

INTRODUCTION

by

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the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

T. S. ELIOT

It takes as much audacity as faith to write such a book as this. David Blum has lacked neither of these qualities and has thus succeeded in achieving the impossible. There is no page, indeed, in which those who knew Casals do not feel his presence or hear his voice; there is nothing that is not perfectly true. In summary, it is at one and the same time a film of the rehearsals, a detailed and minute analysis of the technique of interpretation (elucidated by means of clearly illustrated musical quotations), a commentary structured in such a manner that the thoughts of Casals are transmitted without loss of continuity in all their richness, strength and luminous simplicity. Finally, there is no tendency towards any sort of dogmatism, but on the contrary the demonstration that the art of Casals, elaborate as it may seem on close analysis, was never separated from the warmth of the soul and the heart, and always retained the spontaneous character of improvisation.

Pablo Casals, the greatest cellist of all time, owed the superiority of his interpretations to the quality of his convictions resulting from an exceptional musical intuition, based upon a broad knowledge and ever-strengthened by the sacred fire of exaltation.

'We must have exaltation,' Casals told the musicians around him – this, in reference to variations (exaltation of a theme), to trills (exaltation of a note), in fact, in regard to everything. As he would say: 'If there is no exaltation it is not good.' And the fire of exaltation in which he forged his convictions was fed by the constant wonder emanating from his contemplation of nature.

If well understood, the teaching of Casals may offer much, not only to those concerned with the interpretation of music, but also to composers who, when entering into the depth of Casals' thinking, will become aware of the infinite variety of nature and will rediscover at the same time their innate originality.

Returning to the interpreter, let it not be forgotten that real musical feeling, through which one can find the appropriate character of a given page, can only truly come from *within*. It would be a mistake to hope that it is possible to recreate the works of the great masters in all their beauty and truth by a merely theoretical application of Casals' principles. It seems that in the realm of musical creation and recreation, more are being called and fewer chosen. To remedy this situation, one needs to climb beyond the dangerous slope of mere facility and of quick recompense so contrary to art.¹ Young musicians must honour again the study of musical composition, following the example of the great interpreters of the past, not excluding Casals who, in fact, devoted time to composition all of his life.

May David Blum's work inspire the musical reader to draw strength again from nature, as did Beethoven and Schubert whenever they had the possibility, or to contemplate some Mount Canigou as Casals often did at sunrise. Then one's interpretations will be living and authentic because they will spring from deep sources, as with Casals, who, when once asked, 'How do you count here, Maestro?' answered: 'With my soul.'

¹ 'A work of art is never completed; it is only abandoned.' – Paul Valéry