



CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

Cello Concerto

Transcriptions for cello and piano

Brinton Averil Smith
Houston Symphony
Kazuki Yamada

Evelyn Chen, piano

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968) Cello Concerto · Cello Transcriptions

The career of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968) is equally divided between Italy and America. His departure from Italy at age 44 was precipitated by one event brought on by the rising tide of Italian Fascism, the passage of Mussolini's *Manifesto of the Race*. Not only did this proclamation prohibit future performances of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's compositions but, more devastating, it instituted a ban prohibiting Jewish children from attending public schools.

'On 2 September 1938, we read the first of the so-called racial laws in the papers. The law now forbade Jewish children to attend public schools; Jewish children were now considered pariah and outside the law! Not even in Germany had it started like this! It was a terrible blow. Certain things I could bear – the end of my professional career, the expropriation of our property – but not this! I can still see the look of desperation on Peter's face when he read "the sentence". If there is one thing I can never forgive Fascism, it is that deep silent pain that I read on the face of my child. Back in Florence, Clara and I had an immediate discussion. If accusations were made against us, against adults, it might be different. But you cannot ... accuse and hurt children, they are innocent! If you can do that, then anything is possible! There is only one thing to done.'

The Castelnuovo-Tedesco family left for America.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's bifurcated professional career resulted in a certain obscurity for much of the second half of the 20th century. No longer supported by his early Italian professional networks, he, like many émigrés, had difficulty establishing an American career. In addition, he himself had less commitment to a career that could be so quickly and easily destroyed. Since 'the edifice I had so patiently constructed [was] destroyed by decree with a single stroke of the pen, I asked myself, *À quoi bon?* What's the point? Both glory and renown appear to me, as indeed they are, *vanitas vanitatum*.'

As a result of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's reduced American profile, this recording features the first professional recording of several of his works for cello.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's attraction to the cello began in Europe in the 1920s, and he carried that love with him to the New World. His relationship to the instrument was

intimately tied to the performers of his day, many of whom he accompanied in recital, whether it was the great Casals, 'the impeccable Feuermann, the whimsical Földesy, or the fanciful Cassadó'. However, his productive bond with Piatigorsky was the most 'immediate and spontaneous'. As soon as he met the charismatic cellist, he was overpowered by 'this tall, lanky [figure], with a head like a thoroughbred ... He advances carrying his instrument by the neck, holding it as a guitar, and he instantly puts you in a good humour, immediately establishing a warm connection between himself and the audience ... And, when Piatigorsky starts playing, his sound is a rare beauty, his technique is prodigious, his warmth is irresistibly communicated.'

When Piatigorsky requested a concerto, Castelnuovo-Tedesco knew he must write a work to match the man – a large scale work of a demanding virtuosity (including an atypical double cadenza). It would be more than 80 years after the 1935 Toscanini/Piatigorsky premiere before another musician of such calibre would perform this demanding composition in concert – and it is this live performance that is featured here, by Brinton Averil Smith.

In addition to the concerto, this recording continues with the same virtuosic flair featuring several of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's transcriptions – typically, an opportunity for a composer and/or performer to re-present aspects of a work in a new light, from a new point of view. In the case of Segovia, transcriptions allowed him to re-introduce forgotten lute and vihuela literature, in the case of Paganini and Liszt, it provided a vehicle for the performer to dazzle audiences with brilliant technique.

Again, at the behest of Piatigorsky, Castelnuovo-Tedesco used the opportunity to present new operatic interpretations with a slightly different dramatic focus (that could at times prove transgressive). Associating the cello with the baritone voice, and Piatigorsky's physical presence to that of the Russian Chaliapin, two operatic characters came to mind – Figaro and Don Giovanni.

'I chose Figaro's cavatina *Largo al factotum*. I must confess, I wrote with complete impertinence: scrupulously following the vocal line, albeit with a great deal of embellishment, but disguising it with the piano accompaniment by means of biting harmonies and completely imaginary passages that I dreamed up.'

Upon reading the music, Piatigorsky became unnerved. Although he loved the music, he could 'never dare to perform it in public, not knowing how it would be received, this caricature of such a famous piece.' However, when Heifetz saw the manuscript he immediately asked for it to be transcribed for the violin, playing it 'to resounding success'. That was all it took to convince Piatigorsky to change his opinion; and so the work was simultaneously published in two versions, one for violin/piano and the other cello/piano. The version heard on this recording, however, is an arrangement by the performer that follows Heifetz's virtuosic violin version rather than the traditional cello transcription.

