

# New York's leading Classical station features fight for natural tuning

*The following is a transcription of an interview with renowned Italian tenor Carlo Bergonzi, Kathy Wolfe of the Schiller Institute, and others, which was aired on WQXR Radio in New York City on June 9. The interview was taped on April 6, two days before Mr. Bergonzi held a special master class at Carnegie Recital Hall demonstrating the superiority of the natural tuning of C-256 Hz over the arbitrary high modern tunings of A-440 and above. The interview has been slightly abridged for readability, and some minor errors in the simultaneous translation of Mr. Bergonzi's remarks have been corrected. June LeBell was the interviewer.*

**June LeBell:** Tonight ITT's Salute to the Arts will visit with Carlo Bergonzi and several friends, for a look and a listen, to tuning and registration. . . . We're listening to music by Beethoven. It's a violin sonata in C minor, but there's something a bit different about it and we have with us today several people, including Maestro Carlo Bergonzi, and I welcome you to our program, and Kathy Wolfe. Maestro—before we speak, Kathy, tell us a little about what we're doing here and what makes this Beethoven different from many other Beethovens.

**Kathy Wolfe:** This is the first performance in modern times that I know of, by Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus Quartet and Günter Ludwig of Cologne University, of the Beethoven violin and piano sonata at the "Verdi" pitch, which is also the same pitch that Mozart and Beethoven used, an A of approximately between 430 and 432 Hertz. It was a demonstration that they put together in Munich in 1988, five years ago, to show the superiority of the original tuning for the Stradivarius and other old instruments and for all contrapuntal music.

**LeBell:** All right. Now, I can understand the violins that were made at that particular time, since they were tuned to that pitch. But, modern instruments and voices, what difference does it make?

**Wolfe:** For a modern guitar that's fine. But we don't play Beethoven or Mozart or Verdi or Brahms on a guitar. Most of the finest string instruments in the world, of course, were produced by Guarneri and Stradivari during the 17th and 18th centuries. That's for instruments. The human voice has not changed appreciably. Certainly people have not got-

ten shorter and their vocal cords haven't produced a higher pitch since the time of Mozart, Beethoven, and Verdi, and it's very destructive, as I'm sure Maestro Bergonzi will tell you, of the voices in particular, as well as of the old instruments.

**LeBell:** We're talking about less than a half-step down, considerably less than a half-step down. First of all, why has it gone up over the years?

**Wolfe:** One of the chief culprits of that was Richard Wagner, who tripled the size of the orchestra during the 1840s and '50s, and in general, conductors of his line of thinking, who were not interested in music as a Classical art form, but wanted to produce what he called, of course, "the new music": novelty for the sake of novelty, brilliance for the sake of brilliance. In the end, there became a movement, in fact, of these people to make it almost impossible to hear the original Classical compositions, the *bel canto* compositions as in fact they were written. . . .

**LeBell:** Music by Beethoven played at A-432 Hz. This is what we're dealing with today: Not only the music, but primarily how it was played. Kathy Wolfe, how did you get involved with this whole movement?

**Wolfe:** About 1986, a group of people from the Schiller Institute, which was founded by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who as you probably know is the wife of Lyndon LaRouche—

**LeBell:** I was trying to leave that out of this. How did he get involved in this?

**Wolfe:** I'm trying to give you a straight answer.

**LeBell:** I know, I know. I'm also trying to be very honest. Why is he involved in music? Where did this come from?

**Wolfe:** He himself is a mathematician and a physicist by training and he's always played the piano, loved Classical music. As I believe Maestro Bergonzi will tell us later, many people believed that the tuning was lower as recently as the 1950s, down about A-435. He [LaRouche] walked into the living room of his home one day, where a group of us were having a *Musikabend* [musical evening], singing and playing some Classical music, and he said, "The pitch of physics has always been at 256 cycles," which is C-256. You can open any physics textbook and you'll see that your C is 2<sup>8</sup>, 256. "Why, pray tell, should music be at any other pitch? That seems incoherent." And he said, "I remember it being lower



*Tenor Carlo Bergonzi as Nemorino and Andrea Rost as Adina in the Baltimore Opera's production earlier this year of Gaetano Donizetti's opera L'Elisir d'amore. It was Mr. Bergonzi's farewell performance on the opera stage in the United States, just before the WQXR interview.*

in the '50s, the pitch being lower in the '50s." And a great many people have said that to me subsequently.

