

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

[Go to personal file](#)

On 13 July 1939, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco embarked from Trieste with his wife and two sons on a ship bound for New York. In the international arena, he was the best known and most performed of the living Italian composers. For more than 20 years his compositions had been featured on the programs of the major festivals and in concert series, both in Italy and abroad. A refined pianist, he frequently performed in concerts. Possessing a vast knowledge of music and literature, he had written insightful critical essays. Arriving in America at the age of 44, his first order of business was to find work so he could support his family: his first contract was with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Hollywood. In his hometown of Florence, he would later acquire a small apartment with a view of the Ponte Vecchio, but he would never live full-time in Italy again.

Privileged youth, precocious talent

Born in Florence on 3 April 1895, he was the third and youngest son, after Ugo (Florence 1890-1974) and Guido (Florence 1891- Lucca 1960), of Amedeo Castelnuovo-Tedesco (Florence 1859-1947) and Noemi Senigaglia (Florence 1872-1940)¹. At that time, the family was living in the center of the city, in a rented apartment at via Martelli 4 that they would leave, more than a decade later, for a more comfortable place a few doors down, at via Martelli 7. Thanks to an inheritance from the composer's great-uncle, there was also a home on via di Giramonte in the hills adjacent to the Tuscan capital, where the Castelnuovo-Tedesco family usually spent the spring and fall (they spent their summers on the coast of Tuscany).

¹ Marinetta Piva, *Albero genealogico della famiglia Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, in Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica (un libro di ricordi)*, ed. by James Westby, introduction by Mila De Santis, editorial oversight by Ulla Casalini, Fiesole, Cadmo, 2005 (unpublished English translation by James Westby and Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco), p. 631.

[Link to other connected Lives on the move:](#)

[Giorgio Funaro](#)
[Oscar Levi, then Landi](#)
[Fernando Liuzzi](#)
[Andrea Marangoni](#)
[Renzo Nissim](#)
[Amelia Pincherle](#)
[Moravia Rosselli](#)
[Renzo Ravà](#)
[Gisella Selden-Goth](#)
[Carlo Schapira, then Sorell](#)
[Mario Volterra](#)

In my childhood and in my youth, Giramonte was the place I loved more than any other, until the time when I was married and had the good fortune and privilege to spend time in Usigliano di Lari. It was at Giramonte that I composed most of my early works, including nearly all of my opera *La mandragola*. I composed little, and only reluctantly, in the city; I needed the fresh air of the country².

The family's wealth on both his mother's and father's sides (his father's family in particular had distinguished itself in the field of finance) enabled the boy to have robust private education. In time he also learned foreign languages and literature; in addition to German (taught to him by one of his early teachers), French, and some rudiments of Hebrew (both learned from his mother), he soon began to study English. Spanish would later become important for his vocal compositions, even though he did not formally study it.

His mother was the one who, early on, had recognized and advanced her son's distinct predisposition for music. His father, initially confounded by his son's interest in music, had insisted that the boy continue his general studies until he graduated from the *liceo* [high school]. (After completing the *liceo*, on 13 November 1915 Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco would also be enrolled, as student number 5525, at the University of Florence's Medical School)³. The boy then began to study music with professional teachers, and, after a period of private piano lessons, was admitted to the Conservatory in the class of Edgardo del Valle de Paz. A celebrated concert pianist who had been teaching for many years, Valle de Paz had been at the Florentine institution since 1890, where he influenced not only its community but also its cultural horizons via *La nuova musica* [New Music], the magazine that he founded and directed starting in 1896⁴. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco also studied harmony and counterpoint privately with Gino Modona, who introduced him to the world of Debussy and Ravel. Then, starting during the scholastic year 1912-1913, he

² Ibid., pp. 58-59.

³ See the registration files of the Historical Archive of the Università di Firenze (ASUFI), AC, SS. The author thanks Patrizia Guarnieri for bringing this information to her attention.

⁴ M. Francesca Agresta, *Del Valle De Paz, Edgardo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 38, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1990 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 10 November 2021).

began to study Harmony, Counterpoint and Fugue with Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968), whose complex personality as a musician and as an intellectual had a profound and long term impact on the young student. His strong talent, his already well-defined musical voice, and his humanist culture, still rare among musicians in that era, enabled the student to quickly establish a close connection with his teacher. They spent significant time together, and their exchanges went far beyond the limits of the typical student-teacher relationship. This association continued to intensify over time.

Formative years

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco received his diploma in Piano in 1914 and was awarded his degree in Composition in 1918. He took his composition exams in Bologna as a private student⁵. He continued to spend time at his teacher's home until Pizzetti left Florence in 1924, when he was named director of the Milan Conservatory. For about 10 years the young man was included in Pizzetti's private gatherings, where the writers of «La Voce» [The Voice] would meet: Papini, Prezzolini, and De Robertis, as well as Bruno Barilli and Giannotto Bastianelli and the musicians Vittorio Gui, Vito Frazzi, and Luigi Parigi. Even more significantly, Castelnuovo-Tedesco witnessed the creation of the Pizzetti's operas *Fedra* and *Dèbora e Jaéle*, the incidental music for *La Pisanella*, the *Sonata per violino*, the *Sonata per violoncello*, and many others. These works became the subject of essays and reviews penned by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, who also performed some of these works in concerts⁶.

⁵ By this time, Pizzetti had become the director of the Florence Conservatory and resumed teaching Castelnuovo-Tedesco privately. It would have been a conflict of interest for him to participate in judging his own student's diploma exams.

⁶ Among the major essays Castelnuovo-Tedesco devoted to Pizzetti and his compositions were *La Pisanella di I. Pizzetti*, «*La critica musicale*», II, 9-10, September-October 1919, pp. 157-169; *La sonata per violino e pianoforte di I. Pizzetti*, «*Il pianoforte*», I, 7, July 1920, pp. 1-5; *Ildebrando Pizzetti e la sua musica corale*, «*Il pianoforte*», II, 8, August 1921, pp. 233-240; *Dèbora e Jaéle di I. Pizzetti alla Scala*, «*Musica d'oggi*», V, 1, January 1923, pp. 1-6, now collected in Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *La penna perduta. Scritti 1919-1936*, critical edition and introduction by Mila De Santis (Rome, Aracne, 2017). In America, the composer authored an extensive profile of his former teacher in David Ewen (ed.), *The Book of Modern Composers*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1942, pp. 201-207.

In the meantime, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's own catalog expanded considerably, particularly with works for piano (such as *Cantico per una statuetta di San Bernardino di Niccolò dell'Arca* [Cantico for a statue of San Bernardino by Niccolò dell'Arca], which won the competition sponsored by «Il pianoforte» [Piano Magazine]) and songs for voice and piano. Starting with *Fuori I Barbari! Canto patriottico op. 5* [Oust the Barbarians! A Patriotic Song], composed in 1915 to verses written by his brother Ugo, the majority of these works were published by the Florentine publishing house Forlivesi. Thanks to the suggestions of Castelnuovo-Tedesco and to the sensitivity and the foresight of the owner, Renato Bellenghi, Forlivesi had started to turn its attention to more challenging works of contemporary music and away from more accessible compositions (works for guitar and mandolin, as well as for voice) and didactic works in which it had previously specialized.

Another important figure in Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's development was Alfredo Casella (1883-1947). After pursuing his studies and his early career in Paris, Casella returned to Italy in 1915 with the intention of modernizing and broadening Italy's musical horizons. He immediately found in the young Florentine student one of the possible embodiments of the new direction in Italian music. In addition to adding several of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's piano works, such as *Questo fu il carro della morte* [This was the Chariot of Death] (1913) and, later on, *Il raggio verde* [The Green Flash] (1916), to his repertoire, Casella made sure that other compositions by Castelnuovo-Tedesco were featured on the broader European concert circuit. In the first season (1916-1917) of concerts organized by the Società italiana di musica moderna [Italian Society for Modern Music] the piano works *Il raggio verde* and *Lucertolina* [Little Lizard] were performed, as well as songs for voice and piano: *Coplas* (*Por la niña de mi corazón*) [Verses (for the girl of my heart)] and *Briciole* [Crumbs], the latter to verses by Palazzeschi. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music continued to be part of the programs of the first International Festivals of Contemporary Music, beginning with the successful, pioneering showcase of

chamber music held in Salzburg in August 1922: Italy was represented not only by the works of the established composers Gian Francesco Malipiero, Ildebrando Pizzetti, and Ferruccio Busoni, but also by the young Florentine's *Stelle Cadenti* [Shooting Stars], a work based on Tuscan folk poetry.