For Castelnuovo-Tedesco, his transcriptions created a portrait gallery of operatic characters, allowing the cellist to take on the role of Figaro, Don Giovanni and, (arranged here by the performer from transcriptions for the violin) Cherubino, not to mention the violin transcriptions, Rosina for Nathan Milstein, Violetta for Mischa Elman, and Susanna for Louis Kaufman. In each case, the listener is delighted not only with the familiarity of the tunes, and the performer's skill, but also the clever manipulation of snippets from the operatic drama.

Of a slightly different type, the two Ravel transcriptions, again the result of an appeal by Piatigorsky, *La Vallée des cloches* and *Alborada del gracioso* from *Miroirs* are of a more

haunting nature. While considering the Ravel 'a perfect piece for piano', Castelnuovo-Tedesco felt the addition of the cello voice to be complimentary. He did not change 'a note nor alter a single harmony', rather, he simply added an additional voice, in this case the cello, and in the process, creating a particularly 'good addition to the cello repertory'.

The final piece, *Sea Murmurs*, happens to be one of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's earliest transcriptions. In 1932, Heifetz asked for a virtuosic recital piece. Castelnuovo-Tedesco chose to arrange one of his *Shakespeare Songs* (*Arise* from *Cymbeline*) and suggested Heifetz should feel free to make additional changes with the resulting work sharing a joint Castelnuovo-Tedesco/Heifetz credit. It was a work that pleased the violinist (and his audiences) to such an extent that it remained in his repertory throughout his career and was the last work Heifetz performed for his final public performance in 1972. In this recording, Brinton Averil Smith adds his own arrangement, turning the work into a cello and piano crowd pleaser.

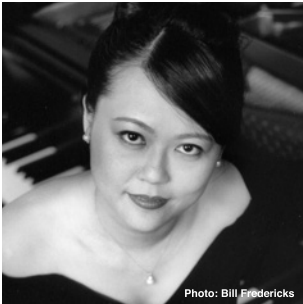
James Westby

[all quotations taken from Castelnuovo-Tedesco's autobiography *Una vita di musica* (Cadmo, 2005), edited and translated by James Westby]



Kazuki Yamada

Kazuki Yamada is principal conductor and artistic director designate of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo. In Japan, he holds the titles of principal guest conductor of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra (from January 2019), permanent conductor of the Japan Philharmonic, music director and chairman of The Philharmonic Chorus of Tokyo and music director of the Yokohama Sinfonietta. Yamada appears regularly as a guest conductor with orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, the MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, the St Petersburg, Czech, Helsinki and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestras, the Gothenburg Symphony, the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI and the Tonkünstler-Orchester. Yamada is active in the field of opera and conducted *Rusalka* with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, which also produced an award-winning DVD. Committed to music education, Yamada appears regularly as a guest artist with students at the Seiji Ozawa International Academy in Switzerland.
www.kazukiyamada.com



Evelyn Chen

Pianist Evelyn Chen's recent engagements include performances at David Geffen and Alice Tully Halls at Lincoln Center, the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Mozarteum in Salzburg and the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. She has performed as a soloist with orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Philharmonia Orchestra and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and has collaborated with renowned conductors including Riccardo Muti, Leonard Slatkin and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. Chen's recordings have received international critical acclaim, and her recording of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concertos* with Leonard Slatkin and the Philharmonia Orchestra became a top-selling classical recording in Britain. Chen, a Steinway Artist, has won several international competitions including First Prize in the Bach International Competition in Washington, D.C., and the 1994 Petschek Award at The Juilliard School, where she received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. Having received a Bachelor of Arts in composition from Harvard University, she is currently an associate professor at Teachers College of Columbia University.
www.evelynchen.com

