

EIR Feature

Schiller Institute begins revolution in musical tuning!

by EIR's Special Correspondent

No less than a revolution in musical history was unleashed on April 9 in Milan, Italy, when the Schiller Institute brought together some of the world's most highly-regarded classical singers and instrumentalists, to demand a return to rationality in musical tuning and performance.

The demand was led by the top speakers at the conference, renowned operatic soprano Renata Tebaldi, baritone Piero Cappuccilli, and Helga Zepp-LaRouche, wife of the U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., and head of the Schiller Institutes internationally. They and others called for an end to the high-pitched tuning, which has been literally destroying all but the most gifted voices during the past century, and for a return to the principles of classical aesthetics, according to which the process of musical composition is just as lawful as are the orbits of the planets in the solar system.

To underline this call, the conference resolved to introduce legislation into the Italian parliament which would require a return to the natural tuning at which middle-C equals precisely 256 cycles per second—significantly lower than the current tuning which sets A at 440 cps, or frequently even higher.

The fact that this is no mere professional detail, was underlined by the star-studded list of endorsers of the conference's aims. That list includes: Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballé, Swiss soprano Anneliese Rothenberger, Spanish tenor Alfredo Kraus, Austrian violinist Wolfgang Schneiderhan (former close associate of Wilhelm Furtwängler), German bass Kurt Moll, Mexican-Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo, German soprano Edda Moser, and Italian tenors Luciano Pavarotti, Carlo Bergonzi, and Giuseppe Di Stefano.

The conference took place at the Casa Giuseppe Verdi, the Renaissance-style building which the great Italian composer had built for retired musicians, with French 'cellist Eliane Magnan and pianist Marie-Pierre Soma playing the "Allegro ma non troppo" of Beethoven's Sonata No. 3 in A Major. As soon as Miss Magnan's 'cello began singing the first phrase, its low notes resounding in the concert hall, the 200 participants, including 150 musicians, understood that this was to be an historic day.



Roberto Inzani

Renata Tebaldi during her address to the conference in Milan, flanked by the Schiller Institute's Liliana Celani and Giuseppe Matteucci.

Opening the conference, Fiorella Operto, president of the Schiller Institute in Italy, paraphrased the motto of the founder of modern Italy, Count Cavour, by saying that Verdi and classical theater and music have already "made the Italians, after making Italy," and now it is the intention of the Schiller Institute to take up this weapon again, to rebuild a nation under attack. She underlined the importance of classical theater and opera to educate beautiful souls and good patriots, a combination particularly embodied for Italians in the figure of Giuseppe Verdi.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institutes, established the classical and aesthetic parameters for creating real art which is "beautiful and good," quoting the famous couplet by Friedrich Schiller: "Human dignity was given to you: Preserve it!" "No artist should dare to compose or perform any piece of art," she asserted, "unless he or she has already reached the highest level of morality and is doing it for a higher purpose."

Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche reminded the audience that instrumental music is a derivation of poetry and vocal music, as indicated by the terms "duet, trio, quartet," etc., and that it is therefore the key to reviving the bel canto tradition of the greatest composers.

She also conveyed the greetings of U.S. Democratic presidential candidate "and my beloved husband" Lyndon H. LaRouche, who could not attend the conference because of the ongoing election campaign, but who had inspired the whole project.

Liliana Celani then presented the 1884 War Ministry

decree with which Giuseppe Verdi and a group of musicians and scientists established $C = 256$ ($A = 432$) as the "official scientific tuning-fork" in Italy, starting with an anecdote about how the Verdi decree was found, a question which many singers had posed: "In the summer of 1986, I was in Leesburg, Virginia, for a Schiller Institute seminar on opera. During a working dinner, Lyndon LaRouche told us: Add pieces of metal, or scotch tape if you must, to the wind instruments, but tune the orchestra to $C = 256$, otherwise it will be the end of the voices." Mrs. Celani then told how this was done in the performance of Mozart's Coronation Mass, although the bassoon had to put scotch-tape on some holes, and that later, while looking for a confirmation on the side of Italian singers and composers, she had found this famous decree.

There were two points in the speech when the audience spontaneously applauded: first, when she read Verdi's letter to the War Ministry in 1884, calling for a "noble and majestic sound" as opposed to the "shouts of a too-high tuning"; and again when she said, "If our politicians listened more to Verdi and less to TV, we would not have so many problems to solve as we have in Italy and in the whole world."

This unity between arts and sciences was proven again, very effectively, by Jonathan Tennenbaum, who with the help of slides and graphs, demolished the dominant theory of sound established by the 19th-century charlatan Helmholtz, according to which sound propagates by particle-oscillation. Tennenbaum showed how sound is an electromagnetic phenomenon, and demonstrated the coherence between the hu-

man voice and the solar system, which also has a “register shift” on F-sharp. This is one of the most compelling reasons for returning to the classical composers’ C = 256, in which high voices (soprano and tenor) will have their natural register passage at F-sharp, whereas today’s higher international standard pitch of A = 440 changes the passage to F for those voices—not to mention the contemporary trends toward A = 444-450!