An unfortunate episode would later temporarily cloud the relationship between Casella and Castelnuovo-Tedesco. In 1939, when Castelnuovo-Tedesco was preparing to leave Italy, Casella let him know that he preferred to meet him in a «neutral, Aryan home»⁷. Casella's words were a terrible disillusionment for Castelnuovo-Tedesco, who, many years later, would suffer even more bitter disappointment, for different reasons, from Pizzetti.

Friendships and attachments

During his youth, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco had maintained a close friendship with Massimiliano Michelangelo (Pimpi) and Emma (Memmi), the children of the artist Vittorio Corcos. The former, who had begun to follow his father into a career in the visual arts, died very early, in 1916; the latter, who was briefly married to the Marquis Gerio Strozzi Sacrati, remained a lifelong friend of the composer. They spent summers together at the seaside at Castiglioncello, where the young Mario's days were also enlivened by the presence of Elisa, the daughter of the archeologist Luigi Milani and the poet Laura Comparetti; the daughters of Baron Alberto Lombroso, and the brothers Corrado and Alessandro Pavolini, the latter of whom would, a few years later, make a rapid ascent in the Fascist government.

In Florence, in 1915, Castelnuovo-Tedesco met Clara Forti (1894-1989), the daughter of an industrialist from the Tuscan town of Prato. He then saw her on many occasions at the home of Amelia Pincherle Rosselli, a friend of both families. There he also met the composer and musicologist Ferdinando (Nando) Liuzzi, who was married to Clara's older sister Paola; Liuzzi would soon become one of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's dearest friends. Mario and Clara

⁷ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 101.

married in 1924, at which time they went to live with his parents, who had moved in 1923 to Piazza d'Azeglio 14. In 1928, a few years after the birth of their first son, Pietro (1925-1998), the couple moved to Via Repetti 4; later, after the arrival of their second son, Lorenzo (1930-2000), they moved again, to via dei Della Robbia 54. They were to remain in this apartment until their departure from Italy.

During the 1930s, they spent time with many of the leading exponents of literary and artistic life in Florence, including Ugo Ojetti at the Villa Salviatino and Bernard Berenson at Villa I Tatti. The circle of the literary magazine «Solaria» gathered regularly at the Castelnuovo-Tedesco home. Among the most frequent guests were Arturo Loria and Alberto Carocci, both of whom would later remain among his closest friends; in his autobiography, the composer also mentions Alessandro Bonsanti, Eugenio Montale, Raffaello Franchi, Piero Gadda, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Bonaventura Tecchi and Gianna Manzini. Among artists, Giovanni Colacicchi and Vieri Freccia should be noted first and foremost, as well as Romano Romiti, Francesco di Cocco, Bruno Bramanti, Marino Marini and Gianni Vagnetti. Moreover, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco frequented two landmarks of Florentine artistic-literary culture between the two wars: he went occasionally to the Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse, and more often, to the Trattoria dell'Antico Fattore (he was also a member of the jury for the Music Section of the Antico Fattore's famous Literary Prize).

Success in Italy

Deeply rooted in the musical life of Florence, Castelnuovo-Tedesco regularly participated as a pianist, as a composer, and as a consultant to concert series of the Lyceum Club⁸, the Amici della musica⁹, the Stabile orchestrale

⁸ Eleonora Negri, *Grandi presenze ed eventi musicali al Lyceum Club di Firenze nel suo primo secolo di attività*, in Mirka Sandiford (ed.), *Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze 1908-2008. Cento anni di vita culturale del primo circolo femminile italiano*, Florence, Polistampa, 2008, pp. 123-142.

⁹ Cf. Johannes U. Müller, *L'Associazione «Amici della musica» e l'origine delle istituzioni musicali fiorentine*, Fiesole, Cadmo, 2003, pp. 198 and following.

fiorentina, and to the first Maggio musicale fiorentino festivals¹⁰. Carlo Delcroix, one of the founders of the Maggio musicale fiorentino, asked Castelnuovo-Tedesco to be a member of the organizing committee of the first edition of the Festival (1933)¹¹. In later editions, he would be involved as a composer: in just a few months he composed the massive score of incidental music for Rino Alessi's much-anticipated *Savonarola*, which was performed in Piazza della Signoria during the Maggio musicale of 1935; Castelnuovo-Tedesco also wrote incidental music for *I giganti della montagna* [The Mountain Giants], Luigi Pirandello's final work, which had been planned for the subsequent Maggio musicale, in 1937. (The playwright died just before the premiere; in the end, the work was performed at the Festival without music because of a strong creative disagreement between the composer and the director of play, Renato Simoni.)

By this time, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was famous throughout Italy and well beyond its borders. In 1925 he had won the national opera contest for his first theatrical work, *La mandragola* [The Mandrake], based on Machiavelli's famous play. Performed the following year at La Fenice in Venice, the opera would then be revised and re-staged in Wiesbaden, in 1928. The world premiere of *Bacco in Toscana* [Bacchus in Tuscany], based on Francesco Redi's dithyrambic poem, was performed at La Scala in Milan in 1931.

Success abroad

Not only were Italian musicians interested in performing Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music, but many stars of the international concert scene were also

¹⁰ The key references for this topic are Leonardo Pinzauti, *Storia del Maggio. Dalla nascita della «Stabile Orchestrale Fiorentina» (1928) al festival del 1993*, Lucca, LIM, 1994, and Aloma Bardi, Mauro Conti (eds.), *Teatro comunale di Firenze. Maggio musicale fiorentino. Catalogo delle manifestazioni 1928-1997*, Florence, Le Lettere, 1997.

¹¹ This is evidenced by the letter of response sent by Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Delcroix on 23 February 1932, preserved at the Archive of the Maggio musicale fiorentino, b. 29, c. 55, and cited in Gianluca Bocchino, *Castelnuovo-Tedesco e le musiche di scena per il Savonarola*, in Alessandro Avallone, Gianluca Bocchino (eds.), *L'ignoto iconoclasta. Studi su Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, Lucca, LIM, 2019, p. 67.

including his music in their concert programs. Among them was the composer's friend, the American violinist Albert Spalding, dedicatee of *Notturmo adriatico* [Adriatic Nocturne] (1924), as well as the German pianist Walter Giesecking, who had been an admirer and interpreter of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music beginning in the early 1920s. (However, Nazi policies would later forbid the performances of music by Jewish composers.) Castelnuovo-Tedesco dedicated the *Sonata op. 51*, a work composed in 1928 and published in 1932, to Giesecking. For the Lithuanian-American violinist Jascha Heifetz, who had added Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Concerto italiano* to his repertoire early on, the composer wrote *The Lark* for violin and piano in 1931 and, shortly afterwards, the concerto *I profeti* [The Prophets], which was premiered by the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. At the explicit request of Gregor Piatigorsky, Castelnuovo-Tedesco composed the *Concerto per violoncello e orchestra* (1932-33), which he dedicated to the Russian-born American cellist, the *Toccata per violoncello e pianoforte*, and a few other, minor works. This concerto also had its first performance in New York with the Philharmonic, again under the baton of Toscanini, in 1935.

The celebrated conductor from Parma, whom Castelnuovo-Tedesco had first met in Florence in 1922, was generally not too interested in contemporary music. However, he came to devote special attention to Castelnuovo-Tedesco's compositions, including them regularly in his concert programs. Toscanini conducted two other world premieres: the *Ouvertures to Il racconto d'inverno* [The Winter's Tale] in Vienna in 1935 and to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in New York in 1945. After having dedicated his overture to *Il mercante di Venezia* [The Merchant of Venice] to Toscanini in 1932, Castelnuovo-Tedesco later dedicated his opera of the same name, written in 1958, to the conductor's memory.

