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CASTELNUOVO- TEDESCO

Music for
Violin and
Piano



Gran Duo Italiano

Mauro Tortorelli
violin & viola

Angela Meluso
piano

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895 – 1968)

Music for Violin and Piano

CD1	47'53	CD2	55'39
Signorine. Due Profili, Op.10		Sonata quasi una Fantasia Op.56	
1. Dolce e tranquillo	3'18	1. Prologo (Moderato e pensoso)	7'00
2. Con grazia	2'59	2. Intermezzo (Vivace e danzante)	4'09
		3. Epilogo (Calmo)	8'21
3 Canti all'aria aperta		4. Sea Murmurs	
3. La sera per il fresco è un bel cantare	12'30	(Dolcemente mosso e ondulato)	2'04
4. Stanotte son dormito a ciel sereno	7'22	5. Tango Op.24b	2'16
5. Il mattino ha l'oro in bocca	7'04	(Allegretto con grazia)	
		6. Figaro from the Barber of Seville by Rossini	6'15
6. Ritmi Op.15		La Figlia del Reggimento: a Fantasy for Violin and Piano on Themes by Donizetti Op.110	
(Lento e languido)	4'40	7. Ouverture	6'29
7. Capitan Fracassa Op.16		8. Romance	4'36
(Eroicomicamente)	3'31	9. Valse	5'06
8. Notturmo Adriatico Op.34		10. Tyrolienne	3'43
(Tranquillo e sognante)	6'00	11. Rataplan (Rondò Militare)	5'07

CD3	51'26	Suite 508 Op.170/21	
1. Exotica: A Rhapsody of the South Seas	11'54	per viola e pianoforte	
2. The Lark Op.64 (Poem in the form of a Rondo)	12'06	5. Entrata	3'17
3. Greeting Cards Op.170/23		6. Pavane	1'55
Intermezzo (Andante Mosso)	4'51	7. Tambourin	1'21
4. Greeting Cards Op.170/25		8. Aria	4'33
Hungarian Serenade		9. Toccata	2'44
(Lento sognante e rapsodico)	4'27	10. Gavotta variata	1'43
		11. Gigue	1'58

Gran Duo Italiano
Mauro Tortorelli *violin & viola* · Angela Meluso *piano*

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Producer, sound engineer and mastering: Giovanni Caruso
Musical supervision: Giovanni Caruso, Mauro Tortorelli, Angela Meluso
Editing: Mauro Tortorelli
Cover: John F. Peto, The Old Cremona, ca. 1887–90
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The fame of Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco (Florence, 3 April 1895 – Beverly Hills, 16 March 1968), at least in Italy, is strictly related to his work as a composer of guitar music and his relationship with Andrés Segovia, an association that lasted for over three decades.

Yet guitar music is only one aspect of his output. He also composed many works for the theatre, including operas, orchestral pieces and ballets, as well as writing a huge number of chamber, instrumental and vocal works. Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco had studied the piano at the Florence Conservatoire with Edgardo Del Valle de Paz and composition with Ildebrando Pizzetti. During the early years of his career, he was not only active as a pianist and composer, but also as a critic and author.

Castelnuovo Tedesco, along with other composers who included Alfredo Casella, made a major contribution to the development of Italian classical music, helping to remedy its provincialism. But his efforts were cut short by the loathsome racial laws introduced by the Fascist regime and endorsed by King Vittorio Emanuele III. Thus in 1939 he was forced to seek refuge in the United States, and that same year performed his Second Concerto for piano and orchestra accompanied by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli.

Arturo Toscanini was also a great admirer of Castelnuovo Tedesco, to the extent that a year or so before the composer moved to the United States he conducted the New York Philharmonic in a performance of his Violin Concerto n. 1 with Jascha Heifetz, and the Cello Concerto with Gregor Piatigorsky. Indeed, Castelnuovo Tedesco was practically the only contemporary Italian composer whose works were conducted by Toscanini in the USA. American audiences particularly appreciated Castelnuovo Tedesco's skill in evoking situations, settings and moods through the use of specific thematic material and refined orchestration.

