

# THE PERIODICAL OVERTURE IN 8 PARTS V

PIETRO MARIA CRISPI

Published by Robert Bremner at the Harp and Hautboy, opposite Somerset-House, in the Strand

Issued: 30 October 1763; price 2 shillings

Source: Henry Watson Music Library – Courtesy of Manchester Libraries,

Information and Archives, Manchester City Council: BR580Cy37

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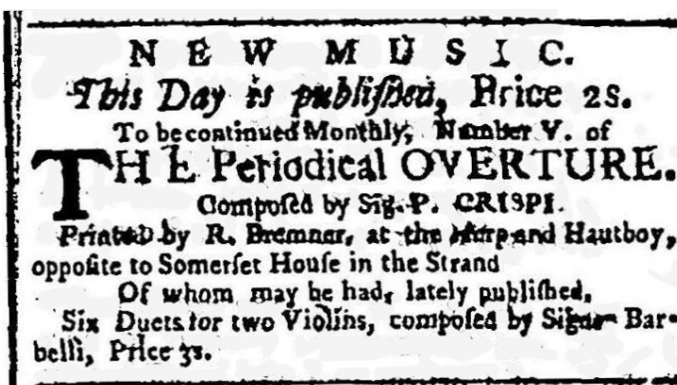
## COMMENTARY

When Robert Bremner (c.1713–1789) published *Periodical Overture in 8 Parts No. 5*, composed by Pietro Maria Crispi (c.1737–1797), it seems to have been the only occasion in Crispi's lifetime that *any* of his orchestral music was printed. In fact, although Crispi was highly esteemed by his contemporaries in Italy and abroad, only a couple of his compositions were published while he was alive, which led Crispi to be almost completely forgotten after his death.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the fifth *Periodical Overture's* release on 30 October 1763, Crispi had been elected to

membership in Rome's Congregazione dei Musicisti di S. Cecilia only a year previously. Nevertheless, his reputation was growing, thanks to a series of sacred oratorios and cantatas starting in 1760, and in 1763, he presented two separate farces in Rome: *Despina serva astuta* and *Le villeggiatura di Rocco Cannunccia*. By 1770, Charles Burney (1726–1814) made a point of visiting *accademia* performances in Crispi's Roman home, and he published a favorable account of Crispi's music in *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*.<sup>2</sup>

Crispi's 1763 contribution to the *Periodical Overtures* seems to have had staying power in England, since it remained in the repertory of various organizations for over twenty years. Audiences at performances of the Edinburgh Musical Society heard Crispi's symphony in 1769, 1770, 1781, 1785, and 1786.<sup>3</sup> In 1785, when the music-loving Moravians established their Fairfield community near Manchester, England, they held a copy of *Periodical Overture No. 5* in their music library, along with fifteen other items from Bremner's series.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, to accommodate the growing number of families with harpsichords or pianofortes at home, a keyboard reduction was published in London some twelve years after the orchestral version's release.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its seeming late-eighteenth-century popularity, Crispi's overture is not easy to come by today. An eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the symphony is housed in the Bibliothek Doria-Pamphilj in Rome. Catalogued as 148–4, it is titled "Sinfonia / Con Violini, Oboe, Corni, Viola, e Basso / Del Sigr. Gio: Pietro Crispi," resembling all of the seventeen other symphonies by Crispi in the hand-written collection.<sup>6</sup> Apart from this manuscript and Bremner's print, no other eighteenth-century versions of this symphony are known to exist, nor has it been published in a modern edition. *RISM* notes the existence of Bremner's print in six archives, while the Manchester Public Library's Henry Watson Music Collection also holds a set of the parts (from which this



<sup>1</sup> MGG Online, s.v. "Crispi, Pietro Maria," by Giancarlo Rostirolla, accessed 17 February 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy: or, The Journal of a Tour Through Those Countries, Undertaken to Collect Materials for a General History of Music* (London: T. Becket, 1771), 259 and 372.

<sup>3</sup> Jenny Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts?: Concert Management and Orchestral Repertoire in Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, Manchester, and Newcastle, 1730–1799*, *Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities*, ed. by John Caldwell (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 311, 314, 330, 342, 345.


<sup>4</sup> Karl Kroeger, "An Unknown Collection of Eighteenth-Century Instrumental Music," *Fontes Artis Musicae* 35, no. 4 (October–December 1988): 276, 280.

