

THE STORY OF "UNA VITA DI MUSICA"

by Nick Rossi

At the urging of his sons, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco began to write his autobiography in July of 1952 at Castiglione. In the Preambolo he tells us:

Molte volte i miei figliuoli, sentendomi raccontare qual che episodio della mia vita, mi hanno chiesto: - "Babbo, perchè non scrivi i tuoi ricordi?" - Ho sempre esitato a farlo, e per molte ragioni. Prima di tutto perchè il tempo (il mio grande nemico) mi è sempre parso troppo breve; ed ho preferito impiegarlo a scrivere musica che non a distillar prosa ...

But finally the Maestro ignored the "reasons" and began to compose the words on paper. The manuscript, titled "UNA VITA DI MUSICA: Un libro di ricordi" was completed on the 19th of August, 1955, at the Maestro's home in Beverly Hills. The manuscript had been divided into two parts: Part I "In Italia" was of 374 pages, and Part II "In America" of 255 pages. Fifteen short chapters, totalling 108 pages, were added later, the final sheet concluding with a paragraph in which the prophetic words of the Maestro's favorite poet are quoted:

"Art thou contented, Jew?
What dost thou say?" Le risponderai come Shylock (ed a maggior ragione...) "I am content."

I first became acquainted with this manuscript in 1964 when, in the process of working with the Maestro on the American premiere of his AUCASSIN ET NICOLETTE, I mentioned the need for a biography of the composer; I suggested an approach through his music. In a letter dated May 11th, 1964, he responded, saying (in part):

The book UNA VITA DI MUSICA (A life of music) already exists, as you see! and it is done exactly the way you suggested: narrating my life through my music, and explaining my music at the same time (its origin, its form, its qualities, its faults); and this nobody else but me could do!... it is done up to the first performance of THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

The book, written in Italian, (and refused by Ricordi) should already have been published by an Italian literary publisher, Sansoni, in Florence; but, for some mysterious reason ... it has never appeared. (I keep on adding chapter after chapter, and it seems it will never end) ...

The book itself is one of the greatest "works of art" I have ever produced! and I am just [sic] proud of it as the best of my music! It reads like a novel, and yet it is absolutely true! No composer, I believe, has ever analyzed himself and his music with such sincerity (as an artist and as a psico-analyst [sic]), nor de-

scribed with such objectivity the life "on two continents." I am sure, some day, it will be a precious document. But when? and where?

Alas, some 12 years later, one still asks "But when? and where?"!

During the summer of 1964, the Maestro visited the Florentine pub-



OIL PORTRAIT OF MAESTRO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO AT 37 painted by famous Roman artist Nino Bertolotti. The portrait hangs in the Castelnuovo-Tedesco apartment on the Via de Bardi in Florence.

lishing house of Sansoni, and, receiving no assurance from them that they would ever put "Una vita" into print, withdrew the manuscript!

(continued on page 3)

NEW RECORDINGS ...

COPLAS with Marni Nixon, soprano, Orchestra of the Vienna Volksoper, conducted by Ernest Gold
CRYSTAL S 501

Gold conducts the Orchestra of the Vienna Volksoper ... in the Castelnuevo-Tedesco song cycle **COPLAS** (the 'copla' is a rigid, brief Spanish poem form ...) for which the composer reportedly wrote an orchestral accompaniment for Miss Nixon shortly before he died. The **COPLAS** which take up Side Two and are sung in Spanish are by far the more attractive part of the recording. As for Miss Nixon, she has a light, flexible, well-produced "white" voice that is easily capable of meeting the composer's demands.

Douglas Watt - RECORD REVIEW

CONCERTINO FOR HARP, STRING QUARTET AND 3 CLARINETS with Ann Mason Stockton, harp; Victor Arno & Kurt Dietric, violins; Alvin Dinkin, viola; Harold Schnier, cello; John Neufeld & John Bambridge Jr., clarinets; William Ulyate, bass clarinet

CRYSTAL S 107

CONCERTINO FOR HARP AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA with Susan McDonald, harp; Arizona Chamber Orchestra, Robert Hull, cond.

KLAVIER KS 515

That so striking a work as the **CONCERTINO**, one of Castelnuevo-Tedesco's most beguiling compositions, should elude phonographic attention for nearly four decades and then turn up in two recordings at the same time merely illustrates anew a "discovery" pattern of long standing. That the work is eminently worth discovering can hardly be questioned: it is voluptuously handsome, its unusual sequence commencing with a passacaglia and concluding

ing with a malagueña finale the composer acknowledges to be "à la Ravel." The performance on Crystal is of the original version, composed in 1937. In 1938 the composer made a revision, substituting flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon for the three clarinets, and it is apparently the revised version, with an enlarged string body, that is presented on Klavier. Either way, it would take a cold heart to resist this music, and both recordings are so effective that a choice might have to be made on the basis of couplings. ...

