

Special Feature on GILBERTO CREPAX

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Gilberto Crepax (or Crepas) (born in Dolo, 3rd July 1890, died in Milan, 8th December 1970) was an Italian cellist.

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His father Pietro was a clarinet player in the town band, while his mother, Teresa Regazzo, of humble origins, was a housewife. It was his father who started him at a very young age to study music, enrolling him at the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory of Venice, where he graduated in cello in 1909. The following year he participated in an examination for a cello teaching position at the Conservatory of Parma and evidently impressed favourably the examination board who immediately realized the candidate's qualities, gaining the position, passing later to be a professor in the Milan Conservatoire.

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During the course of the First World War, to which he had enlisted as a volunteer, he met Arturo Toscanini, who then organized concerts for the troops, and Gabriele D'Annunzio, both leading personalities in the panorama of music and art. There were sporadic collaborations with D'Annunzio, especially when his brother began to give concerts as part of the Vittoriale quartet, while soon Toscanini also noticed the innate talent and potential of the young cellist. Crepax later regretted the period spent in the war, because that was perhaps the most delicate moment of his life. It was in those years that he should have perhaps seized the opportunity to go abroad and take the most advanced specialization possible and therefore allow him to enrich and expand his artistic horizon. Anyway he also met the composers Alfredo Casella and Gian Francesco Malipiero, with whom he established solid friendships, and he had also been offered the help of Ermanno Wolf Ferrari, and so he gradually began to make his way through the difficult world of Italian artists.

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However, the crucial point came thanks to Maestro Toscanini who in 1921 called him to be part of the orchestra that would bring La Scala to a famous tour of the United States; this important implicit recognition of his abilities placed him at the highest level of consideration, even if, at the master's request to stay in the United States he did not accept, causing the wrath of Toscanini who was certainly not accustomed to disputes or refusals! Evidently, however, the maestro's esteem for Crepax did not suffer at all, on the contrary, so much so that Toscanini wanted him as cellist of the Scaligera orchestra who would have had the historic task of inaugurating the resurrected Teatro alla Scala after the war, destroyed by bombing.

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After the American experience, Crepax began his concert activity in Italy, participating in numerous successful formations, and to which he always supported with teaching. We should recall the trio Vidusso-Abbado-Crepax, with whom he achieved remarkable success. He also participated in the Ferro quartet, with which he toured going to Budapest and Berlin, and also in the Quartetto Strub, with whom he participated in some performances in Milan. In other quartets he sometimes collaborated as an extra invited concert performer for quintet music. In these years he made some solo recordings for Columbia, unfortunately now untraceable. He also often played at the La Fenice theatre in Venice, where he was largely based during the Second World War.

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Back in Milan once again he had the bitter surprise of finding his home completely destroyed by the bombing and, with it, he irrevocably lost an immense archive of memories and reviews and other career documentation. Once the war had finished he once again started his regular teaching classes at the Milan Conservatory, for this was an activity that he had never wanted to neglect. Among his most famous pupils were M. Amfiteatrov, A. Janigro and C. Gusella. He ended his career in Milan with the recording of two discs with the Quartetto della Scala.



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