<sup>5</sup> Guido Salvetti, "Crispi, Pietro Maria," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), Vol. 6: 667.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Lippmann, "Die Sinfonien-Manuskripte der Bibliothek Doria-Pamphilj in Rom," *Analecta Musicologica / Studien zur Italienisch-Deutschen Musikgeschichte* V (1968): 220.

score was created).<sup>7</sup> Some partial sets exist, such as the two surviving parts (Viola and Oboe II) at the Fairfield Moravian Church holdings.<sup>8</sup>

Although Crispi's overture is scored for the customary "eight parts" that comprised the majority of works of Bremner's series, the winds are not given truly independent material. In fact, whenever the oboes play, they double one or both of the violin parts almost without fail. On a few occasions, they play sustained pitches while the higher strings present measured tremolos or oscillating patterns, as seen in mm. 17–18, 33–36, and 49–52 in the first movement. Similarly, the horns customarily play a simplified version of material drawn from various string parts; they are never featured on their own. Moreover, as is the case in over half of the *Periodical Overtures*, the ensemble is reduced to strings alone in the middle movement.

The first movement introduces Crispi's fondness for sharp dynamic contrasts. Structured as a sonata-rondo form in common time, the cheerful "Allegro Spiritoso" opens with a principal theme that returns in the tonic D major at m. 60 and again at m. 99. Curiously, the opening theme consists of two six-bar phrases in its first two appearances, but it is truncated to five-measure phrases in its final statement. Although Crispi was not a member of the Mannheim school of composers, various devices associated with that influential mid-century ensemble appear throughout the movement, such as the measured tremolos in m. 17 and onward, the "drum 8ths" in the low strings beginning in m. 3, or the oscillating *Bebung* gestures that  launch each occurrence of the second theme (mm. 37, 57, 88, etc.).<sup>9</sup> In comparison to the robust principal melody, the secondary theme seems wispier and much less substantial. Its phrase lengths are also modified in its successive re-appearances.

The central "Andantino"—a thirty-six-measure ternary structure with a codetta extension, set in the dominant key of A major—again displays Crispi's penchant for variable phrasing. During the opening section, he shifts between short motifs that start on the downbeat and phrases that begin at other points of the duplet-measure measure, keeping listeners slightly off-balance. The B section (m. 12), in E major, sustains a quiet dynamic level, contrasting with the final A section (m. 20) in which Crispi again plays with subito dynamic contrasts.

The closing "Allegro assai" returns to D major but is a bit more adventurous in its harmony. The first half of this gigue-like finale (in 3/8 time) resembles a conventional sonata-form exposition, presenting a first theme in the tonic, then moving to the dominant A major for both a second theme (m. 17) and a closing theme (m. 28). After the repetition of the exposition, the first theme is heard in A, and shifts abruptly to a repetition in the tonic *minor* (m. 45). (Crispi uses a favorite device—a rapidly descending five-note scale—to transition to this surprising key.) A short rising sequential passage leads to the second (m. 61) and closing themes (m. 72), set in the expected D major. As with the preceding movements, Crispi delights in echo effects achieved by sudden dynamic changes.

We do not know if Bremner issued the *Periodical Overtures* simply in the order that he acquired them, or if he planned the way that the early symphonies would be grouped in their respective sets of six. If he did follow some scheme, it is tempting to regard *Periodical Overture No. 5* as the lighter, scherzo-like "relief" before the subsequent *Periodical Overture No. 6* by Johann Stamitz, which, in performance, is triple the length of Crispi's contribution. Still, Crispi incorporated various moments of flair in his treatment of phrasing, dynamics, and harmony, and the appeal of his sole representation in Bremner's series should encourage musicians to seek out his many other surviving compositions.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://rism.online/sources/990011766>; Jan LaRue, *A Catalogue of 18th-Century Symphonies: Volume I: Thematic Identifier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 136.

<sup>8</sup> Kroeger, "An Unknown Collection of Eighteenth-Century Instrumental Music," 280.

<sup>9</sup> Hugo Riemann, ed., *Sinfonien der pfalzbayerischen Schule (Mannheimer Symphoniker)*, in Year 7, Vol. II, of *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern*, in Series 2 of *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1906), xvii.

## EDITORIAL METHODS

*Transposing instruments:* Transposing instruments are written in conventional modern format indicating original key—parts in original keys are available [e.g., Horn I in F (orig. in D)].

*Slurs and ties:* Editorial slurs are indicated using dotted lines; editorial ties are indicated by brackets.

*Triplet/rhythmic grouping indications:* In general, modern practice is followed. Occasionally (especially in slow movements), original subdivisions are used. Where groupings are inconsistently realized in the original source material, modern groupings are adopted.

*Grace notes and appoggiaturas:* These are generally treated as appoggiaturas and are given a value of half the note they precede; in cases where it seems clear that grace notes are intended in the original, a slash is added.

*Alternate notes/ossia passages, etc.:* When a written note is unplayable, an alternative octave substitution is indicated in smaller font and within brackets.