It was the esteem and advocacy of Andrés Segovia that helped Castelnuovo-Tedesco to maintain his international fame throughout the twentieth

century. Segovia had been the one to first invite Castelnuovo-Tedesco to try to compose for the guitar. From this relationship a huge bounty of compositions for the solo instrument would arise, including instrumental and vocal works as well as works for guitar in dialogue with an orchestra, for a total of about 50 works: from the *Variations à travers les siècles op. 71* [Variations across the centuries] (1932) to the unfinished *Appunti, Preludi e Studi op. 210* [Notes, Preludes and Studies] (1967-68). This body of work encompasses the famed *Concerto per chitarra e orchestra op. 99* which was premiered by Segovia on 28 October 1939 in Montevideo, Uruguay. Castelnuovo-Tedesco had begun composing the work in December 1938, shortly after he had made the decision to leave Italy. Segovia, in a sign of solidarity, spent the Christmas holidays in Florence with the Castelnuovo-Tedescos, offering the composer words of comfort and hope¹².

Clouds on the horizon

According to the composer's memoir, evidence that times were changing had been clear for some time, and one particular episode directly involved Castelnuovo-Tedesco: in January 1938, the violinist Giulio Bignami, engaged by EIAR [Ente italiano per le audizioni radiofoniche, the Italian National Radio] to perform *I profeti*, was suddenly asked to replace the piece with another work, without explanation. Shortly afterward, the composer Renzo Massarani, who was also Jewish and at the time worked at the Società italiana degli autori ed editori [Italian Society of Authors and Publishers], warned his colleague that the music of Mendelssohn had been removed from concert programs¹³. In contrast to Massarani, who had participated in the March on Rome and was thus a confirmed Fascist (his incidental music for *18BL*, staged

¹² M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., pp. 264-265.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 291-292. An accurate description of the atmosphere in those years, as it relates to the biography of the composer, is furnished by John Tedeschi, *A Harbinger of Mussolini's Racist Laws. The case of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, in Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni, Marcello Massenzio (eds.), *Non solo verso Oriente. Studi sull'ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, Florence, Olschki, 2014, vol. II, pp. 569-586.

in Florence in 1934, was one of the «performances for the masses», strongly desired by Mussolini himself), Castelnuovo-Tedesco had no Fascist medals of honor to display. He had had little to no interest in politics and had dedicated his life to music, art, literature and family. Aristocratically low-key, he had no need to earn the praise of the regime, nor to make compromises, since he had never been employed in the civil service. The continued presence of his music at the Maggio musicale fiorentino, a festival that was a source of pride for the Fascist regime and for this reason strictly controlled, can be explained first and foremost by the prestige that the composer enjoyed, particularly in Florence. If anything, he could proclaim the patriotic sentiments and the Italian character of the music that brought him worldwide fame: which is what he did, in effect, when he asked for clarifications from Alessandro Pavolini, an old friend who was then the president of the Confederazione fascista professionisti e artisti [Fascist Confederation of Professionals and Artists], of which Castelnuovo-Tedesco was a member. He did not receive any explanations¹⁴.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco did manage to glean some information from Gabriele D'Annunzio in February 1938. The two had met for the first time in Gardone Riviera in 1930, but the poet had known of the composer long before: in 1920 D'Annunzio had used the music of *Fuori i barbari* for *La canzone di Fiume liberata* [Song of Liberated Fiume], for which he had changed the lyrics to adapt the work to the «*impresa di Fiume*»¹⁵. Thanks to Luisa Baccara, D'Annunzio's companion, Castelnuovo-Tedesco learned that «there were no written orders, but that, on a case-by-case basis, instructions were communicated by phone, from either the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Propaganda. At any rate, there was little to be done about it»¹⁶.

¹⁴ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., pp. 292-293.

¹⁵ The two texts can be viewed side by side in Alessandro Panajia, *Ad Ariel. Con un ramo di ginepro. Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco incontra Gabriele d'Annunzio*, Florence, Tassinari, 2018, pp. 14-15.

¹⁶ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 295.

Yet, in March 1938, at the Politeama fiorentino, the composer would have the satisfaction of hearing the music he had originally written to accompany Pirandello's play *Giganti della montagna*. The work was performed as an orchestral suite, under the direction of the eminent conductor Gino Marinuzzi. Then, in order to avoid the celebrations planned in Florence for the last stop of Hitler's visit to Italy on 9 May 1938, Castelnuovo-Tedesco withdrew to Usigliano di Lari, the villa of his wife's family near Pisa, a place he dearly loved. Here he completed the fairy-tale opera *Aucassin et Nicolette*, which he had originally conceived in his youth¹⁷.

Subsequently, the situation evolved quickly. When the first anti-semitic decrees were announced in early September 1938, the composer's most immediate concern was for the future of his sons, who would no longer be able to attend public school, before he thought about the restrictions imposed on his own musical career: the painful decision to leave the country was quickly taken¹⁸. As for the destination, «the decision to choose the United States of America was obvious; a country that was strong, rich, free, and full of resources, it was a place where I had influential friends who, I hoped, would help me»¹⁹.

The influential friends to whom Castelnuovo-Tedesco refers in his autobiography are certainly the previously mentioned Albert Spalding, Jascha Heifetz, and Arturo Toscanini; in order to avoid the Italian censors or word leaking out, he traveled to Switzerland and wrote to them from Lugano, where his friend Gisella Selden-Goth (1884-1975), the Hungarian-born pianist, was then living. He also sent a letter to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the well-known American arts patron and supporter of contemporary chamber music,

¹⁷ The genesis and the destiny of the work are reconstructed in Mila De Santis, *Aucassin et Nicolette, una cantafavola tra due mondi*, in A. Avallone, G. Bocchino (eds.), *L'ignoto iconoclasta*, cit., pp. 49-63.

¹⁸ In the succinct timeline entitled *La mia vita* [My Life], compiled in manuscript form in 1966, Castelnuovo-Tedesco dates his «decision to leave» to December 1938. The timeline is published in Angelo Gilardino, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Un fiorentino a Beverly Hills*, Milan, Curci, 2018, pp. 259-266.

¹⁹ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 302.

to whom the composer had dedicated his first *Quartetto per archi op. 58* [String Quartet]²⁰. Although Castelnuovo-Tedesco did not receive any concrete help from Coolidge, the response from the others was swift:

As soon as my three letters arrived in America, Toscanini responded immediately by telegram, through our friend Gisella. He said that Heifetz and Spalding would arrange for the necessary affidavit, and that together, the three of them would try to find some form of work for me [...]. The work they hoped to arrange for me was in the film industry, with which Heifetz had contacts²¹.

Spalding, as well as Albert Morini,²² the agent Castelnuovo-Tedesco had chosen to represent him in North America, had contacts in Hollywood. Morini was a Viennese Jew who, along with his sister, the celebrated violinist Erica Morini, had emigrated to the United States. Morini's office, located at 119 West 57th Street in New York City, would be the address to which Castelnuovo-Tedesco would have his mail sent during his first months in America. A contract to work in Hollywood would come to pass only later.

As soon as he received Heifetz's affidavit, Castelnuovo-Tedesco requested permission to immigrate at the American Consulate in Naples. However, Italian government officials created obstacles for the composer: out of caution, Castelnuovo-Tedesco had been vague about his intentions and, in all probability, had made the request to travel for artistic reasons, as if he had been planning a concert tour, which would not have justified the departure of the entire family. It would require much more time, energy, and the interventions of influential contacts in order to obtain the long-awaited permits for the family²³.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 303 fn.

²¹ Ibid., p. 303.

²² Beginning in January 1939, the Hollywood film studios had shown signs of interest in the Florentine composer, as revealed by the letters of Morini and Spalding cited in James Westby, *Uno scrittore fantasma. A Ghost Writer in Hollywood*, «The Cue Sheet. The Journal of the Film Music Society», XV, 2, April 1999, pp. 4-5.

²³ In his autobiography Castelnuovo-Tedesco does not reveal the name of his «musician friend, who, through his job, had easy access to the upper echelons» and could thus help him (M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 304). Gilardino identifies him as Mario Labroca (Rome 1896-1973), at the time the director of Florence's Teatro comunale and the Maggio musicale fiorentino (A. Gilardino, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, cit., pp. 101-102).