So we looked into this and we found, surely enough, that Verdi had written *legislation*—of all amazing things—back in 1844, requesting that the Italian government set a ceiling of the pitch at 432 for the A, which is about, depending on how you calculate from C to A, it's about as high as you could set the A.

**LeBell:** Yes, all right. Carlo Bergonzi, tell us how you feel about this and how you got involved in the movement yourself to move the pitch back down again.

**Carlo Bergonzi:** I'm sorry for my poor English. But I will have my friend Nora [Hamerman, editor of *EIR*] translate it for me.

There is a very great difference. Four hundred thirty-two was the normal tuning fork that Verdi wanted. That was the tuning fork for voices, for the vocal technical question. In fact, we are going to hear some examples, and we'll see the difference between A-432 and A-442.

**LeBell:** We have an electronic instrument here, and we're going to go back and forth between that and our piano, which is tuned approximately to A-442, which is even higher than the 440, and we'll see what happens a little bit later in our program.

But, Maestro, how are you comfortable singing? At

which pitch?

**Bergonzi:** In my career I've sung a lot, naturally, not at A-432 but at a maximum of A-440. Today things are getting exaggerated. I'm bringing in the standpoint of vocal technique. Nature is always the same. Today we have young voices which in their quality are the same as 100 years ago. Why do we say that there are no voices? There is a reason. This is my personal opinion, and I appreciate very much the work of the Schiller Institute, which points to this necessity of returning to the normal tuning pitch.

**LeBell:** All right. We're going to hear more about this from Carlo Bergonzi and several of the people that we have in our studio, who are going to be singing for us. We're also going to get to a tape of a Bach partita, and hear the two different tunings of that. . . .

We are discussing tonight the idea of different types of pitch. We have gone up to, actually, 442 these days for the A. When you hear the oboe tuning in the orchestra, it may very well be in this country now and particularly in New York, 442. A while ago, it was down to 432. And Verdi actually had legislation in Italy saying that that should be the ceiling.

We're going to hear a tape, and I have to warn you that the quality is not that terrific, but it gets the point across very well, of part of a Bach partita, and this is tuning you're going

to hear, a lot of tuning back and forth. The violinist once again is Norbert Brainin. And he's going to be explaining what's happening first in the lower pitch, and then you'll hear the same music in the higher pitch, with the tuning.

**Voice of Norbert Brainin:** And now, I'm going to play this Sarabande and Double, first of all in the higher pitch of 444. And just that you see that there's no hanky-panky, I'm going to show you now: I'm going to tune this up [strikes A-444 tuning fork and tunes up to it from A-432]; after which I'm going to tune back to the lower pitch and play the same again, and I leave you to judge. [Plays example at A-444, retunes down to A-432, and plays it again.]

**LeBell:** To my ears, this is a slightly richer, darker color than what we heard before. The first one was higher, this is the lower pitch. Is that right, Kathy Wolfe?

**Wolfe:** Yes.

**LeBell:** And is it mainly color that you hear, aside from the fact that this is better for the instrument, that it doesn't stretch the strings quite as much?

**Wolfe:** Color is important, but instruments, just as voices, have many registers, the human voice having primarily three registers and the violin has four, it has four strings—those are the registers. Those get knocked out of whack, so that the actual voicing, as musicians call it, is changed and harmed by raising the pitch.

**LeBell:** Carlo Bergonzi, here's where we get back to you. Kathy talked about the registers in the voice. The registers are in different places with each voice and each voice can do different things, is this not true? It's not like a violin or a piano, where you see everything's all—

**Bergonzi:** This is the question. With the violin you can adjust the pitch with the peg. But if you heard those two interpretations, the second one is sweeter. The second is softer, a velvety sound. The first is a little strained, a little shrill. It doesn't please the ear truly.

Such is the human voice: The human voice hasn't changed, the anatomy is the same. We are all born a certain way. A man is born a man, a woman is born a woman. When the tuning is high, there's a strain upon the vocal cords. The vocal cords are the way they are. If you stretch those vocal cords in an artificial tuning, then there's a strain on the vocal cords and it sounds artificial. And you lose even the interpretation of the text. What happens is that the singer is so concerned about placing this high sound, he forgets about it and is not able to express it.