Two years after his arrival in the USA, the composer moved to Los Angeles to be closer to the movie world that he found particularly interesting. In fact he had already written several works pertaining to the cinema, including the two *Film Studies* for piano of 1931. It is likewise no coincidence that a number of the young men who

attended his courses in composition went on to write some exceptional soundtracks. They included musicians of the calibre of Jerry Goldsmith, André Previn, John Williams, Elmer Bernstein and Henry Mancini.

During the course of forty years, Castelnuovo Tedesco wrote a great deal of chamber music, a significant part of which was devoted to the violin and piano. The two musical profiles, *Signorine*, written in 1918 and published in 1921 by Forlivesi, constitute a first example of his ability in writing in a manner that is not just descriptive, but also evocative. The slightly melancholy, dreamy aura of the first profile derives from the rhythmic and melodic alternation of duplets and triplets, while the second profile is based on a syncopated rhythmic passage that invests the piece with a somewhat hazy atmosphere, using the frequent harmonic slippage that was a characteristic of coeval French music, introduced to his Conservatoire students by Ildebrando Pizzetti.

Composed in 1919, the *Tre canti all'aria aperta* contain many elements typical of Castelnuovo Tedesco's later works. First and foremost, the connection with a text that tends to transcend mere description in its use of sophisticated compositional devices that translate a personal vision into musical terms. The titles of the three songs respectively correspond to "*La sera per il fresco è un bel cantare*" (The fresh evening air makes me want to sing), "*Stanotte son dormito a ciel sereno*" (Last night I slept under a clear sky) and "*Il mattino ha l'oro in bocca*", (The early bird gathers the worm).

The first and second come from the beginning of two Tuscan folk songs. In the initial section in particular, "*La sera per il fresco è un bel cantare*" embodies a canon-like structure in which the thematic material returns and undergoes variations, especially in harmonic terms, in clear allusion to the rhyming tensons of the still lively Tuscan troubadour tradition. The text in the central part of the composition derives from the first verse of a famous sonnet by Folgore da San Gimignano.

Appreciation of the rhythmic structure of the second song calls for careful listening. The compression and dilation of the length of the notes contributes to overlapping

and asymmetry that invest the simple melodic lines with complexity, urging them towards key changes that elude the rules of 19th century harmony.

The third song initially consists of a subject in six bars played on the piano right hand, and then taken up by the violin a fourth above, over a movement in diatonic scale in the base. The first thematic idea then returns on fixed notes. Despite the growing complexity of the composition, the overall balance of the constituent elements is maintained throughout.

Composed in 1920 and again published by Forlivesi, though not until 1926, *Ritmi* is based on the Habanera in terms of rhythm, despite the tempi indication *Lento e languido* that suggests a chamber version of the traditional Cuban Milonga dance. Here Castelnuovo Tedesco has fun reducing and expanding the initial rhythmic structure consisting of a dotted quaver, a semiquaver and two quavers, adding a melody that alludes to the sensual intimacy of dancing as a couple.

Published by Forvilesi in 1921, the portrait of *Capitan Fracassa* was also composed in 1920. It comprises a single rhythmic figuration that underpins the whole composition, with a melody that conjures up the mock-heroic braggadocio of the main character in Gautier's famous novel.

Notturmo Adriatico was composed in 1924 and dedicated to the American violinist Albert Spalding. The composer indicated that it should be tranquil and dreamlike in mood, implementing this with a highly effective rhythmical device in the piano left hand consisting of alternating symmetry between regular and irregular figures. This is sustained throughout the piece, while the melody is largely entrusted to the violin.

Dedicated to the violinist of Hungarian extraction Adila Fachiri, grandniece of Joseph Joachim, *Quasi una Fantasia Op.56* was composed in 1929 and published by Ricordi the following year. The title of the sonata brings to mind Beethoven's famous diptych in Op.27, though it does not identify the movements that make up the overall structure with classical tempi markings, but rather with references pertaining to the theatre: *Prologue, Intermezzo* and *Epilogue*.

The *Prologo*, which seems to be rhapsodic in mood, is actually constructed around

a logically precise distribution and use of the thematic material: the initial passage played by the piano left hand is the first tessera of a mosaic in which the violin takes over the development, almost like a recitative of increasing virtuoso impact.

