

Dahl ◇ Castelnovo-Tedesco ◇ Hindemith

Preface: These composers represent a part of a special period of western music that changed, what I like to call, the *balance of cultural power* from Europe to the Western Hemisphere. The first half of the 20th Century saw *Pogroms* and the *Holocaust* that forced millions of people to flee Europe for safer havens – mainly, but not limited to North America. This emigration included musicians, conductors, singers and these composers among many others. They each had wonderful careers in America: Dahl at the University of Southern California (USC); Castelnovo-Tedesco as a movie composer in Hollywood and Hindemith at Yale. **Richard Gilbert**

Mitchell Lurie & Christie Lundquist, clarinetists

Ingolf Dahl: Five Duets for Two Clarinets

In the Spring of 1970, Ingolf Dahl was on sabbatical leave from USC, living and composing in Frutigen (a suburb of Bern, Switzerland). We were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Ingolf's wife, Etta, and were further devastated to hear shortly afterwards in August of 1970, Ingolf also passed away of pulmonary complications.

Hardly had we a chance to accept the terrible tragedy of these happenings than a large package arrived from a music manuscript service in Hollywood. Inside the package was a manuscript score for the *Five Duets for Clarinets*. Ingolf had been working on these for half a dozen years. The completion date was July 31, 1971, one week before his death.

Completely unknown to us, the pieces were dedicated to five clarinetists, all close friends of his. Imagine the shock when we opened our packages to find these incredible duets sent to us from the grave, as it were.

The first (Sonatina) is dedicated to **Donal Michalsky**, originally a clarinetist, who under Ingolf's tutelage became an outstanding composer. In fact Donal completed the last few unfinished works of Ingolf's. Add another tragedy: several years later, Donal, his wife and three children perished in their home in a pre-dawn Christmas day fire. The *Invention on Two Intervals* were written for **Christie Lundquist**, who, as a student at USC became very close to the Dahl family, as though a daughter. She has gone on to a brilliant career, being principal clarinetist with the National Orchestra of Mexico, and for some years the principal of the Utah Symphony under Maurice Abravanel and Joseph Silverstein. The *Cadenza Pastorale* was for **Nicolas Roussakis**, who was an associate of Ingolf's at the Fromm Foundation at Tanglewood. The *Invention on a Rhythm* was dedicated to **Robert Wojciak**, who after receiving his Doctorate in Clarinet Studies at USC stayed to teach and later was made Chairman of the Wind & Percussion Department, a position he holds today. The final duet, the *Canonic Rondo* was for me.

I only have mixed feelings knowing that it was the last music from his pen in his life. The piece received its first public performance at the

International Clarinet Society Congress in Denver in 1974, with Christie Lundquist and myself as performers. I have also performed it at USC with Robert Wojciak at several occasions honoring Ingolf.

Reminiscences by **Mitchell Lurie**

My personal reminiscences of these artists: I met Mitchell in August 1973 at the Academy of the West shortly after the Denver Clarinet Clinic. It happened to be Mitch's birthday and his students threw him a little party. He was wearing a birthday hat and we all had a great time. He was a warm-hearted, friendly individual without pretense. Over the next few years we kept in touch. He had told me that he & Christie were going to be in Toronto (1978) for the ICA. I had arranged for a private recording studio in Toronto to record the Dahl Duets. The three of us met a day or so before and we discussed various aspects of the works. Mitchell & Christie were a joy to work with and we had a very productive and amiable session. I am delighted to have this recording back in circulation. **Richard Gilbert**

Taken from Grenadilla Records GSC 1066

Produced by Richard Gilbert in Toronto in 1978

Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, clarinet

& Ralph Votapek, piano

Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco:

Sonata for Clarinet & Piano, Op. 128

At long last the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano by Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco is available for all of us to enjoy. His manuscript, written in and dated 1944, is identified as his Opus 128, one of a number of sonatas for wind instruments and piano. Its absence in printed form resulted in only occasional performances, since the manuscript copies were difficult to obtain. All of this is now corrected by the publication of the work by Ricordi in Rome and the present recording published by Grenadilla Records.

Though all music lovers in this country have come across the name of Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco at intervals (after all he has been performed many times by the greats - Toscanini, Heifetz, Piatagorsky and Segovia, among others) his name has not come among us with anything like the frequency that his music deserves. He was a very erudite gentleman, of kindly disposition, an avid scholar, easily conversant in Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, English, German and Hebrew. He lived in a world of personal involvement with western art, having experienced many of its greatest examples. He was a profound, practical, and practicing musician – versed in many aspects of the art. His compositions were of many kinds, and it is undoubtedly true that almost every movie-goer in America has heard some of his music in the film scores he wrote during his many years of residence in Beverly Hills. But then, how many read all the credit lines?