**LeBell:** Yes, but if I am brought up in a certain way and at a certain pitch, and that's the only thing I've ever known, am I not attuned to that? Is that not what I'm used to doing so it's not foreign to me? If I've not started off at a lower pitch.

**Bergonzi:** That's the mistake, that the young people don't know that there *was* a correct position. With the teachers you have today, who want to produce this sound like a great orchestra, they try to make these singers make that kind

of sound artificially, like you could adjust a string.

Let me give you an example. Not to mention teachers of my days, there was just one great voice teacher: Tullio Serafin. He always fought for this tuning. When they sang Verdi, Tullio Serafin always said, "I don't want to hear castrato voices! I want to hear the covered, dark, velvety voice for Verdian singing." And I follow that school.

**LeBell:** All right. I remember at least 10 or 15 years ago now, the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center gave a concert that was televised. It was from Alice Tully Hall and they played Bach, and they had two different groups. One was the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the other one was an earlier music group with the original instruments and a lower pitch. I remember the audience visibly and audibly laughing and sort of gasping as the pitch was higher and they liked it better. They thought the higher pitch was the better pitch because it was brighter and it was more exciting, and I think that's the reason that the pitch has gone up over the years, because it's a brighter sound, just as we are using microphones now. We're so used to *loud sounds* that when you go into a concert hall and you hear something that's not miked. . . . It depends on what you're used to. But I understand what your point, what you're saying, that the natural—

**Bergonzi:** Yes, *natural*. It's very important for the interpretation, because the singer must be tranquil, he must feel natural, even in the technical position of the voice—not thinking that he has to sing up a half-tone. If I sing *Il Trovatore*, "Di quella pira," as a tenor at A-440, A-442, then that high C becomes a C-sharp, almost. All tenors, before the performance: "a te!" [sings high G to high C]. They try the C thousands of times, over and over again. By the time "Di quella pira" comes, either he sings it badly, or his voice breaks on the note, because he has no more voice! But he ruins the whole opera before that—because he's so worried about whether he's going to make that high C.

**LeBell:** All right. Let's hear some of our singers in the two different pitches, and I think we're going to start at the top in terms of pitch with the soprano and work our way down to a baritone later on. We're going to stay with music straight through with Verdi.

Our first singer is a soprano, who is a student of Rita Patané. You are a lyric soprano? You call yourself a lyric spinto? [A lyric spinto is a relatively bigger soprano voice, but not quite as demanding as a dramatic soprano—ed.]

**Andrea Cawelti:** Perhaps a little heavier; we're not sure yet.

**LeBell:** How long have you been singing?

**Cawelti:** A long time.

**LeBell:** You sang professionally?

**Cawelti:** Yes. I sang as a mezzo[soprano] for a long time, because it was very difficult for me to sing in today's—well, in any registration, of course, one has to learn how to sing first, but I find it extremely difficult still to sing in the

extreme ranges that of course are called for in all opera roles.

**LeBell:** That's interesting. All right, but you started as a mezzo and you are now singing soprano, and you're not sure whether you're going to go into the spinto, or exactly which direction it's going. All right, let's hear a little bit of this. We're going to treat this as a master class with Carlo Bergonzi speaking to our singer.

This is starting at our piano in our studio, which is tuned really to 442, so this is the higher pitch. [Cawelti sings "Tu che le vanità" from Verdi's *Don Carlo* at A-442.]

**Bergonzi:** Now we're going to pass to the other example at 432. And let's pay very careful attention to the passage in the last note. [She sings same at A-432.] What you heard was the voice rounder, darker, and more supported on the breath. The diaphragm is very important, to have that kind of support and not *push* to get the sound out. The first time she did it with a thinner voice, a little bit forced, just because it is almost half a tone higher, and it's more difficult.

**LeBell:** All right. Now, I've got to ask our singer, Andrea, did you do anything? Are you prejudiced in any way? I have to ask this question because, certainly to my ear, the second one was much richer, easier.

**Cawelti:** It fits. I find it extremely difficult to sing it at 442 because it seems too high. It doesn't fit. And at the lower pitch it feels more comfortable. I'm able to give the space to each note that they require, whereas I have to work much harder at a higher pitch, and I just can't do it sometimes.