Tebaldi, Cappuccilli stir audience

The high-point of the conference came in the first afternoon panel, when Renata Tebaldi, known internationally as “la voce d’angelo” (the angel’s voice) entered the room and moved toward the podium, welcomed by an ovation from the enthusiastic audience. Miss Tebaldi, who enjoyed a brilliant career in the United States as well as in Europe until her retirement 11 years ago, was making her first public appearance on an issue of the keenest concern to her.

Miss Tebaldi emphasized that she has been fighting for years against high tuning, but that it was “only when the Schiller Institute took up the issue, when these two young people came to me in my house” (indicating Liliana Celani and Giuseppe Matteucci on the podium), that she saw a “real hope to finally do something concrete about it.”

While the audience was waiting for the arrival of baritone Piero Cappuccilli, who came to the Milan conference between two rehearsals of Verdi’s *Aida* in Munich, Liliana Celani answered Tebaldi’s call, by reading the bill which the Schiller Institute will force the Italian Parliament and government to adopt, and which will be a replication of Verdi’s 1884 decree (box, page 33). She named the first famous singers who have agreed to endorse it: Renata Tebaldi, Piero Cappuccilli, Luciano Pavarotti, Carlo Bergonzi, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Fedora Barbieri, Renato Bruson, Mirella Freni, as well as at least 50 more singers, and also two conductors: Bruno Rigacci, who won the Golden Verdi Prize this year, and Gian Paolo Sanzogno. The audience approved the petition with warm applause.

As Piero Cappuccilli was entering the hall, also welcomed by an ovation, Maestro Bruno Rigacci, pianist and conductor, gave the first musical example proving the superiority of C = 256 over A = 440 to the whole audience. He simply played the first few bars of Bellini’s most famous soprano aria, “Casta diva,” from the opera *Norma*, first on a piano which had been tuned to C = 256 for the conference, and then on the A = 440 concert piano. When he played it on the C = 256 piano and asked the audience, “Did you hear any disturbance?” everybody found it pleasant. As soon as he had played the same notes on the high-tuned piano, the audience reacted with true shock, because it sounded strident and totally different.

Piero Cappuccilli took the microphone at this point, and not only explained why high tuning is destroying all the original color and significance of Verdi’s operas, but also

gave two concrete examples which were clearer than any explanation: one from the opera *Ermani* and the other one from *Il Trovatore*, in which the baritone is forced by high tuning to incorrectly pass the register before the E-natural, as a result of the effect on his vocal cords. He gave the two examples twice, first singing with the piano tuned to C = 256, and not passing register, as Verdi wanted, and then with the piano tuned to A = 440, indicating to the audience with his hand when the early passage occurred on E-flat. (“Watch out for those E-flats,” he said before singing it.)

Both Tebaldi and Cappuccilli were asked about how the register-shift works and where it is for baritones and sopranos, and at the end of this session the audience greeted the two great singers, and also the famous soprano Gina Cigna, now nearly 90, who was in attendance.

The afternoon session continued with a panel discussion on the damage wrought by high tuning, not only to voices but also to instruments, which included: Prof. Bruno Barosi, of the International School of Violin Building in Cremona, who presented his studies on the damage to the static balance of the violin and on its wood caused by an increase in tuning; Maestro Ginevra of the Milan Conservatory, who reviewed the history of tuning through the centuries, showing how old music cannot be performed with high tuning; Gianni Mascioni, an organ restorer, who confirmed what Father Circelli of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music had reported previously, namely that most ancient organs are tuned to A = 435, although many organs have different tunings; and Maestro Bruno Sacchetti, director of the National TV choir and organist at Radio Vaticana, who explained the tendency to increase tuning by the fact that there is no morality any more among performers. Sacchetti said that his experience as choir director shows how too many choir conductors change tuning from one day to the next according to their “feeling,” thereby destroying all choir singers, and pointed out that there exists another law in Italy, from 1936, saying that funds can be denied to orchestras which do not stick to the right tuning.

The day concluded with a panel on “Music and Classical Interpretation,” at which Günther Ludwig of Cologne, Werner Thärichen of the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra, and Eliane Magnan of Paris showed that, besides the right tuning, an elevated concept of music akin to the notion of *agapē* is needed in order to convey great musical compositions to large audiences. A living proof of that ability was the concert concluding the conference, at which more than 200 people heard Lyndon LaRouche’s good friend, Norbert Brainin, former principal violinist of the Amadeus Quartet, and Günther Ludwig perform Mozart’s Sonata in F Major K. 376, Brahms’s Sonata in G Major Op. 100, and Beethoven’s Sonata No. 7 in C Minor Op. 30, No. 2.

This last work, with its “Adagio cantabile” in the second movement, had been used by Mr. Ludwig in his presentation earlier in the day, as an example of how, out of a simple sung melody, Beethoven makes a full composition.