According to the composer's autobiography, the permits, valid for six months, were received on 3 April 1939²⁴. From his passport – on which many European nations were listed before the United States of America, countries that he would never visit – it appears that the green light was given by the emigration inspector in Genova on 5 April 1939. The stamp on his passport bears the date of 18 April 1939, with a validity of one year (until 17 April 1940); the American immigration visa is dated two days later: 20 April 1939²⁵. The composer thought it was important not to delay their departure, but he did allow himself the time to see close friends and family, as well as some places that held deep meaning for him, particularly the family villa at Usigliano and the home on via di Giramonte, where his mother and father were then living. (After his departure for America, he would not see his parents again.) He took his sons to visit several places in Tuscany and Umbria, sites imbued with historical significance, in the hope that they would preserve some positive memories of the ancient and artistic civilization that they were about to leave²⁶. They would also say their goodbyes in Palermo and Naples, which were the first stops of their long voyage to the new continent. On 12 July 1939 they departed from Florence, bound for Trieste; the following day they boarded the *Saturnia*, with New York as their destination. From that moment, their focus was on the future: during the crossing, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco had use of a piano, on which he practiced for upcoming concerts in New York, and he composed *Un sonetto di Dante* [A sonnet by Dante] for voice and piano. Nonetheless,

At that moment, something in me died; not hope, but illusion. [...] Although over the years I have genuinely grown fond of my adopted

²⁴ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 304.

²⁵ The passport is preserved in Library of Congress, Washington DC, Music Division, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers*. The date of the American visa is also found on the manifest of alien passengers sailing on the *Saturnia*; cf. *The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search, ad nomen* <<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org>> (accessed 10 November 2021). The author sincerely thanks Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco and James Westby for the information they provided and for their support in this research.

²⁶ Luigi Dallapiccola recalls this story in his remembrance of his late friend in *In Memory of Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco*, «The Composer and Conductor», IX, 6, May 1968, p. 3.

country, I was no longer able to become attached to people or to things. I have lived as though suspended in mid-air, as if in a cloud, waiting: without resentment (actually with my heart full of understanding and compassion for this poor tortured humankind), but now «distant»²⁷.

The arrival in New York, the move to Larchmont

The *Saturnia* arrived in New York on 27 July 1939²⁸. On the manifest of passengers who boarded the ship in Trieste, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and his family had been listed as «Italian», but this was crossed out and replaced with the description «Hebrew» after each name²⁹. From a second list of passengers prepared at the port of arrival, it appears that Castelnuovo-Tedesco declared his intention to the US immigration officials not to return to his home country and to settle permanently in the United States. The destination listed, Boston, arouses some surprise as does the name of the person with whom the travelers declared that they intended to reunite: Elena von Weber, whose address was 7 Bay State Road in Boston³⁰. In his autobiography, Castelnuovo-Tedesco does not mention either her or Boston as their final destination. The most probable hypothesis is that Boston was tactically indicated as a possible (final) stop in a series of concerts featuring performances of the composer's music, on which his agent Morini was then working. Indeed, Mario and Clara would go to Boston to attend one of these events, but not until the fall of 1940. Elena von Weber is, in fact, Madelaine (Elaine, Elena) Boutwell (1905-1990), the wife of Roland von Weber (1899-1975). Born to a prominent and influential Boston family, she had, together with her husband, embarked on a concert career (she as a mezzo soprano, he as a pianist), which had brought them to Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

²⁷ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 307.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 312. In the timeline cited in footnote 16, the composer had listed the date of 29 July; cf. A. Gilardino, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, p. 263.

²⁹ *The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search*, entry for «Marie Castelnuovo-Tedesco» [sic] <<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org>> (accessed 10 November 2021). The retrieval of the document in the database is currently hindered by the erroneous transcription of the composer's name.

³⁰ See fn. 29.

Once she retired from performing, she expressed her love for the arts, and especially for music, as a patron of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra³¹. The von Webers' relationship with the Florentine composer still remains to be clarified. Certainly it is known that Roland von Weber was entrusted with the task of writing a profile of the composer for the volume *The Book of Modern Composers*, published in 1942³². Now let us return to the composer's time in New York. The Castelnuovo-Tedesco family initially secured lodgings in a hotel, with the help of Gisella Selden-Goth and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's radiologist friend from Trieste, Oscar Levi (1903-1958), who, back in Florence in the mid-1930s, had cured the composer of a painful sciatica with shortwave therapy. Both Levi (who would soon change his last name to Landi) and Selden-Goth were Jewish refugees themselves who had recently settled in the US. (Selden-Goth had emigrated with her daughter Trudy, a dancer.) Also on hand to assist the Castelnuovo-Tedescos were Margherita De Vecchi, a friend of the Toscaninis, who was an American born to an Italian father, and the Halmans sisters, about whom not much is known at the moment, on behalf of Morini.

The extremely hot weather that summer led the composer to search for a different place to live. Thanks to Edda Graf (the aunt of Herbert Graf, the opera producer who had staged some important productions for the Maggio musicale fiorentino), the Castelnuovo-Tedescos discovered Larchmont, a small town between the ocean and the countryside, about 40 minutes by train from New York City, where the temperatures were milder. The «tiny but delightful little house»,³³ which they rented already furnished, was located in Larchmont Woods, the residential section of town, and Oscar Levi moved in

³¹ The Madelaine G. von Weber Trust continues to underwrite artistic and social welfare projects in New Hampshire <<https://vonwebertrust.org>> (accessed 10 November 2021).

³² Roland von Weber, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, in D. Ewen (ed.), *The Book of Modern Composers*, cit., pp. 108-116.

³³ Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Alberto Carocci, Larchmont, 18 August 1939, in Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Ringrazio il Cielo di essere qui. Lettere ad Alberto Carocci da Larchmont e Beverly Hills 1939/41*, ed. by Alessandro Panajia, Livorno, Sillabe, 2021, p. 40. Translated from the original Italian.

with them. This was supposed to have been a temporary solution for the summer months, but the prolonged uncertainty of the long-awaited Hollywood contract, the pleasantness of the place, and assurances that the children could be enrolled in good local schools persuaded the Castelnuovo-Tedescos not to return to New York City. Instead, they found another, more comfortable furnished home to rent in Larchmont at 12 Summit Avenue.

Italians in Larchmont

Here Castelnuovo-Tedesco and his wife had the opportunity to reconnect with many other Italians, both emigrés and those residing only temporarily in the US. In September 1939, their brother-in-law Fernando Liuzzi came to New York City for the International Congress of Musicology organized by the American Musicological Society. Liuzzi would have gladly stayed in America; he had been offered a position to teach Music History at Columbia University. However, his family was not able to join him, and because of some serious health issues, he returned the following year to Italy, where he died on 6 October 1940. Clara's younger sister, Piera Forti, and her husband, the pathologist Cesare Tedeschi, along with their two sons, had also made the crossing. Many other exiled physicians spent time at the Castelnuovo-Tedesco home: the aforementioned Oscar Levi (Landi); Mario Volterra, who had taught medical semiotics at the University of Florence; Roberto Funaro, who had treated Lorenzo Castelnuovo-Tedesco when he was ill with polio in 1938; and a recent acquaintance, Carlo Sorell (Schapira). Castelnuovo-Tedesco's close friend Aldo Bruzzichelli and his wife Anja Schawinsky, a dancer born in Poland, who had made the crossing on the *Saturnia* with the Castelnuovo-Tedescos, frequently visited Larchmont from their home in New Jersey. Bruzzichelli, a talented entrepreneur (his family ran one of the most elegant cafés in Florence), had come to the United States for personal reasons – his wife had a brother there. He had deliberately chosen the same ship as the Castelnuovo-Tedesco family so that he could make the trip with

his friend. When war broke out, he then decided to prolong his stay in America. Andrea Marangoni, the son of the art critic Matteo and Drusilla Tanzi (at the time the companion and future wife of Eugenio Montale) was also living in New Jersey. In his autobiography, Castelnuovo-Tedesco also mentions Renzo Ravà, who had been in charge of Constitutional Law studies and *professore straordinario* of Labor Law at the University of Florence, and Renzo Nissim, the journalist and musician. After arriving in America in the spring of 1940, Amelia Rosselli also settled in Larchmont with her daughters-in-law and grandchildren. As already mentioned, Rosselli had been a close friend of Mario's mother³⁴.

