

## Biographie

### Carl E. Seashore



Carl Emil Sjöstrand was born January 28, 1866, in Morlunda, Sweden. When he immigrated to the United States with his father, mother, and younger sister, all of whom, as he, were born in Sweden, Carl had just passed his third birthday. The family, following the tradition of relatives who had migrated to the country earlier, changed their surname to Seashore. Sjöstrand translates to seashore in English.

Along with their steadfastness in religion, the family had a strong pioneering spirit. Going by way of Canada, the family first arrived in Rockford, Illinois. After a short stay, they moved to Bonne County, Iowa where Carl spent an exciting and stimulating boyhood. It was in Boone County that Carl received his primary education at home with his parents as his teachers and in a nearby country schoolhouse which his father helped build. »My boyhood education was of a primitive sort, meager in formal book learning but rich and powerful in the challenge to cope with big situations. The freedom for vegetating in the out-of-door responsible activities of rich and varied interests was a valuable substitute for pressure in brain word in formal school training and confinement. Ours was a prolonged kindergarten set in reality with necessity as a teacher.« \*

\*Taken from page 10 of the unpublished *Psychology and Life in Autobiography* by Carl E. Seashore. He completed the work between 1945 and 1947.

In the fall of 1884, at eighteen years old, Seashore entered Gustavus Adolphus College where he qualified for admission into the second-year class of the preparatory department. He spent six years there. Not long after receiving the baccalaureate, Seashore became a graduate student at Yale University in 1892 on the day the psychology laboratory was opened. He was one of the first four students to register in the laboratory. After three years of working with Professors Scripture and Ladd, Seashore received the Ph. D. in 1897. He then served two years at Yale as a post-doctoral student and as an assistant in the Laboratory. Later he was appointed Lecturer in Education and was asked to stay on at Yale. He also had two other opportunities: to go to India as an Educational Missionary and to accept a position at the State University of Iowa (now The University of Iowa) in Iowa City as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy. (During the last decade of the nineteenth century, psychology was under the domain of philosophy throughout the country.) He felt compelled to return to Iowa, where he resided the remainder of his life. He died in 1949. Two of his sons, Harold and Robert, and a grandson, Charles, became distinguished psychologists.

In addition to the initial of Professor of Philosophy, Seashore served at Iowa as a Professor of Psychology just as soon as the Department of Psychology was established, Chairman of the Department of Psychology, and Dean of the Graduate School. During his tenure at Iowa, which spanned almost fifty years, Seashore became one of the most loved and respected persons on campus. Though officially retired, Seashore was constantly being called back by the University for assistance of one type or another. He visited with students at home until the time of his death. Later in life Seashore often reflected, without regret, on how his life as well as his career might have been different had he not accepted the Iowa offer in 1897.

Seashore was curious about various disciplines in addition to experimental psychology. He engaged in study and research in music, heredity, speech, esthetics, religion, eugenics (a design for living), personnel audiometry, clinical psychology and psychiatry, child welfare, the gifted and talented, and testing. Of his publications, which included

many journal articles, he is perhaps best known and remembered for the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talent*, published in 1919 by the Columbia Phonograph Company in New York City. The test battery was revised and published by the Psychological Corporation in New York City as the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talents* in 1939. It was the first standardized music aptitude test. His pioneering work established the basis and set standards for all who followed him in investigating the nature, description, and measurement of music aptitudes. His first book, *The Psychology of Musical Talent* was published in 1919 by Silver Burdett in Boston. Later, in 1938, the landmark *Psychology of Music* appeared under the auspices of the McGraw-Hill Book Company of New York City. His final book, *In Search of Beauty in Music*, was published in 1947, two years before his death, by the Ronald Press Company of New York City. Certainly of no small importance is that Seashore was the editor of the first four volumes of *Studies in the Psychology of Music*, which he initiated at the University of Iowa. Although, by today's standards, he did not have sophisticated equipment to work with in his laboratory, his studies of the vibrato, for example, have been referred to until this day as being on the »cutting edge«.

The measure of a man and his work is in part determined by the legacy he leaves. The innovative careers of Seashore's renown bode well in that regard for »the grand old man« or »the dean«. His name and works are continually referred to at music education seminars and conventions throughout the world. A chair has been established in his name at the Boyer School of Music of Temple University in Philadelphia. The concept and measurement of music aptitude remain a current issue in the twentieth century, and, if all indications are correct, they will command even more attention in the twenty-first century. Musicians and music educators will be forever in his debt.