The second movement is structured like a mirror image: the first part consists of a sort of Tarantella, which is followed by a second section with a subject in octaves on the piano accompanied by two-string pizzicato on the violin. The central section (*Subito dolce e languido*) returns to the main thematic statements of the prologue, and is followed by a return to the second section before concluding with a return to the first section.

The *Epilogo (Calmo)* opens with a four-bar subject in the piano left hand (*Cupi e grave*), followed by 4 more bars featuring chromatic descent, also in the left hand. Chromatism is also a feature of the piano part in the following bars, where Castelnuovo Tedesco adds a flowing violin melody above the somewhat elusive harmonies of the piano accompaniment.

To date, only two of the six sections that make up *La Figlia del Reggimento. A Fantasy for Violin and Piano on themes by Donizetti* have been published: *Romance* in 1944, and *Valse* in 1952. The *Fantasy* was composed around 1941 and dedicated to Jascha Heifetz, the violinist of Lithuanian origins who had been in professional contact with the composer since the early 1930s: in fact in 1933 Carl Fischer had published Castelnuovo Tedesco's two short Op.24 pieces – *Sea Murmurs* and *Tango* – arranged for piano and violin by Heifetz.

Both pieces derived from the series of 33 songs on texts by Shakespeare that Castelnuovo Tedesco had composed between 1921 and 1925. *Sea Murmurs* comes from Act II of *Cymbeline (My Lady Sweet, Arise, vol. VI of the collection)*, while *Tango* refers to the fourth scene of Act IV of *A Winter's Tale (Two maids wooing a man, vol. VIII)*.

Returning to the *Fantasia Op.110*, the *Overture* that Castelnuovo Tedesco completed in May 1941 initially reveals a transcription that is fairly faithful to the original, even though the piano accompaniment is obviously completely different

to Donizetti's orchestration. Although the main thematic ideas of the *Ouverture* are largely presented as they were in the opera version, the composer proceeds to transform them in a somewhat improvisational manner, bringing out the martial nature of the music with an evident touch of irony. The virtuoso, lyrical handling of the famous Romance "*Il faut partir*" was also written in 1941, while the heady version of the *Valse* was completed and added exactly two years later, in May 1943.

The simple *Tyrolienne* aria becomes the pretext for a series of spectacular and witty variations. Composed in April 1941, this was the first section of the *Fantasia* to be written. The following month Castelnuovo Tedesco also finished the last section, *Rataplan*, based on the Military March of the finale of the first act of the opera.

With *Exotica: A Rhapsody of the South Seas* the composer's evocative skill comes to the fore through an interesting use of timbre, achieved through a combination of the violin and piano parts. In the first part of the composition the composer achieves some remarkable and, for the period, highly unusual effects with *glissato* thirds on two strings in the violin, which almost sounds like a Hawaiian guitar. Unpublished to this day, the *Rhapsody* was composed in 1934, according to the catalogue of Castelnuovo Tedesco's works compiled by Nick Rossi (International Castelnuovo-Tedesco Society, New York, 1977), though the hand-written score bears the date 20 December 1943.

Composed in 1930 and published by Carl Fisher three years later, *The Lark* was also dedicated to Jascha Heifetz, its title deriving from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. The theme of the Rondo follows an introduction whose impalpable harmonics and improvisational style suggest a sense of anxious expectation that is ultimately resolved through the use of the playful dotted rhythm in the piano that underpins the lively melody played by the violin.

The two *Greeting Cards Op.170 No.23* and *25* in the form of an *Intermezzo* and a *Hungarian Serenade* were written in 1960 as homages to the violinist Harvey Seigel and to the composer Miklos Rosza. Both are based on the time-honoured use of acrostic, whereby the notes that make up the subject derive from the vowels and

consonants of the person in question's name. However Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco did not use the classic version of the device, which simply required the alphabetic correspondence of notation (a-b-c-d-e-f-g-h). Instead he redefined the letters, starting with A at LA, assigning all 25 letters of the English alphabet to the individual notes of the ascending or descending chromatic scale (ascending for *Intermezzo*).