Brinton Averil Smith

Cellist Brinton Averil Smith's performances have been lauded by reviews praising his virtuosity and musical ideas rooted in the golden age of string playing. His debut recording of Rózsa's *Cello Concerto* received international acclaim, while his recording of Fauré chamber music with Gil Shaham was chosen by multiple reviewers as one of the year's best. Smith's broadcast performances include *CBS Sunday Morning* and NPR's *Performance Today* and *Symphonycast*, while his live youtube performances of unusual cello works and virtuosic transcriptions have been viewed over one million times. Smith has been the principal cellist of the Houston Symphony since 2005 and is also a faculty member of the Shepherd School of Music and the Aspen Music Festival. At age 10, Smith was admitted part-time to Arizona State University where he completed a BA in mathematics at age 17. He received his master's and doctoral degrees from Juilliard, studying with Zara Nelsova and writing on the playing of Emanuel Feuermann.
www.brintonaverilsmith.com





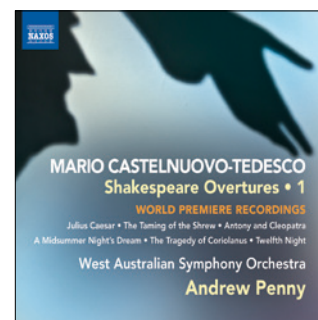
Photo: Anthony Rathbun



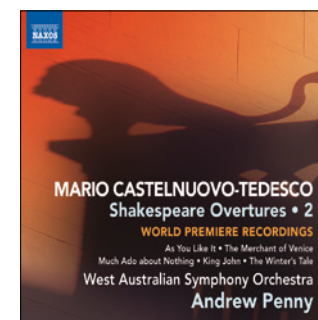
Houston Symphony

The Houston Symphony celebrates its fourth season with music director Andrés Orozco- Estrada during 2017–18 – continuing its second century as one of America's leading orchestras with a full complement of concert, community, education, touring and recording activities. The Houston Symphony is one of the oldest performing arts organisations in Texas and the largest performing arts organisation in Houston. The full-time ensemble of 88 professional musicians presents nearly 170 concerts annually. The orchestra's Community-Embedded Musician initiative offers over 900 community-based performances each year, reaching thousands of people in Greater Houston. The Houston Symphony has recorded for prestigious labels, including Naxos, Koch International Classics, Telarc, RCA Red Seal, Virgin Classics and, most recently, the Dutch label PENTATONE. In 2017, the Houston Symphony received an ECHO Klassik award and a GRAMMY® Award in the Best Opera Recording category for the live recording of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* under the direction of former music director Hans Graf. www.houstonsymphony.org.

Also available



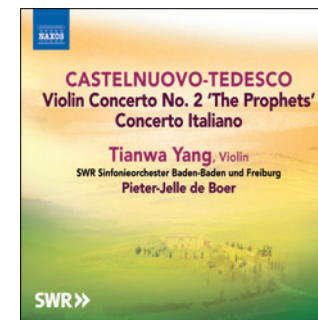
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Inspired by the personality, prodigious technique and musicality of the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Cello Concerto* is a work of imposing scale and demanding virtuosity, but also with a rare beauty and warmth of expression. This live recording documents the first professional performances of the concerto in more than 80 years, and is paired with playful and virtuosic freely composed transcriptions for cello and piano of Mozart, Rossini and Ravel that Castelnuovo-Tedesco made for Piatigorsky and Heifetz.

Mario
CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO
(1895–1968)

Playing Time
58:07

	Cello Concerto in F major, Op. 72 (1935)	30:35
1	I. Sostenuto ed appassionato	13:42
2	II. Allegretto gentile	5:33
3	III. Vivo e impetuoso	11:16
	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) / Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	
4	Don Giovanni (Serenade) (1944)*	2:31
	Cherubino – Two Arias from <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> (1944) (arr. Brinton Averil Smith)*	5:51
5	Voi che sapete	2:57
6	Non so più	2:49
	Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) / Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	11:27
7	Miroirs – IV. Alborada del gracioso (1944)	6:17
8	Miroirs – V. La Vallée des cloches (1944)*	5:05
	Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) / Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	
9	Figaro from ‘<i>The Barber of Seville</i>’ by Rossini (1943) (arr. Brent Averil Smith)	5:43
	Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco	
10	Sea Murmurs, Op. 24/a (1932) (arr. Jascha Heifetz)*	1:40

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**



Brinton Averil Smith, Cello
Houston Symphony • Kazuki Yamada 1–3
Evelyn Chen, Piano 4–10

Recorded: live, 13–15 April 2017 at the Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts, Houston, Texas, USA **1–3**,
25 May 2017 at the Stude Concert Hall, Houston, Texas, USA **4–10**

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