In the letters he sent from Larchmont to relatives and friends who had remained in Florence, the composer demonstrates his rapid adaptation to his new circumstances, starting with his prose, which quickly begins to include many English words and expressions. He recounts his nostalgia for loved ones left behind, disappointment at the dearth of news about many of them (his dear friends Arturo Loria, Alberto Carocci, and Memmi Corcos did write regularly, however), and the painful awareness of the family's change in social status; yet, curiosity and sometimes genuine enthusiasm for things seen or experienced in their new country, as well as faith in the opportunities afforded by the US for him and his family, seem to prevail. Thus, on 13 September 1939, he wrote to Alberto Carocci:

This country is charming, even despite its undeniable shortcomings. I even like the lack of traditions, which are due to the fact that this country is young, and its people are rather ignorant and slightly ill-mannered. Please believe me that I don't long for old, tormented Europe, where we all would have had a nervous breakdown, to say the least. I thank heaven that we are here, and I believe that, one way or another, I will manage³⁵.

And on 28 October:

Here at least there is a sense of freedom and space that, believe me, brightens my spirits. I love this country! And I assure you that my

³⁴ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 317.

³⁵ Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Alberto Carocci, Larchmont, 13 September 1939, in M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Ringrazio il Cielo di essere qui*, cit., p. 45. Translated from the original Italian.

nostalgia is limited to certain places that meant a lot to me (Firenze, Usigliano, Castiglioncello) and to the loved ones I left behind, but I don't miss anything else³⁶.

On 23 February 1940, he wrote to his friend the framer Corrado Del Conte, who would open the art gallery Il Fiore in Florence shortly afterwards:

Certainly I am no longer a «gentleman» as I was in Florence; rather, I am a «working man»...: anyway, one thing does not preclude the other, and it's enough to have the soul of a gentleman [...] and no one can take this away, right?... Moreover this country is beautiful, there is a sense of abundance and of freedom that is very consoling... We can work, we can say and do exactly what we wish, according to our activities and our means... Seen from here, many things from before seem inconceivable, and one wonders how we could become accustomed to them... For this it's worth making many sacrifices: for this sense of dignity and personal responsibility, which is priceless³⁷.

These were certainly sincere expressions, behind which one cannot help but suppose there was also a desire to reassure his correspondents and dispel any possible reason for concern.

Resumption of musical activity

At the instigation of Albert Morini, performances of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's music and his concert career resumed during the 1939-40 season. The New York Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli, devoted half of the evening's program on 2 November (repeated on 3 and 5 November) to the composer's music, performing the world premiere of the *Concerto per pianoforte* (with Castelnuovo-Tedesco as soloist) and the Overture to *La dodicesima notte* [Twelfth Night]. Castelnuovo-Tedesco subsequently performed his *Concerto* to similar acclaim in New Haven, under the baton of Hugo Kortschak. Initially, he had some undeniable successes: in 1940 his music was performed in various major American cities (in the fall he and his

³⁶ Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Carocci, Larchmont, 28 October 1939, in M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Ringrazio il Cielo di essere qui*, cit., p. 53. Translated from the original Italian.

³⁷ Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Corrado Del Conte, 23 February 1940, in the Archivio contemporaneo A. Bonsanti, Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux, Florence (ACGV), *Fondo Corrado Del Conte*. Translated from the original Italian. The author thanks Del Conte's heirs and the director of the GV, Gloria Manghetti, for the authorization to publish this excerpt.

wife went to Boston to hear the new orchestration of his youthful work *Cipressi*, conducted by Koussevitzky);³⁸ he was invited to write several articles (for «The New York Times» and other publications, both general interest and musical);³⁹ he was interviewed on the radio;⁴⁰ and, though he had little appetite for social life, many parties were organized in his honor. He reconnected with old friends and acquaintances: Castelnuovo-Tedesco was often the guest of Toscanini at the conductor's home in Riverdale, on the Hudson River; he met up again with Heifetz, Spalding, Edward Johnson, manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Isidor Achron and his wife Karin (he, a pianist and longtime collaborator with Heifetz; she, a singer), as well as the vocal duo Eleanor and Vernon Steele, the first interpreters of the composer's *Shakespeare Duets* (1937)⁴¹.

In spite of all this, Castelnuovo-Tedesco still had plenty of worries:

I immediately understood that it would be difficult to «conquer» New York, let alone America! I felt I could never become «a success» (at least in terms of promotion and public opinion). As a pianist, I would have to compete with performers far more experienced and technically more sophisticated than myself [...]; as a composer, also, I understood that my art, quiet and understated, was far removed from the whims of fashion. Even if my work could inspire some interest and respect, it would be difficult to arouse the curiosity of the American public [...]. The film work, which initially seemed promising, was slow to materialize. I would have liked to find a teaching position, but this avenue also proved difficult (I even contacted some agencies!). In fact, we Italian refugees were preceded by German exiles who had been, on the one hand, very well prepared for academic teaching; however, their elitist and, at times, arrogant attitudes made them not very well liked. A reaction ensued and,

³⁸ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 320.

³⁹ Among these are *A Composer on Writing Concertos*, «The New York Times», 29 October 1939, p. 10; *Modern Italian Music – Now Domiciled in America, Famous Composer Discusses Himself and His Contemporaries*, «The Boston Evening Transcript», 16 December 1939; *The Italian Overture*, «The New York Times», 14 April 1940; *The Overture Form in the Music of Today*, «Musical America», 60, February 1940, pp. 108-110; *Shakespeare and Music*, «The Shakespeare Association Bulletin», 15, July 1940, pp. 166-174; *The Composer Speaks*, in D. Ewen (ed.), *The Book of Modern Composers*, cit., pp. 392-393.

⁴⁰ The transcript of an interview of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is available in an Italian translation in Id., *Ringrazio il Cielo di essere qui*, cit., pp. 75-81. The interview was conducted by Lisa Sergio, an Italian journalist who became an ardent anti-fascist and emigrated to the US in 1937. At the time of the interview, Sergio was a political reporter for the New York City radio station WQXR.

⁴¹ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 318.

unfortunately, a nationalist movement began to emerge in America as well.⁴²

There were also some scorching disappointments from composition projects, the first of which was *Larchmont Woods*, written for Albert Spalding. Then, Castelnuovo-Tedesco completed his *Concerto n. 3 per violino e pianoforte op. 102*, which Heifetz had commissioned a few months before the composer's departure from Italy. The violinist, however, was not convinced about the work, especially the third movement, and he never performed it⁴³. A similar fate befell two revisions of *Exotica* for violin and piano, the first of which had dated back to 1934. In addition, in America the composer did not encounter a very receptive environment for his art songs for voice and piano, the area of his musical output of which he was perhaps the most proud⁴⁴. Therefore, the news he received in October 1940 from Rudolph Polk, former secretary to Heifetz who had become an agent for Columbia in Hollywood, was particularly welcome: Castelnuovo-Tedesco's contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) was ready, with a start of 1 November. This was going to be a radical change for him, and it would also distance him from the personal relationships he had begun to forge on the East Coast.

Composition in Hollywood

Castelnuovo-Tedesco departed for California alone, leaving his family in Larchmont so that his sons could complete the academic year. He stayed at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where he remained for only six months, that is, a shorter time than planned: after his wife underwent emergency surgery in his absence, the couple decided to move up the date of their reunion. On 21 April 1941, Clara moved to California with Lorenzo, who, being younger, had less burdensome school obligations than his brother. Pietro remained in

⁴² Ibid., pp. 321-322.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 322-324. The commission, for which a compensation of one thousand dollars was proposed, is the subject of a letter from Heifetz to Castelnuovo-Tedesco dated 22 May 1939, held in Library of Congress, Washington DC, Music Division, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers*.