The paraphrase of Figaro's aria *Largo al factotum* was published by Carl Fischer in 1945 in a double version, one arranged by Jascha Heifetz for violin and piano, and the other for cello and piano by Gregor Piatigorski. Although both versions are somewhat demanding, the Heifetz arrangement allows for a greater degree of playful virtuoso display, not only in the fiery finale, but also in the other sections of the *Fantasia*.

Suite 508 for viola and piano was composed in 1960 and is still unpublished. It also belongs to the *Greeting Cards* series, and is dedicated to certain "friends of Michigan State University". As with the others in the collection, the thematic material for the various movements is derived from the composer's personal take on acrostic. In particular he uses the ascending and descending chromatic scales so as to have two different note sequences for each of the seven dedicatees to whom the individual sections of the *Suite* correspond:

- I *Entrata* on the name of Walter Hodgson
- II *Pavane* on the name of H. Owen Reed
- III *Tambourin* on the name of Marie Iliff
- IV *Aria* on the name of Gean Greenwell
- V *Toccata* on the name of Ernest Victor Wolff
- VI *Gavotta Variata* on the name of Hans Lampl
- VII *Gigue* on the name of Sherman Krane

The challenge lay in the fact that the composer was constrained by fairly random factors, such as the construction of thematic material based on semi-arbitrary sequences. On occasions the results were relatively easy to handle, since the note

sequences could be grouped together and harmonized without too much difficulty. But on others, the series obtained were distinctly complex, for instance in the *Toccata* for solo piano, where the series comprises twelve different sounds. Although this practically amounted to dodecaphony, Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco handled it with great fantasy and skill.

Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco died half a century ago, leaving for posterity a remarkable heritage of elevated professional craftsmanship. He was a man whose artistry was interwoven with his technical expertise. The fruit of such gifts he transferred not only to his compositions, but also to many of his talented pupils.

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Translation by Kate Singleton



The Gran Duo Italiano, Mauro Tortorelli violin, Angela Meluso piano, boasts a Discography that includes word-premiere recordings of music by Gaetano Fusella, Camillo Sivori (Paganini's only pupil) and Rosario Scalero (himself a pupil of Sivori) Tactus Recording. Radio broadcast of the music on Italy's Rai Radio 3 was enthusiastically received by audience and critics alike, and the releases were well reviewed in specialist music magazines such as *Musica*, *Amadeus*, *Fanfare*, *Harmonia Mundi* and *Gramophone*. In 2011 the Duo was awarded one of the European Union's highest accolades, the "Premio Mediterraneo", in recognition of their research, rediscovery and promotion of Italy's artistic and musical heritage. In 2012, the duo gave a lecture-recital at the 40th International Conference of the European String Teachers Association (ESTA) at the theatre in Porec in Croatia. This was followed by a conference-recital in 2013 on the music of Camillo Sivori at the Emirates International Festival of Dubai and a masterclass-recital on Paganini and his musical contemporaries at the University of Aichi (Nagoya) in Japan. In 2014 the Duo debuted in Germany with unanimous applause at the Stilwerk-Bechstein Centrum in Berlin, Festsaal of the Coselpalais in Dresden, Harmoniesaal in Bamberg, and at the Philharmonie Gasteig in Munich. In 2015 the Duo had an important tournée in Japan: Nagoya at the Munetsugu Hall, Gakuin University in Osaka, in Fukuoka at the University Concert Hall and Kagoshima Concert Hall. In 2016 the Gran Duo Italiano had concerts in Timisoara (Philharmonie), Malta (Gaulitana Festival), Tenerife (Conservatorio Superior de Musica, Real Casino), Firenze (Lyceum-Amici della Musica), Ravello Festival etc. In February 2017 they had their debut at Carnegie Hall of New York and at the Music School of Kazan (Tatarstan-Russia). The last recordings for Brilliant Classics Label are: Camille Saint-Saens (Violin Sonatas) and Darius Milhaud (works for violin and piano – viola and piano).

Dedication to Nicola Manzo

"many thanks to Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco"