

Violinist Norbert Brainin plays tribute to LaRouche at C-256

by John Sigerson

In the spirit of the advice from Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis that the best way to help the world's freedom movements would be through performances of great classical music, one of the world's greatest living violinists, Norbert Brainin, who led the Amadeus Quartet for 40 years, traveled to the United States early this month to play a single concert dedicated to his good friend, political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche. Together with the fine German pianist Günter Ludwig, Brainin played Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms at the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. on June 6, at the tuning of C=256 cycles per second which those composers demanded, and which Lyndon LaRouche has "resuscitated," as Brainin put it during brief remarks he delivered from the stage.

Among the audience were scores of Chinese students, who had just been involved in commemorating the first anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Their program consisted of three sonatas—Mozart's Sonata in E-flat major, K. 481; the Brahms Sonata in A major, Op. 100; and Beethoven's Sonata in G major, Op. 96. It also included the first repetition in the United States of Brainin's unique demonstration of the superiority of the lower tuning, in which he played the same piece—in this case the Saraband and Double from J.S. Bach's First Partita for Solo Violin—both at the common modern pitch of A=444 and at A=432 (about C=256). Despite the less than optimal acoustics in the auditorium, the richness and subtle shaping of phrasing for which Brainin is justly famous, became the focus of the listeners' attention at the proper tuning, against which the high-tuned version seemed but a distant echo.

Hopefully, a wider audience will be able to hear this demonstration, since the concert's sponsor, the Schiller Institute founded by LaRouche's wife Helga Zepp-LaRouche, had arranged a professional recording of the concert with a view toward issuing a compact disc.

Friends in science and art

Brainin's bond with LaRouche is based on the same personal qualities which made the Amadeus Quartet such a unique institution in postwar history: his loving and uncompromising dedication to the discovery of truth, and his unceasing drive to accurately transmit those discoveries to a wider audience. Brainin gave his own view of how the pro-

cess worked within the quartet, during a half-hour interview with Martin Goldsmith of National Public Radio. Brainin reported that the members of the quartet had many arguments, but that they were always aimed at convincing the others that something was true, and not in working out some sort of compromise. "You have to know how to argue; you have to try and convince, and be ready to be convinced, but also you must be ready to be convinced. *But never compromise.*" He observed that whenever a string quartet begins to function on the basis of compromise, this inevitably leads to the break-up of the group.

Just prior to LaRouche's railroading and imprisonment in January 1989, Brainin stated on a nationally televised broadcast in the United States on Nov. 5, 1988: "I met LaRouche through my work with the Amadeus Quartet, of which I used to be leader until one of my colleagues died last year. I was always astonished about Lyn's knowledge of music, which was far above that of many practicing musicians and certainly way above that of most laymen. He displayed the kind of analytical mind, the kind of truth-seeking which one associates with a real scientist."

Saving the Strads

In written comments included in the June 6 concert program, Brainin explained why he had become convinced that LaRouche was entirely correct on insisting upon reviving musical performance at the scientific tuning: "It has become a universally recognized fact, that the lower tuning of A-432 is a great help for all singers. On the other hand, the advantage that the lower tuning offers instrumentalists is not so well-documented. It is universally accepted that for wind instruments—brass and woodwinds—the difficulties in playing in the lower tuning are insurmountable and, in fact, will require a complete reconstruction.

"With string instruments there is, obviously, no problem. They need only be tuned somewhat lower. This has several consequences. The burden of the tension on the instrument is less—the tone is richer in substance, that is, it is broader, since it is possible for the player to draw the bow nearer the bridge, without there being unavoidable 'scratches.' That means a more economical use of the bow, which increases the breadth of tone-color and the dynamics. Of course, the projection is diminished—but only minimally. Everyone

knows that the higher tones have a greater projection than lower—but high tones sound uniformly the same. The greater multiplicity of sound that is produced by the lower tuning is therefore worth the sacrifice, if it really is a 'sacrifice.' The lesser tension on the instruments in the lower tuning also means a substantial extension of the lifespan of these irreplaceable instruments.

"I myself can remember many recordings, which have subsequently become historic, of great performances by Casals, Heifetz, Elman, Milstein, Kreisler, Huberman, Adolf Busch, Enesco, Kulenkampff, Menuhin, etc. Anyone who has heard these can remember their tonal quality. In all these performances, the tuning was considerably lower than is customary today. Certainly it was not higher than A-440 Hz. This is a fact that can be easily proved, because we have these records and can compare them with today's recordings.