⁴⁴ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., pp. 325-327.

Larchmont (under the supervision of the Rosselli family) to finish high school and joined the rest of the family in California at the end of June. Castelnuovo-Tedesco rented a small house, located at 312 Alpine Drive in Beverly Hills, which suited their needs.

A few months later, the United States entered World War II. Italians living in America immediately became «enemy aliens» and were subject to various restrictions, among them being prohibited from going out in the evening, meeting other Italians, and traveling more than fifteen miles from their place of residence. For Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, what was far more difficult was the complete absence of news about the relatives and friends that he had left behind in Europe. Only once the war was over and communications had recommenced would he learn that all his family members were safe. Even his brother Ugo, sent into internal exile in Pescasseroli for his anti-fascist views and actions, then jailed in Florence and eventually freed with the armistice of 8 September 1943, had managed to evade the Nazi-Fascists and escape to Switzerland. On the other hand, the family suffered extensive losses of property: their houses had been ransacked, and only a few items would ever be recovered.

Meanwhile, on 16 October 1943, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's contract with MGM expired and was not renewed, as a result of new protectionist policies at the studio. The composer was not unhappy about his termination; instead, he continued to work for various production houses as a freelance composer until the mid-1950s. Although his facility with composition, his very solid technical skills, and his propensity for mimetic musical thinking had permitted him to adapt rapidly to the requirements of the studios, their ways of working, in his opinion, represented the negation of the idea of «art music» (and were also contrary to his personal ideas of what «film music» should be). The contributions that were asked of him only constituted a small piece of a large, industrial machine, which was often dedicated to the production of B-movies: a group effort, without credit for the composer,

conducted at a frenetic pace. For the most part his work consisted of writing original music for individual scenes (and not the entire film score) and then handing over the orchestration and arrangement to others. Lastly, MGM retained the rights not only to the original music intended for a specific film and to the so-called «stock music» (works composed without a specific use in mind, which were meant to contribute to a sort of «musical library» to be drawn upon for future films),⁴⁵ but to all works composed by the author while he was under contract.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco would always keep these two different areas of activity completely separate: on one side, there was the composition of film music, from which he earned his living; on the other, his independent work. Only very occasionally did film composition provide him with some creative satisfaction: for example, in the case of the musical score he wrote for René Clair's *And Then There Were None* (1945). Clair entrusted Castelnuovo-Tedesco with all of the music for the film, and the composer is officially recognized in the credits. Another positive experience was *The Loves of Carmen* (1948), directed by Charles Vidor, which the composer judged to have been, up until that time «without a doubt the best work I have written for a film»⁴⁶.

Another work direction opened up for the composer during these years (which became a secondary, if not a primary, source of income): private teaching. Some of the dozens and dozens of students of every age who passed through his doors went on to become celebrated film composers: John Williams, Henry Mancini, Jerry Goldsmith, Nelson Riddle, and Jerry Fielding, as well as Castelnuovo-Tedesco's personal favorites, André Previn and Herman Stein.

⁴⁵ Cf. Simone Caputo, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco a Hollywood: compositore di film score, original music e stock music*, in A. Avallone, G. Bocchino (eds.), *L'ignoto iconoclasta*, cit., pp. 81-101.

⁴⁶ Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Arturo Loria, 5 May 1948. ACGV, Fondo Arturo Loria. Translated from the original Italian. The author thanks Loria's heirs and the director of the GV, Gloria Manghetti, for the permission to publish this and other excerpts from the correspondence held by the Fondo Arturo Loria.

Florentine composer, American citizen

The final war years coincided with a period of additional uncertainties and important decisions for the composer. The need to quickly move out of the rented home in which they were living and the limited availability of housing in Los Angeles convinced the Castelnuovo-Tedescos to take a major step:

I had always clung to the hope that our stay in America would be temporary; I still dreamed of returning to Florence. The idea of buying a house in Los Angeles and being tied to this place just terrified me⁴⁷.

They went ahead and bought a house («a tiny house, very comfortable and attractive»),⁴⁸ also in Beverly Hills, at 269 South Clark Drive, of which they took possession on 4 March 1944. They would remain there until the end of their lives.

Another transition that was not easy for the Castelnuovo-Tedescos was the acquisition of American citizenship, even if it was, in a certain sense, the natural consequence of the procedural process initiated with their immigration. After the Declaration of Intention (First Papers), signed in 1939, the Castelnuovo-Tedescos submitted their request for Final Papers in 1945, for which they had to take exams about the history of the United States and its Constitution. The prolonged time required to obtain their American citizenship was caused not only by the functional delays of wartime and the immediate post-war period, but also by a situation in which the composer found himself at that time. In 1945 Castelnuovo-Tedesco received, in a more or less direct manner, requests from Italy about his interest and availability to take over the direction of either the Conservatory of Naples or, an even more enticing prospect, the Conservatory of Rome. In both cases, Castelnuovo-Tedesco had taken his time to respond, as we learn from the letter he wrote to his friend Arturo Loria on 13 November 1945:

You can tell Bacci Bandinelli [Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, then the Director of the post-war Italian government's Fine Arts and Antiquities

⁴⁷ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 428.

⁴⁸ ACGV, *Fondo Arturo Loria*, Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Loria, 25 April 1945. Translated from the original Italian.

Ministry] that (at the risk of disappointing my good friends in Naples) I would prefer Rome to Naples (in fact I don't know if I would move back for Naples): for many reasons that you can imagine [...] the longer they wait, the more I enjoy it...: when it comes down to it, as you know, my ideal would be to return to Italy in the summer of 1947, but if my presence were required sooner, I could (if I had enough advance notice), withdraw from my position here for the fall of 1946. However, I will not move forward with resigning my position here until I have clear assurances and know that everything is agreed in detail [...] I am profoundly grateful to those friends in Italy who remembered me⁴⁹.

None of these preliminary discussions would have concrete follow through (although the Naples position would come up again a few years later, as we will see). Castelnuovo-Tedesco's frequent correspondence with Italy, which, at that time, was still under the eye of censors, gave rise to doubts in Washington about his true intentions. Once he clarified the actual situation to the American authorities, the composer and his wife obtained their United States citizenship on 23 July 1946. A few months later, Lorenzo automatically received his as well. For Pietro, who had arrived in the United States at age 14, the procedure was different: the paperwork could only be initiated in late 1946, after his twenty-first birthday. In his case, too, several months were required before he received his citizenship.

In Italy once again

The Castelnuovo-Tedesco family had been planning a return trip to Italy in the spring or summer of 1947, but with Pietro still awaiting his American citizenship, they postponed this voyage for a year. The opportunity for a «consolation trip» came when Castelnuovo-Tedesco received a commission to write the music for a ballet, *The Octoroon Ball*, from the dancer, choreographer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham, who invited the composer and his family to spend the summer in Mexico for this purpose. «After eight years, I am delighted to cross the border» – he would confess to his friend Loria on 17 July 1947 – «and I will enjoy seeing something that is,

⁴⁹ ACGV, *Fondo Arturo Loria*, Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Loria, 13 November 1945. Translated from the original Italian.

like me, more than 50 years old!»⁵⁰ The trip to Mexico turned out to be a very interesting one, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco composed the music as planned, but the ballet would never find its way to the stage.

Only on 18 May 1948 did the Castelnuovo-Tedescos board the Vulcania in New York, bound for Naples, where they arrived on the 28th⁵¹. In addition to the understandable emotions felt by all of the members of the family, for the composer there were new doubts about the idea of returning definitively to Italy:

The directorship of the Naples Conservatory had remained vacant, and during the winter our Neapolitan friends, led by Achille Longo and Jacopo Napoli, insisted that I accept it. Indeed, they had sent a petition to the ministry, signed by all the professors of the Conservatory (with the exception of two, and I knew who they were) requesting that I be appointed without a competition⁵².

Even without putting into question the affection and respect that the composer enjoyed from his friends in Naples,⁵³ it would be revealed how his name was seen as an advantage to guarantee these colleagues, almost all of them members of the more traditionalist wing of Italian music, a prestigious representative, given both his artistic profile as well as his ethical stance. (Castelnuovo-Tedesco had not compromised himself with Mussolini's regime, and, moreover, he had been a victim of it.)