**LeBell:** I hear quite a difference. I'm very surprised, because I started out, I have to say, because I was prejudiced, the other way. I have always liked a higher, brighter sound. You're changing my idea.

All right, let's see where we go from here. I'll go back to where I was in school, my teacher always said: "next victim." Our next victim is a tenor, and he is Steven Tillman. You're going to be doing a little bit of what for us?

**Steven Tillman:** "Celeste Aïda" [from Verdi's *Aïda*].

**LeBell:** This should show us something very different, because this is a higher, brighter sound in itself as an aria. [He sings aria at A-442.] This next is at the lower pitch on the electric keyboard, not the piano. [Tillman sings same at A-432.]

**Bergonzi:** Here the difference was heard on the F-natural, "del mio pensiero" and "mistico serto." The "mistico serto" the first time, he did it with the *force* of his voice. The second time, he did it as Verdi wrote it, *dolce*, which means sweet. Because it's no longer a G-natural, but it's an F-sharp. Try it once more, "mistico serto," from "Celeste Aïda." [Tillman sings again at A-432.] This is the color with which he's able to soften the voice going over that passage on the G-natural and then grow after that, the way Verdi actually wrote it.

**LeBell:** I'm curious, Steven Tillman, how do you feel singing each example? What's the feeling inside of your face?

**Tillman:** At the lower pitch, of course, it is a joy. All I can say is, *it is a joy*. It allows me to express those innermost feelings about Aïda, her softness and how tender she is, and otherwise, you know, I'm constantly at the higher pitch trying to be aware of where I am with the voice and trying again to keep it high and light, but it's very difficult.

**LeBell:** This is the way that Verdi intended it to be. Now, what about contemporary operas, when you get into music by, I'll go back to 20, 30 years ago, music by Menotti, which is still that kind of sound, but it's contemporary. Did he write for, or does he write for this pitch, the 440, or for the lower pitch?

**Bergonzi:** If I could command, if I could give the orders, I would have the tuning pitch go back to what Verdi wanted.

**LeBell:** No matter what you were singing?

**Bergonzi:** I would do this not to go against the symphonies or those conductors who want a brilliant sound, but to safeguard the human voice, because not only in New York, not only in Milan, not only at La Scala, or at the Metropolitan, but in all the world, we don't have the singers for lyric opera anymore. When I debuted as a tenor in 1951, there were 200 great tenors. Today, there's two and a half!

**LeBell:** How different is the pitch in different countries? Does it change very much from the United States to England to France to Italy? Is it very different?

**Bergonzi:** America up till two years ago, I think, was generally 440. Now it's 442 or more. In Italy and Austria and Spain, it's higher.

**LeBell:** Higher than this?

**Bergonzi:** Yes.

**LeBell:** Oh my!

**Wolfe:** Maestro, you told us in an interview three years ago that the pitch in Vienna was almost up to 450.

**Bergonzi:** Yes.

**LeBell:** What happens when someone comes along to sing the Queen of the Night [from Mozart's *Magic Flute*]?

**Bergonzi:** I was coming back [to Italy] from the Metropolitan, where I'd sung [Gaetano Donizetti's] *L'Elisir d'Amore*. I went to Florence. I came to the pre-dress rehearsal, and they said, "Carlo, this is the pre-dress rehearsal, what would you like to try out?" I said I would like to sing [Nemorino's aria] "Una furtiva lagrima." I had just sung it here [at the Metropolitan Opera] at 440. Two days later I'm in Florence, and I start to sing: "Una furtiva lagrima. . . . Maestro, excuse me please, I have to speak to you! We're more than a half-tone too high."

The conductor says: "But, it's impossible!" So I call up my friend, the oboe player. I said, "Excuse me, what pitch are we at?" "Maybe 448." I said, "Well, then Maestro Bergonzi will not sing Nemorino." So the oboe came and he adjusted his reed, and we came down to 440. And Bergonzi sang Nemorino with great success!

**LeBell:** All right, we have one more singer to hear, and this is our baritone, Hector Martínez. And we are still hearing

Verdi. And we're going to start again at the regular piano at 442. [Martinez sings "Il balen del suo sorriso" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* at A-442.]