"I am personally of the opinion, that the trend to an ever higher tuning is simply senseless and will only lead to the complete destruction of voices and instruments."

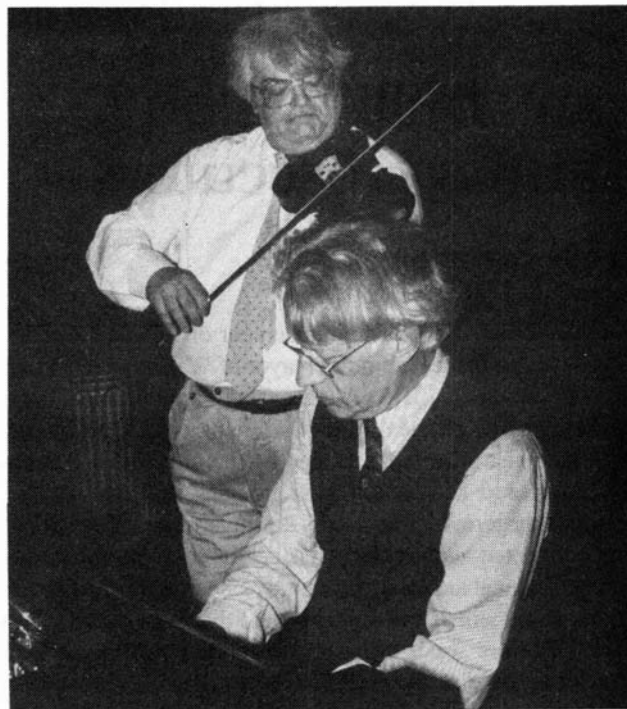
No amount of scientific evidence, however, would have been sufficient to convince the Establishment's local mouthpiece, the *Washington Post*, of the correctness of those views—particularly if they are associated with Lyndon LaRouche. The *Post's* review of the June concert was so laden with hostility that it couldn't even keep its facts straight: "Music theory makes for strange bedfellows," the reviewer wrote, "and Wednesday night's recital . . . was a strange affair. The issue Verdi once argued—the same one LaRouche, Brainin, and others argue today—is that the middle C we have known and loved for 200 years is too high. A great deal of literature written by LaRouche was handed out before the recital explaining why a lower pitch had a closer affinity to God-given values. But based on the slender musical evidence in this 'correctly' low-key recital, it is hard to be convinced the issue's worth so much fuss."

In fact, if this incompetent reviewer had been alive in 1790, he would have searched Europe in vain to hear music played at the tuning he falsely claims "we have known and loved for 200 years," since high tuning was only first introduced 25 years later, following the defeat of the republican forces in Europe at the 1815 Congress of Vienna, and not even then was it universally accepted.

A musical treat at the Smithsonian

On the morning of the concert, Brainin and Ludwig had a rare treat, when the directors of the musical instrument collection at the Smithsonian Institution opened doors and display cases for the two artists to play on the two best Stradivarius violins in the collection, as well as a number of keyboard instruments dating from Mozart's and Beethoven's time.

Brainin took up the "Greffuhle" Stradivarius, built in 1709, like an old friend, since he had played on it before when it was part of a private collection in Switzerland. Brainin was



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Violinist Norbert Brainin and pianist Günter Ludwig rehearse backstage for their June 6 concert at C=256 Hz in honor of Lyndon LaRouche.

able to compare this with his own Stradivarius which dates from around that time, and with the 1689 "Ole Bull" Stradivarius, which dates from the very beginning of the revolution which the Cremona violinmaker Antonio Stradivarius introduced by basing his design on the principles of acoustics and optics discovered by Leonardo da Vinci about two centuries before.

Brainin had praise for the museum's work in preserving these instruments, and noted that contrary to popular belief, fine instruments are not harmed by being kept in museums, provided they are properly maintained. "All it takes is a couple of days' playing by a qualified player, and they open right up again," he observed.

Meanwhile, Günter Ludwig played on a 1788 fortepiano, an 1830-32 fortepiano by Conrad Graf, and finally on a 1794 London Broadwood fortepiano—a model particularly liked by Beethoven. Brainin then also stepped over to the Broadwood, was immediately taken with its musical qualities, and, oblivious to the museum visitors who gathered around, the two played the entire first movement of the Beethoven Op. 96. "With this fortepiano," Brainin commented afterwards, "we don't have to worry about the volume and the balance between the violin and the piano. You [turning to Ludwig] don't have to worry if you're too loud. You can lose yourself completely in the music. This way we can both feel completely free and concentrate on the expression of the musical line—which is the most important thing."