Beyond the festive welcome from so many who had come to greet him at the port (his brother Ugo, Memmi Corcos, members of the Liuzzi family, and his composer friends Nino Rota and Virgilio Mortari, along with Mrs. Mortari), the warm feelings demonstrated by many Neapolitan friends and colleagues, and

⁵⁰ ACGV, *Fondo Arturo Loria*, Castelnuovo-Tedesco to Loria, 17 July 1947. Translated from the original Italian.

⁵¹ Ibid., Castelnuovo-Tedesco informs Loria about this in his letter of 5 May 1948.

⁵² M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 482.

⁵³ Based on a review of the correspondence between Castelnuovo-Tedesco and his composer friend Alfredo Sangiorgi, Cosimo Malorgio has expressed his reservations about whether relations had continued between the two during the first decade after the Florentine composer's emigration. Cf. Cosimo Malorgio, *Censure di un musicista. La vicenda artistica e umana di Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, Turin, Paravia-De Sono, 2001. Aloma Bardi corrects this assertion, at least partially, in *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco amico dei musicisti napoletani*, in Pier Paolo De Martino, Daniela Margoni Tortora (eds.), *Musica e musicisti a Napoli nel primo Novecento*, Naples, Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, 2012, pp. 237-271.

the numerous concerts organized in his honor, his stay in Naples was spoiled by a serious episode (his son Lorenzo suffered the sudden onset of the symptoms of a possible meningitis), other unpleasant situations resulting from the decline and poverty of the city, and, above all, by the rivalries and conflicts within the local musical scene. Castelnuovo-Tedesco was therefore convinced not to accept the position; with that decision he abandoned any prospect of returning permanently to Italy, and he departed for the Tuscan capital. The return to his beloved Florence also had a bitter edge. Conditions were still rather miserable, and profound changes had occurred in the city's social and urban fabric. Moreover, on a personal level, he realized that the investment of time and resources required to put the family's beloved estate of Usigliano back in order and to manage it going forward would not be feasible. The Castelnuovo-Tedescos therefore made up their minds to sell the place. On 3 November 1948 they boarded the ship at Naples that would take them back to New York.

I realized then, perhaps for the first time, what had been the real tragedy of my life, which I had intuited many times, but only vaguely, and it had never before felt like a final verdict: the tragedy of the expatriate! I understood that Americans would always consider me «the Italian», and Italians would always consider me «the American». Forever more (or for however many years I had left), I would be suspended between two worlds!⁵⁴

Florence in 1952 and other trips to Italy

His subsequent trip to Florence was a much more positive experience. The occasion was the world premiere of *Aucassin et Nicolette* at the XV Maggio musicale fiorentino. On 16 April 1952, accompanied by Clara's sister Piera and her husband Cesare Tedeschi, the Castelnuovo-Tedescos boarded the

⁵⁴ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 492. Aloma Bardi observes that the phrase «'between two worlds' is a clear reference to Jewish suffering and the experience of separation. In fact, *Between Two Worlds* was the title, and later became the subtitle, of a famous Yiddish play by Shelomoh An-ski, and in Yiddish a *Dybbuk* is a spirit that wanders restlessly after death and takes possession of a living body, divided between after transcendent world and the earthly one». A. Bardi, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco amico*, cit., p. 248. Translated from the original Italian.

Queen Mary in New York, this time with the destination of Cherbourg. After visiting Paris and Chartres, they arrived in Florence just in time for the first rehearsals. The opera premiered on 2 June and had genuine success, notwithstanding some serious reservations from the critics and from the composer about the director's choices. The event marked the closing of a circle for Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco: conceived in his youth, composed twenty years later at Usigliano just before his departure in exile, *Aucassin et Nicolette* finally came to life in the composer's hometown of Florence with Suzanne Danco's beautiful performance and Emidio Tieri's attentive direction. The presence of so many friends, colleagues and relatives made it a particularly special moment for Castelnuovo-Tedesco. It had been a time to take stock and to look ahead to a new phase, which turned out to be the final one of his life. In July, in Castiglioncello, Castelnuovo-Tedesco began to work on his autobiography, which he had started ten years earlier and set aside after writing the first chapter. He would complete a draft in 1955, ending the book with the premiere of *Aucassin et Nicolette* on 2 June 1952. After he failed to find a publisher for the work, he decided to extend the story up to 1961 (the year of another world premiere at the Maggio musicale fiorentino, as we will see), and then appended the draft once more with a final brief note. *Una vita di musica* [A Life of Music] is the title he chose for his memoir, which would only be published more than 30 years after his death⁵⁵. The book does not simply reflect his desire to pass down to his descendants an enormous wealth of information about the family's history and about his own life, as we read in his Introduction to the work; nor is its purpose, as the composer always asserted, to provide a listening guide for his compositions to better understand their context and meaning⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ During the author's lifetime excerpts were published in «Letteratura», 3, 13-14, 1955, pp. 53-65, and in «La rassegna musicale», 27, 3, September 1957, pp. 201-204. However, his contacts with the Florentine publisher Sansoni did not result in the hoped-for publication of the entire work. Widely used by scholars while it was still in manuscript form, the book was finally published in M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Above all, the book deals with recomposing in a single life of music what was ruptured by his forced exile in the United States. The composer demonstrates how this deep wound, even if it interrupted his successful career («I saw [...] the edifice I had so patiently constructed be destroyed by decree, with the single stroke of a pen»⁵⁷), had not undermined his journey as a human and as an artist.

That same year the composer decided to purchase an apartment in Florence, with the goal of returning to the Tuscan capital at least every other year; he did not want to feel like a tourist or impose on relatives and friends. His brother- and sister-in-law Aldo and Lilly Forti told him about an apartment on the fourth floor of a building that was still under construction in a very central area of the city that had been destroyed by wartime bombings. The Castelnuovo-Tedescos took possession of the apartment, located at Via de' Bardi 52, only during their subsequent stay in Florence, in 1954.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco would make five more trips to Italy, including his final one in 1966. Two of these merit particular mention. In 1959, his return to Italy was scheduled so that he could participate in a ceremony during which he was awarded the prestigious Davide Campari Prize at an imposing event at the Palazzo Serbelloni in Milan. At the suggestion of his friend and colleague Alfredo Sangiorgi, the composer had entered his new opera *Il mercante di Venezia* [The Merchant of Venice] in the Campari competition, which had been announced the previous year by the local press club under the patronage of La Scala. The satisfaction of victory would soon turn into a bitter disappointment. Contrary to expectations, the prize consisted exclusively of a large sum of money and did not include a production of the work at La Scala. The composer would later learn that the staging at La Scala had been blocked by his former teacher Ildebrando Pizzetti, who was then an artistic consultant to the opera house (and, as a juror, he had voted on the

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

awarding of the prize). He would recall this episode as «the greatest disappointment of my life»⁵⁸.

Not long after, Castelnuovo-Tedesco would have the satisfaction of seeing *Il mercante di Venezia* sumptuously produced at the Teatro Comunale in Florence on 25 May 1961 as part of the XXIV Maggio musicale fiorentino. The production received positive acclaim from the public, although the critics' response was more tepid.

The American years: composition, teaching, family

In *Una vita di musica*, Castelnuovo-Tedesco highlighted how many of his works, which were premiered and even partially or entirely composed during his American years, in fact had their roots back in Italy, in the years preceding the rupture that occurred between 1938 and 1939. Because of different characteristics of musical consumption, changes in the publishing market, as well as the composer's personal evolution, his move to the United States also brought, among the many consequences, a significant reorientation of his musical output. He added frequently to his catalog, but he composed fewer pages for solo piano, orchestral works, and songs for voice and piano. Among his songs, the 28 *Shakespeare Sonnets* (1944-1947) stand out: a milestone in his long and varied journey of compositions – songs, overtures, and operas – inspired by the English poet, which he began with the *Shakespeare Songs* (1921-1925) and continued through to the already mentioned *Mercante di Venezia*. Another direction he explored was composing for voice and guitar, and at least two of these works focus explicitly on the theme of exile: the *Ballata dall'esilio* (1956), to the poem by Guido Cavalcanti, and the cycle *The Divan of Moses-Ibn-Ezra* (1966)⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 603. In his autobiography Castelnuovo-Tedesco does not comment on the reasons for Pizzetti's behavior. One cannot rule out concerns about «squandering» La Scala's budget, which was needed to stage Pizzetti's own operas (*Assassinio nella cattedrale*, 1 March 1959; *Il calzare d'argento*, 23 March 1961).