**Bergonzi:** Okay—432! [Martinez sings same at A-432.] This is a rounder and a warmer sound. Please repeat again that phrase, in a more relaxed way, "Sperda il sole" at 432. [Singer repeats the phrase.] Okay.

**LeBell:** There's quite a difference. What I feel is not only the warmth of the tone but also, in all cases, I feel more relaxed. And since music is something that really gets to me and, I think, to all of us who love it, right in our gut, it either relaxes you or makes you tense and uncomfortable, and this just kind of soothes and calms you.

**Bergonzi:** The thing that I would like to say is that this baritone, if he studies in this tessitura, will soften his sound, and his voice will become more round and have more body. This is a voice that needs to be developed, but not developed by force.

**LeBell:** This is fascinating. I wish we could go on for much, much longer to talk about this and give more examples. I would love at some point to do more with this whole idea. I know that you're doing a master class in New York. It will already have taken place before this program goes on the air. Since this book says Book I, I assume that there will be more books to come on this, Kathy Wolfe?

**Wolfe:** I think, in our great haste to hear the musical examples, we've forgotten about the book. I did want to say that this particular program arose when I sent Ms. LeBell the copy of Volume I of the Schiller Institute's new *Manual on [the Rudiments of] Tuning and Registration*, which has a very nice endorsement by Maestro Bergonzi on the back, for which I thank him very much. Volume I is entirely on the singing voice, and what we try to do in Volume I is go through each of the voices in turn, giving about 20 or 30 examples on the soprano, the mezzo, the tenor, the baritone, the bass, and the examples you've heard today are from the book. We show how the voice registers would function properly at the Verdi pitch, the lower pitch, and we show what the distortions in the registers are at the higher pitch.

**LeBell:** I wish that our audience could all be singers, so that they could *feel* the difference. I think that feeling it is even more than hearing it. But I think we've made the point today. Where is the book available? How can they get it?

**Wolfe:** I believe that it's starting to be sold at Patelson's. . . . The number to order the book directly from the Schiller Institute is in Washington, D.C., 202-544-7018. . . .

To answer your earlier question, Volume II will deal with all the instrumental voices, and we hope to be able to go through all 25 instruments of the orchestra, but we hope it won't be any thicker than Volume I, which is already thick enough to sit on to play the piano.

**LeBell:** If you're tall. I want to thank all of you for being here. . . .

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## The Randy Weaver Trial

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# The wrong party is being prosecuted

by Patrick Ruckert

On June 15, in Boise, Idaho, the Randy Weaver case was sent to the jury. The case is an example of a government gone mad, a government that deployed more than 400 FBI agents and U.S. Marshals to a remote Idaho mountaintop to "get Randy Weaver."

Randy Weaver, his wife Vicki, their four children, and friend Kevin Harris have become a cause célèbre among "anti-government/anti-establishment" political networks throughout the West.

It began last Aug. 21, when U.S. marshals initiated a shoot-out with the Weavers and Kevin Harris near Bonner's Ferry, Idaho. During the assault against the Weaver household, the federal agents managed to murder the Weavers' 14-year-old son, shooting him in the back as he ran toward his home, assassinated Vicki Weaver as she stood in her doorway with her baby in her arms, wounded Randy Weaver and Kevin Harris, and even killed the Weaver's dog, with a shot in the back as it was running away.

After an 11-day siege, Weaver, Harris, and the surviving children surrendered to the FBI, after former presidential candidate Bo Gritz intervened and helped to negotiate the surrender. If it had not been for Gritz's personal intervention, the FBI would have undoubtedly ensured that there would have been no live witnesses to testify in court.

The assault on the Weavers by the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) was run by the same FBI "Hostage Rescue Team" that carried out the assault and murder against the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas earlier this year. The government learned several lessons in the Weaver siege that were applied in Waco, among them not letting the media get too close, destroying all the evidence, and killing everyone possible, i.e., not leaving any evidence on the scene that could point to government misconduct.

Weaver and Harris are charged with eight counts—including murder, conspiracy, selling illegal weapons, assault, harboring a person charged with a crime, using firearms in the commission of a crime, and committing crimes while on release from custody pending trial. Two other charges were dismissed by U.S. District Judge Edward Lodge.

The federal marshals had had the Weaver home, located in an isolated area of northern Idaho, under surveillance for 18 months, attempting to arrest Weaver on a warrant that