

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco was born in Florence in 1895, into a prominent Jewish family. In his city he began studying at the Luigi Cherubini Conservatory in 1909, graduating in piano in 1914; in 1918 he graduated in composition from the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's earliest works date from his childhood, and his earliest published piece dates from 1910. A highly educated musician, he launched his European career in Italy as a pianist and composer. His early works were regularly published and performed by prestigious soloists, conductors, orchestras and institutions, such as Jascha Heifetz, Arturo Toscanini, Vittorio Gui, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. In the 1920s and 1930s he frequently appeared as a pianist in performance of his own music and of pieces by other composers, as a soloist, with orchestras, in chamber music formations with other instrumentalists and with singers, playing a wide-ranging international repertoire. The escalation of fascism in Italy and the alliance with Nazi Germany soon created dangerous life conditions for the composer and his family, his wife Clara and their two sons Pietro and Lorenzo. In 1938, as a consequence of the enforcement of the racial laws, his music was banned. With the help of Heifetz and Toscanini, Castelnuovo-Tedesco and his family left Italy for the United States in the summer of 1939. After spending a year in Larchmont, NY, they settled in Beverly Hills, CA, where Castelnuovo-Tedesco started a new career, employed as composer of film scores at the Music Department of the MGM Studios in Hollywood. In the US, for many years he worked on soundtracks for about 200 motion pictures, and gave a remarkable contribution to the development of film music, while continuing to produce a vast output of classical music. He died in Beverly Hills in 1968. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco composed for numerous genres, and vocal and instrumental ensembles: operas, oratorios, concertos for solo instrument and orchestra, chamber music, art songs. Among his operas: *The Merchant of Venice* (from Shakespeare, 1956), *Saul* (after Vittorio Alfieri, 1958-1960). He wrote Oratorios inspired by Biblical texts (e.g., *The Book of Ruth*, 1949), Orchestral Overtures to Shakespeare plays (e.g., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1940). Castelnuovo-Tedesco was particularly sensitive to languages and literature, to the intonation and expression of poetry. He wrote many text-oriented art songs, a genre particularly dear to him; he set to music the greatest Italian poets (Dante, Petrarca, Leopardi) as well as his contemporaries (such as Palazzeschi) and popular, vernacular texts. Among his settings of English literature, the *Shakespeare Songs* (1921-1925) and *Shakespeare Sonnets* (1944-1947). He worked closely with performers, such as guitarist Andrés Segovia, who requested pieces that are among this composer's best known and most frequently performed, and have enlarged the guitar repertoire. A cultivated writer, he also published articles on his experience and challenges as a composer. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's autobiography, *Una vita di musica* (*A Life with Music*) written in the 1950s, was recently published in Italy (Cadmo, 2005). It is an affectionate, detailed narrative of a composer's life on the background of cultural and social events in the first half of the 20th century on both sides of the Ocean, and expresses the author's love for both his native and adoptive countries, whose combination was to become the synthesis of his own life and art. The Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers at the Library of Congress Music Division in Washington, DC are a large collection of his published and unpublished music, correspondence, photographs, and documents; the Castelnuovo-Tedesco Papers are open to research.