⁵⁹ Cf. Tina Frühauf, *Song of Exile. Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco and The Divan of Moses-Ibn-Ezra*, in Alessandro Cassin (ed.), *Exile and Creativity*, New York, CPL Editions, 2020, pp. 50-81.

In addition to many compositions for solo guitar, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's catalog was enriched with chamber music works, music for the synagogue (although he was never a member of one during his years in America), many compositions inspired by the Bible (among them, several oratorios); and lastly, numerous choral pieces, both sacred and secular.

His peaceful life in Beverly Hills, periodically interspersed with long stays in Europe, had a welcome change of pace with his only experience in public education, which was at Michigan State University. In 1958, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was invited to the University as a Distinguished Visiting Professor to teach a course of his own choice. He accepted, but for health reasons, asked to postpone the commitment until the following year. In September 1959, Mario and Clara went to East Lansing, where they moved into Suite 508 of the Kellogg Center; they remained until mid-December of that year. The course, «On Opera Writing», was organized as a series of lectures open to all students,⁶⁰ as well as weekly seminars and private lessons for the graduate students in composition. In addition to teaching responsibilities, his activities during this stay were multi-faceted: concerts, speeches in a variety of settings, as well as time for composition; he described the period as one of the «most serene and pleasant» of his life⁶¹. After his time in Michigan, he transposed his memories into one of his most extensive *Greeting Cards, Suite 508* for viola and piano⁶².

⁶⁰ Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, «Under the Sign of Orpheus. A Series of Lectures as Distinguished Visiting Professor at Michigan State University» (unpublished manuscript and typescript, 1959), in Library of Congress, Washington DC, Music Division, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers*.

⁶¹ M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica*, cit., p. 610.

⁶² Beginning in the early 1950s, the composer began to honor friends, acquaintances, and colleagues with short compositions created by deriving a subject or musical theme from their name, according to a particular method of connecting the letters of the alphabet with the notes of the chromatic scale arranged on two or more octaves (according to the alphabet used). Starting from this subject or theme, the piece sought to render in music the «personality» of the dedicatee. The series *Greeting Cards op. 170* is comprised of more than 50 of these pieces. *Suite 508 op. 170 n. 21* (the title of which is a play on words with the term «suite»), is made up of a succession of seven dances, each dedicated to a colleague, a student, or a staff member of the Music Department of Michigan State University.

For some time, the nest in Beverly Hills had been left empty. Pietro, who had departed for Berkeley to study psychology and then to Boston to study medicine, had married Lisbeth Stone in 1957; Lorenzo, an aspiring painter, had turned to the study of architecture and had married Laura Spaulding in 1952. Pietro and Lisbeth had two daughters, Diana and Costanza; Lorenzo and Laura had two sons, Marc and Greg. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco lived long enough to know his grandchildren. He died on 16 March 1968.

Major publications

Compositions

For the composer's musical catalog, refer to Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Una vita di musica (un libro di ricordi)*, vol. II, edited by James Westby with introduction by Mila De Santis and editorial oversight by Ulla Casalini, Fiesole, Cadmo, 2005 (English translation by James Westby and Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco, forthcoming). The complete catalog is also available online at <<https://mariocastelnuovotedesco.com>> (in English and Italian).

Writings (selected)

- *La penna perduta. Scritti 1919-1936*, critical edition and introductory essay by Mila De Santis, Rome, Aracne, 2017.
- *A Composer on Writing Concertos*, «The New York Times», 29 October 1939, p. 157.
- *Modern Italian Music – Now Domiciled in America, Famous Composer Discusses Himself and His Contemporaries*, «Boston Evening Transcript», 16 December 1939.
- *Ringrazio il Cielo di essere qui. Lettere ad Alberto Carocci da Larchmont e Beverly Hills 1939/41*, edited by Alessandro Panajia, Livorno, Sillabe, 2021.
- *The Overture Form of the Music Today*, «Musical America», 60, February 1940, pp. 108-110.
- *Shakespeare and Music*, «The Shakespeare Association Bulletin», 15, July 1940, pp. 166-174.
- *Ildebrando Pizzetti*, in *The Book of Modern Composers*, edited by David Ewen, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1942, pp. 201-207.
- *The Composer Speaks*, in *The Book of Modern Composers*, edited by David Ewen, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1942, pp. 392-393.
- «Under the Sign of Orpheus. A Series of Lectures as Distinguished

Visiting Professor at Michigan State University», unpublished manuscript, 1959.

- *Una vita di musica (un libro di ricordi)*, cit.

Archival Sources

- ASUFI, AC, SS, Medical School registration card, a.y. 1915-16.
- Library of Congress, Washington DC, Music Division, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers*.
- *The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search*, entries for «Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco», «Marie Castelnuovo-Tedesco» [sic] <<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org>>.

Bibliography

- *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco* <<https://mariocastelnuovotedesco.com>>.
- Alessandro Avallone, Gianluca Bocchino (eds.), *L'ignoto iconoclasta. Studi su Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, Lucca, LIM, 2019 (The essays by Susanna Pasticci, Aloma Bardi, Mila De Santis, Gianluca Bocchino, and Simone Caputo are of particular relevance.)
- Aloma Bardi, Mauro Conti (eds.), *Teatro comunale di Firenze. Maggio musicale fiorentino. Catalogo delle manifestazioni 1928-1997*, Florence, Le Lettere, 1997.
- Aloma Bardi, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco amico dei musicisti napoletani*, in Pier Paolo De Martino, Daniela Margoni Tortora (eds.), *Musica e musicisti a Napoli nel primo Novecento*, Naples, Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, 2012, pp. 237-271.
- Luigi Dallapiccola, *In Memory of Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco*, «The Composer and Conductor», IX, 6, May 1968.
- Mila De Santis, *Un'eco nella mia musica. Scelte e strategie di lettura nella lirica da camera di Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco degli anni fiorentini*, «Codice 602», V, 2014, pp. 15-37.

- Tina Frühauf, *Song of Exile. Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco and The Divan of Moses-Ibn-Ezra*, in Alessandro Cassin (ed.), *Exile and Creativity*, New York, CPL Editions, 2020, pp. 50-81.
- Angelo Gilardino, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Un fiorentino a Beverly Hills*, Milano, Curci, 2018.
- Cosimo Malorgio, *Censure di un musicista. La vicenda artistica e umana di Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, Torino, Paravia-De Sono, 2001.
- Alessandro Panajia, *Ad Ariel. Con un ramo di ginepro. Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco incontra Gabriele d'Annunzio*, Firenze, Tassinari, 2018.
- Leonardo Pinzauti, *Storia del Maggio. Dalla nascita della «Stabile Orchestrale Fiorentina» (1928) al festival del 1993*, Lucca, LIM, 1994.
- John Tedeschi, *A Harbinger of Mussolini's Racist Laws. The case of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco*, in Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni, Marcello Massenzio, *Non solo verso Oriente. Studi sull'ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, vol. II, Firenze, Olschki, 2014, pp. 569-586.
- James Westby, *Uno scrittore fantasma. A Ghost Writer in Hollywood*, «The Cue Sheet. The Journal of the Film Music Society», XV, 2, April 1999.

Mila De Santis

Translated by Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Cite as:

Mila De Santis, *Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco* (2021),
in Patrizia Guarnieri, *Intellectuals Displaced from Fascist Italy. Migrants,
Exiles and Refugees Fleeing for Political and Racial Reasons*,
Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2019-
<<http://intellettualinfuga.fupress.com/en>>
e-ISBN: 978-88-6453-872-3
© 2019- Author(s)
Open Access article published under license CC-BY-SA 4.0

Publication date: 1 April 2022.