

Two rediscovered Sonatas for trumpet and piano by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

By Danny Miller, D.M.A.

The 1950s witnessed a wealth of new trumpet compositions unrivaled since the Italian Baroque era, mostly consisting of works for trumpet and piano. By our modern day most of the composers' names are familiar to us, including Kent Kennan, George Antheil, Halsey Stevens, Bernard Tuthill. By no means is this repertoire merely limited to American composers, as compositions by Otto Ketting, Yuri Chichkov, and Karl Otto Runolfsson will attest. The rediscovery and publishing of two sonatas by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco adds two more significant works that should be considered as the equal of these well-established works. The purpose of my presentation is to introduce these sonatas to a wider audience.

The presentation will commence in two parts: 1. A brief outline of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's life, and some analysis (with recorded examples) of important features of these two sonatas.

The brief outline of the composers' life, including his dramatic escape with his family from pre-WW2 Italy and immigration to the United States will open the presentation. Especially important is his contribution to the genre of movie soundtracks in the 1940s and 1950s while working for M-G-M and other studios. As a performer and teacher during this era he would teach and influence such composers as Henry Mancini and John Williams. He eventually wrote two trumpet sonatas for Vladimir Drucker who studied with Willy Brandt before leaving Russia for the United States. Drucker and Castelnuovo-Tedesco likely met in Los Angeles in the 1940s when Drucker was also performing on movie soundtracks. This historical outline is well attested in several works by Edward Tarr and Library of Congress material.

For reasons that will be explored, the two sonatas in question have been more-or-less forgotten. I have found precious few references to them at all and even fewer mentions of performances of the same. They are listed in the composers' Grove article and listed (as his opp. 179/1 and 179/2) in his works list in the Library of Congress, but until now only existed in manuscript form.

In 2017 Edizioni Curci of Italy republished these two wonderful sonatas in an excellent new edition. I had my own small part to play, as I contacted the composers' granddaughter, and trustee of his unpublished materials and helped stimulate the swift publication of the sonatas.

My presentation will contain brief discussion of several salient features of the two sonatas, in an effort to convince an audience why these two pieces should re-enter the repertoire. They are well-written, fun, challenging, and important pieces written by a major composer (one who taught

Henry Mancini and John Williams) and I look forward to their future performances and recordings. The sonatas are excellent additions to the trumpet repertoire and I have no doubt they will become beloved by fellow trumpeters if they are made aware of their existence.