R. J. - STEREO REVIEW

UNA VITA DI MUSICA
(continued from page 1)

Years later, the composer's widow received positive assurances from Edizione Bèrben in Florence -- the publisher of much of the Maestro's guitar music -- that they would publish the Italian language edition. After three or four years of procrastination, they still continue to postpone any actual work on the book. To date, nothing has been accomplished!

As for the edition in English, the need is immediate, the demand obvious!

Several times I have approached American publishers with reference to the manuscript, and always I receive the same answer. If they are the least bit interested in considering the project, they ask to see a few chapters in English.

(continued on page 4)

CATALOGUE DELAYED

The long-delayed **COMPLETE CATALOGUE** of works by Mario Castelnuevo-Tedesco will be off the press sometime in October, and each member of the International Castelnuevo-Tedesco Society should receive his copy by November 1st.

When the Society first announced publication of the catalogue, it was thought that with a little effort, the catalogue prepared by Robert Taylor for his doctoral dissertation at the University of California at Los Angeles could be adapted and brought up to date. After countless hours of work, it was discovered that there are titles missing from the original catalogue, changes of titles in printed editions, and -- in most instances -- incomplete information. For all cyclical works, only the general title had been included: 33 **SHAKESPEARE SONGS**, for example, or 24 **CAPRICHIOS OF GOYA**. For instrumental works, no information about instrumentation

or timing was included.

As the revised catalogue neared what was thought to be completion, it was decided to check with each publisher, to determine his present address and/or affiliation, and to determine which works were still in print and readily available. This process is still going on.

In September, Dr. Nick Rossi who is preparing the catalogue for the Society, will fly to Los Angeles and spend two weeks working with the composer's scores, checking and double checking all the pertinent information.

With this accomplished, the catalogue should go to the printer around October 1st.

While Dr. Rossi apologizes to the members for the delay in the printing of the catalogue, it is thought that the resulting catalogue will be much more accurate and far more valuable for having been delayed for all this additional work.

UNA VITA MUSICA
(continued from page 3)

The Maestro had originally asked me to translate the entire autobiography. With the deepest possible regret, I had to decline since my command of Italian -- in spite of my name -- is negligible. Subsequently both the Maestro and, later, his widow, suggested that someone be found who could make a literal translation. Once that was accomplished, they proposed that I should rework it into appropriate literary form. Unfortunately we never found anyone who would volunteer to make the translation. To pay someone would require a staggering sum of money! (The only quotation I could get from a professional was \$15 per page, for a total of approximately \$13,500 to make a rough translation.)

In the prospectus for the International Castelnuovo-Tedesco Society, we stated that one of our first projects would be to see that "Una vita di musica" was published. Any and all practical suggestions from members as to how this may reasonably be accomplished are earnestly solicited.

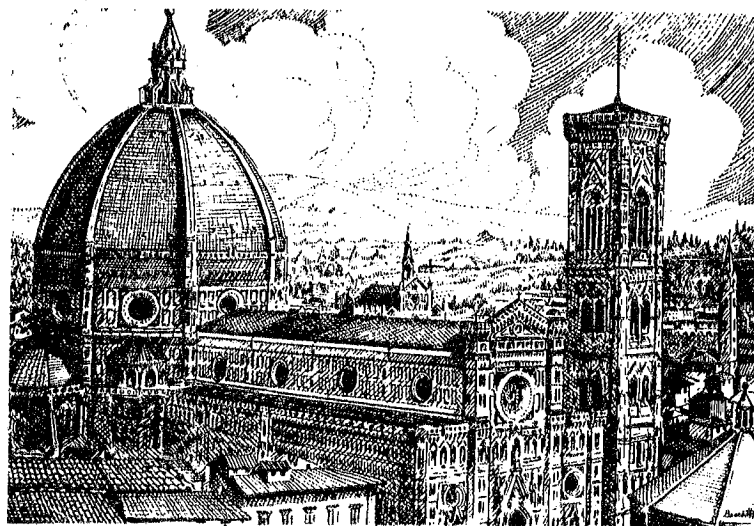
It seems to me, in light of my experience with the manuscript, that the first step is to get it translated

into English, either a literal translation which could be reworked, or, if the translator is a bilingual author, a finished translation.

Once this difficult and lengthy task is completed, there are several New York publishing houses that would consider the work. Failing action on their part, the Society itself could publish the book with

financial aid of a few small grants. (We are now incorporated as a non-profit organization, and any such contributions would thus be tax deductible.)

If there is any more logical solution, a better approach, please, as a member of the Society and in the memory of our beloved Maestro, let us know.



Firenze - La Cattedrale

The arrow in the lower corner of this post card of the Cathedral in Florence was drawn by Castelnuovo-Tedesco to indicate the room in which he was born "all 'ombra del Cupolone (under the shadow of the Dome) as they say in Florence."

International CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO SOCIETY

Dr. Nick Rossi, President
Suite 5-C, 44 West 62nd Street
New York, New York 10023
U.S.A.



Dr. Jack Gottlieb
Assistant Professor of Music
Hebrew Union College
40 West 68th Street
New York, New York 10023