Born in Florence, Italy in 1895 he studied music at the Cherubini Institute in that city and later became a pupil of Ildebrando Pizzetti, a major figure in Italy's music, who influenced him greatly. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's first major work was a setting of three of the 'Fioretti' verses by St. Francis of Assisi, and he went on to write his first opera in 1920 – 'La Mandragola' which won the Italian Prize and was performed by Toscanini in the United States as the initial one of a number of performances of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's works which he led over the years. He has written in many forms: 3 operas, much film music, 2 ballets, many choral and orchestral works, concerti for violin, cello, piano and guitar. And a good deal of chamber music. His intellectual stature being what it was, he did not in his vocal works take the easy line of superficial realism and theatricality, but instead chose to create equivalent impressions by modern and very personal means. There have been many performances and a goodly number of recordings of his works. Indeed the current Schwann catalog lists some 15 recordings presently available. The recording of his Sonata for Guitar (played by Segovia) is very well know, as are the recordings of his guitar concerto by Ormany and the Philadelphia Orchestra (with Williams as soloist).

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's love for the clarinet, an instrument he described as 'agile and sonorus' and 'dear to Mozart and Brahms' began early in his life, at which he took part in performances of the 2 Brahms sonatas for clarinet and piano. It was probably here in this sonata of his own, for the first time in his life as a composer, that the Brahmsian influence showed itself in the passionate and serious first movement, labelled 'Andante con moto'. The other movements are a 'Scherzo-Valse', a 'Lullaby' and the Finale, labelled 'Rondo Alla Napolitana', The Lullaby is also somewhat Brahmsian-like and the idea for the form of the last movement he attributed to Debussy, though adding a fugue. How refreshing to have a composer of stature (in this age of search for ever more original originality!) acknowledge his debts to an earlier master. The sonata is long but presents no listening problems. His feelings that it was 'perhaps the longest clarinet sonata ever composed' certainly did not take into account sufficiently the sonatas of Max Reger, since each of his three sonatas for clarinet and piano probably run longer. The melodies of this sonata are beautiful direct utterances of compelling attraction. The scherzo is a brilliant movement in simple waltz meter, with a fine swinging buoyancy and a bright spirit. The slow movement has the easy undulations of a special lullaby, with a melody most suited to the title. The last movement is the ideal foil for all before it – a brilliant, strongly rhythmic, yet captivating melodic dance movement. The experience of hearing the work is a realization that it is one of the most agreeable of the clarinet sonata literature, indeed one which will have a permanent place in the repertoire.

Originally released in 1978
Grenadilla Records GS 1018

**Alexander Williams, clarinet
& The New York Trio
Paul Hindemith**

Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Cello & Piano (1938)

The Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Cello & Piano written in 1938, a fruitful year in which Hindemith composed, among other works, the ballet, *Noblissima Visione* and the Sonata for piano four hands.

During this period the composer was turning away from his previous atonal experiments and the Quartet gives a strong feeling of his return to tonality. A lyric quality permeates the work, and rich melodic inventiveness is in evidence everywhere. It is also apparent that the composer was challenged by the sonorous possibilities of the unusual combination by instruments, and there is ample evidence of his masterful use of counterpoint.

The first movement (Massig bewegt-Moderato) is "on" F rather than "in" F major, setting up F as the central tone and mixing freely the major and minor modes of F. The movement is written in sonata form. The main theme – first played by the piano and later sounded by the clarinet – has a fine singing quality. Soon the lyric second theme is announced by the cello and in turn by the other instruments. Material related to this theme comprises most of the brief development section. A dynamic climax marks the start of the recapitulation, which is irregular and omits the second theme. This theme, however, makes a delayed appearance in the quiet setting of the coda.

The second movement (Sehr langsam-very slow) is in ternary form, with B flat as a tonal center, and features the clarinet in a leisurely, flowing melody accompanied by dark and subdued harmonies. A dramatic, turbulent middle section brings the movement to a fortissimo climax. After a calmer transition passage, the initial clarinet melody returns again, this time with pizzicato accompaniment. The movement ends with cadenza-like clarinet passages.

The last movement, again "on" F, is divided into three sections-each with different tempo markings-and a coda. The first, moderately paced, melodious section is followed by a very fast, brilliant, dance-like part, characterized by rhythmic intricacies and swift-moving contrapuntal passages. Once more the tempo relaxes. The low registers of the clarinet and the muted strings are contrasted to staccato figurations in the piano treble register. This section ends with a feeling of suspense elicited by a widely spaced fermata chord. A barbaric rhythmic figure in the piano comes as a shock, introducing the coda which brings the movement to a swift close.

Notes from the original release – writer unidentified.

[At the time of this recording, c.1948, Mr. Williams was solo clarinetist with the NBC Symphony under Arturo Toscanini]

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