*Accents/articulations/fermatas:* There is considerable inconsistency in articulation throughout the set of periodical overtures. Following the Bremner edition, a wedge is used rather than a staccato mark. In some cases, the printed edition uses wedges and staccato markings within a movement (usually the slow central movement). When this is the case, both marks have been used. Where parallel passages indicate the use of articulations, these have been included between brackets.

*Dynamic markings:* In the original edition, the placement of dynamic marks can be inconsistent within the bar and sometimes across the barline. Where the correct placement of the dynamic is clear from the musical phrasing, the dynamics have been repositioned without comment. Where dynamics are less clear, or missing, the editor's dynamics occur within square brackets.

*Crescendo / diminuendo markings:* “Cresc.” and “dim.” markings are generally used, but there are rare exceptions to this with the use of hairpins. Where these are editorial, they are enclosed in square brackets. Other markings such as *rinf.* have been retained except where it seems clear that this refers to a crescendo.

*Realization of notational shorthand:* For spacing reasons, some use of notational short-hand has been used. When this is the case, the first full beat has been written out.

*Altered note values:* In the sources, there are occasional errors and inconsistencies in note values. Where these occur, the altered note values are given within brackets.

*Accidentals:* As is standard modern practice, accidentals remain valid until the next barline. This differs from eighteenth-century practice where this convention was not consistently employed. Wherever this is the case, accidentals are added in brackets.

*Figured bass:* Although the eighteenth-century parts usually position the figured bass numerals above the relevant bass notes, the modern score and parts show them below the basso line.

*Missing music:* Where music is missing in the original, alternative sources are sought (e.g., when a bar is missing due to a printer's error or when music is unreadable). When eighteenth-century concordances are unobtainable, editorial notes are added in smaller font within brackets.

## CRITICAL NOTES

The notation of dynamics and articulation has been standardized throughout. Where these are missing in the original source, they have been reconstructed from parallel passages. These are indicated by the use of dotted slurs and brackets. Where there is inconsistency in the use of staccato articulation marks, the editors have taken decisions based on the collocation of the markings. As is common with music printed in this period, *appoggiature* are inconsistently notated. These have been standardized. Copyist errors have been corrected in brackets (see notes below), along with errors in accidentals. The horn parts have been transposed into F in the score. Metronome marks are a suggestion for performance only. Rehearsal letters, cues in parts, and bar numbers have been added for convenience.

<b>Mvt. 1</b>	<b>Allegro spiritoso</b>	
m. 5	VA	3rd eighth note changed to G3 (parallel with Basso)
m. 24	Vn 2	2nd beat A4 extended to dotted quarter-note (unison with Violin 1)
mm. 54, 58	Vn 1	appoggiatura F5 added to 1st beat (parallel with mm. 38 and 42)
m. 80	Ob 2	1st beat changed to B4 (unison with Violin 1)
m. 81	Vn 2	lower pitch changed to C4 (correction of copyist error)
m. 98	Ob 1	initial eighth-note D5 changed to B4 (unison with Violin 1)
mm. 1-110	Hn 1, Hn 2	transposed down 1 octave
<b>Mvt. 2</b>	<b>Andantino</b>	
m. 8, 10	Vn 2	final sixteenth note changed to B4 (unison with Violin 1)
m. 11	Vn 1, Vn 2	final quarter note changed to eighth note (parallel with m. 9)
m. 27, 29	Vn 2	final sixteenth note changed to B4 (unison with Violin 1)
m. 33	VA	second eighth note change to G <sup>b</sup> 4 (parallel with m. 31)
<b>Mvt. 3</b>	<b>Allegro Assai</b>	
mm. 1-84	Hn 1, Hn 2	transposed down 1 octave

## CATALOGUE REFERENCES

- RISM A/I C/CC 4416 [Répertoire International des Sources Musicales;  
<https://rism.online/sources/990011766>]  
 LaRue 7003 (C936) [Jan LaRue, *A Catalogue of 18th-Century Symphonies*, Volume I: Thematic Identifier  
 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)]  
 Lippmann 148 Nr. 4 [Friedrich Lippmann, "Die Sinfonien-Manuskripte der Bibliothek Doria-Pamphilj in  
 Rom," *Analecta Musicologica / Studien zur Italienisch-Deutschen Musikgeschichte* V (1968): 220]

## ILLUSTRATION

Publication advertisement: *The Public Advertiser*, 31 October 1763, p. 3 (courtesy of the British Library Archives)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

<https://repertoire-explorer.musikmph.de/en/periodical-overtures-details/>



## PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

Please contact *Musikproduktion Höflich, München*: <https://musikmph.de/>

