

New Castelnuovo-Tedesco Projects on the International Scene

Short Paper

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First of all, I wish to thank the “Intersections” Conference and ICAMus for this session devoted to Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

I am very pleased to be here, representing the University of Florence, and to have the opportunity to talk briefly about what I see as a true “Castelnuovo-Tedesco Renaissance”, that is, a clear resurgence of interest—at least in Italy and in the U.S.A.—in the figure and work of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, both in terms of programming concerts and recordings, and from a musicological point of view.

In 2012, I was invited to speak at the first international conference about the Florentine-American composer, that took place at Brown University. The title of that conference was “Music between Nation and Form: Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and the boundaries of Italianità”. The purpose was precisely to begin to systematically investigate the special position of this composer at the crossroads of different trends: his place within the international modernity (between need to ensure a national identity to his music and to satisfy at the same time a cosmopolitan education, to refer to an Italian cultural tradition and to update his musical language looking around), as well as the relationships between music and other practices and languages (poetry and film, above all), the influence of Jewish culture, the impact of American culture, and some other issues.

Aloma Bardi and John Champagne have just provided a significant exemplification about the progress of such studies in these last few years. Now I would like to announce a new editorial project I am working on, that was originally conceived during that conference. As mentioned by Aloma Bardi, for a long time when he lived in Italy, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was also a music critic. Following his teacher, Ildebrando Pizzetti, who directed him also towards this kind of activity, he began very early to regularly write articles and reviews of

music for «La critica musicale», the Florentine musical journal founded in 1918 and led by Luigi Parigi until its closure, in 1923.

In the meantime, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was invited by the director, Guido Maggiorino Gatti, to write for another, even more important musical periodical, «Il pianoforte», based in Turin. As was the case for «La critica musicale», at the very beginning Castelnuovo-Tedesco was asked to use his privileged position as pianist and piano reducer to analyze Pizzetti's music and write about it. He soon became one of the regular contributors of this journal too, as well as the official correspondent from Florence. «Il pianoforte» discontinued publication in 1928, but it was immediately replaced by «La Rassegna musicale», also directed by Gatti. Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote for the new journal from 1929 until 1936; after that, his long, ongoing collaboration with Italian musical periodicals ceased completely. In the United States he wrote about music only occasionally.

From 1919 to 1936, Castelnuovo-Tedesco authored about twenty very long articles, or reports, and hundreds of reviews of contemporary music. At some point (still we do not know exactly when) he decided to publish a significant selection of them (fifteen articles and forty reviews) and to give it the overall title *La penna perduta* (The lost pen). The composer, however, could not carry out his plan. Thanks to Castelnuovo-Tedesco's heirs and to the Library of Congress in Washington, who both made available the original typewritten copies of such articles and reviews, this selection is now being published, edited by myself, in the series "I discorsi della musica" of the Aracne publishing house in Rome.

While in his articles Castelnuovo-Tedesco deals mainly with the musical life in Florence and with some of the leading exponents of the Italian and European music—like Pizzetti, Casella, Alfano, Stravinsky and Manuel de Falla—the selection of the reviews reflects in a much more extensive and detailed way his interest in contemporary international music production. In this context, the presence of composers from Great Britain (Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss, Gordon Jacob, John Ireland, Eugen Goosens, Lord Berners, Ralph Vaughan William) is decidedly conspicuous. As regards the United States of America, we find just one, small but very significant presence: in November 1921, Castelnuovo-Tedesco devoted his attention to the Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord, Mass, 1840-1860" by Charles Ives, albeit he didn't hide his doubts with respect to the interaction

of music and philosophical program, as well as the music itself, that he judged «abbastanza bislacca e dilettantesca» (rather odd and amateurish).

Luigi Dallapiccola, who was a friend of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's, liked to say that when a composer speaks about other composers' music, he actually speaks almost always of his own compositional problems. Castelnuovo-Tedesco is not an exception in this sense. This is one more reason for considering his writings worth looking into.

After me, Eleonora Negri will tell you about a new upcoming occasion to explore the work of Castelnuovo-Tedesco. I hope you will not miss it, and I thank you for your attention.

