earning a diploma from the University Extension Conservatory of Chicago, Illinois in 1938.

His life-long career, however, was with the Health Department. He began as a clerk in 1919 and attained the post of administrative officer before retiring in 1950. Yet, despite his claims that music and poetry were but hobbies, Creque made recognized contributions to the cultural life of his homeland. He often lauded the virtues of music and poetry (including both European “masters” and local works), both in print and in a monthly radio show he hosted with his son on station WSTA in St. Thomas.

As one of the forerunners of the Virgin Islands poetic tradition, Creque is listed in *Who’s Who in American Poetry*. His poetry was published in two collections, *Trade Winds*, in 1934, and *Panorama*, in 1947.

Creque also gave piano lessons and served as church organist for both the Memorial Moravian Church and the Frederick Evangelical Lutheran Church, of which he was a member. He produced two plays and directed the choir at his church. Creque’s songs reflect his patriotism and his love for the Virgin Islands. Major musical works are “From Mark of the Yoke,” written in honor of the centennial of the abolition of slavery in the Virgin Islands in 1848, and “The Upward Way (A Patriotic Song of the V.I.)”

SCOPE & CONTENT/COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Music manuscripts and sheet music for "The Upward Way (A Patriotic Song of the V.I.)" published in 1959 by Arch Music in New York, and a book of original poetry, Trade Winds (Newport, Rhode Island: Franklin Printing House, 1934).

The collection is small, consisting of just six music manuscripts, sheet music for one published song and one book. However, the handwritten scores offer a welcome insight into the work of this locally important, composer and poet. Cyril Creque was one of the educated elite on the Islands, and like that of his contemporaries, (including Alton Augustus Adams) his work captures the essence of the local cultural milieu during the early 1900s, reflecting the political issues of the day, and a kind of romantic patriotism prevalent in the Virgin Islands at that time.

In addition, his published song, written shortly before his death, arranged by Arthur Charles, is only available in few repositories, as it appears to have gone out of print.

ARRANGEMENT

The material is arranged by date in seven folders and one volume.

RELATED MATERIALS

The CBMR holds a folder of material provided by a CBMR fellow who studied with a relative of Cyril Creque with further information about his life and work.

ACQUISITION SOURCE

Received from Dale Mathews, March 2003.

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Composers--Virgin Islands, Virgin Islands of the United States Poetry, Music, Danish West Indies, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

ACCESS STATEMENT

The collection is open and available for research use.

RIGHTS STATEMENT

United States copyright laws apply to the materials in this collection.

PREFERRED CITATION

The Cyril Felix William Creque Collection, Center for Black Music Research Collection, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

CYRIL FELIX WILLIAM CREQUE COLLECTION INVENTORY:

- Folder 1: "America We Look to You." 6/30/1955. 2 leaves taped together to make a folio. 27 cm. Manuscript in pencil with words typed.
- Folder 2: "From Mark of the Yoke." 1948? 2 leaves (folio). 32 cm. Manuscript in ink. "Dedicated to the centennial of the abolition of slavery in the Virgin Islands of the U.S." With note from Creque to Valdemar A. Hill. Undated. No location.
- Folder 3: "A Patriotic Song of the Virgin Islands." Undated. 4 leaves. 32 cm. Manuscript in pencil. With 1 sheet of typed lyrics by Creque, altered in ink.
- Folder 4: "A Red Red Rose." Undated. 1 leaf (2 p.). 32 cm. Manuscript in pencil. Possibly incomplete.
- Folder 5: "Though You Depart." 12/27/1937. 2 leaves (folio) with title on cover. 32 cm. Manuscript in pencil. "For Mrs. C.L. Root." With another 1-page draft of the song in pencil.
- Folder 6: [Incomplete patriotic song] Undated. 2 p. 32 cm. Manuscript in pencil. Begins "three pretty girls..."
- Folder 7: Published sheet music: "The Upward Way (A Patriotic Song of the Virgin Islands)." New York: Arch Music, 1959.
- Book (poetry): Trade Winds. Newport, R.I.: Franklin Printing House, Inc. 1934.