

LaRouche celebrated in Verdi's hometown

by Claudio Celani

A piece of history was made on Nov. 30, when Giuseppe Verdi's hometown, Busseto, Italy, hosted Lyndon LaRouche and Helga LaRouche at an event designed to help launch a movement to return to the "Verdi tuning," and revive Classical principles in musical composition. In the Casa Barezzi, in the very room where the young Verdi studied (today the property of the "Friends of Verdi" association), LaRouche was celebrated by famous singers such as Carlo Bergonzi and Piero Cappuccilli, who praised and supported his efforts. LaRouche addressed more than a hundred distinguished guests who had gathered for the occasion from throughout the country, and answered their questions.

The occasion for LaRouche's presence was the presentation of *Canto e diapason*, the Italian edition of *A Manual on the Rudiments of Tuning and Registration, Book I*, published in the United States under his direction (see *EIR*, Aug. 16, 1996, "A New Front Opens in the Battle for Scientific Tuning," for coverage of the release of *Canto*). The editors of *Canto e diapason*, Maestro Arturo Sacchetti, and Liliana Celani of the Schiller Institute, were also present, together with Bruno Barosi, a physicist and former director of the International Institute of Violin Building in Cremona. Musical examples were provided by soprano Antonella Banaudi, and the chorus of the Collegiate of San Bartolomeo, an amateurs' group led by Rev. Tarcisio Bolzoni.

Busseto, besides being the hometown of Verdi, Italy's most famous and beloved composer, today hosts a renowned school of opera singers under the direction of Carlo Bergonzi. Bergonzi, a native of Busseto, is known to all opera fans as one of the best "Verdi tenors" in this century. At 73, and having had a heart-bypass, Bergonzi is still singing as if he were 20. Last year, at the jubilee for conductor James Levine at the Metropolitan, Bergonzi brought down the house with his performance of Verdi arias.

Another singer with an astonishing musical longevity is baritone Piero Cappuccilli, who is this year celebrating his 40-year career. Cappuccilli, 70, no longer performs full opera roles (because of a car accident, which he miraculously survived a few years ago), but his voice, similar to Bergonzi's, has lost nothing of the original extension, elasticity, and vigor.

The secret of such musical longevity is the mastering of a perfect singing technique, which includes the use of vocal registers as they are naturally defined for all species of human voices. A register shift means that, with a middle C tuned at

256 cycles (Hertz), a tenor or a soprano will generally move from a "chest" voice into a "head" voice, passing from the F to the F sharp. The same goes for all other voice species: a baritone and mezzosoprano will shift on the E, a bass and contralto on the D.

The importance of register

All great classical composers, including Verdi, were well aware of the existence of registers, and composed their music, taking them into account. They also composed for a tuning which was defined by an A between 427 and 432 Hz, a range corresponding to a middle C=256 Hz. But what happens when the pitch goes higher than that, reaching today sometimes A=444, or A=450? Not only does a high C become a C sharp, but the whole system of vocal registration is shifted, with catastrophic results: The voice is no longer in the proper place, and singers are forced either to shout or to shift register earlier, thus distorting the poetic intention of the composer. Furthermore, the attrition of vocal organs brings brilliant careers to a premature end, and has already caused the virtual disappearance of some species of voices, such as real contraltos or dramatic sopranos.

As the daily *La Repubblica* commented the day after the Busseto conference: "It is a war started at the 1815 Congress of Vienna. . . . It seems that those who started the escalation were the Russian military bands. 'Because of purely political reasons,' says Lyndon LaRouche in his *Canto e diapason* manual: At the Vienna Congress, right when the powers were deciding the new post-Waterloo European order, the jump to 440 was imposed. Now, it is the orchestras, continuously looking for brilliancy, that impose it on singers."

Bergonzi stressed the importance of the international effort initiated by "the great LaRouche," reminding the audience that he had already supported the initiative in a conference at Carnegie Hall. Both Bergonzi and Cappuccilli, who were interviewed together with LaRouche by national and local television networks at the beginning of the conference, reminded viewers that LaRouche's effort corresponds to the one by Verdi who, in 1884, also supported a "scientific tuning" set at A=432. "If Verdi said that, we must do it," Cappuccilli stated emphatically.

Both singers commented on musical examples provided by Antonella Banaudi, one of Italy's most promising young dramatic sopranos, who sang arias from Verdi's *Attila* and *Aida*, first with the current, higher tuning (A=440), and then with the lower tuning (A=427). As Cappuccilli readily observed, contrary to normal expectations, the difference was not so much in the high notes, which the singer can perform anyway, but rather in the lower register. Critics of the lower tuning, in fact, insist that if the pitch were lowered, high notes would be comfortable, but the lower ones would be more difficult to sing. To the contrary, Banaudi demonstrated that with the lower tuning, not only does the whole voice acquire a rounder, darker sound, but even the lower notes, as Cappuc-



The chorus of the Collegiate of San Bartolomeo, directed by Rev. Tarcisio Bolzoni, performs Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus."

cilli indicated, become richer.

Banaudi was accompanied by Maestro Serenelli, who works with Bergonzi's academy in Busseto, and performed examples with the low tuning on Verdi's original fortepiano, which as of today will sport a plaque, saying that it is tuned to the original "Verdi tuning."

The musical demonstration was so self-evident that it did not need more technical explanation. The audience, composed mostly of musicians, turned its attention then to LaRouche, who explained why he had the idea to launch the international campaign for the Verdi tuning.

'We have to save civilization'

The problem, LaRouche explained, is very practical: We have to save civilization from a general intellectual decay, which is dramatically shown in the younger generations, whose origin is in the Romanticism-induced separation of science and art. The American statesman recalled his own experience, when, in an effort to discard "artificial intelligence" theories in the 1950s, he realized that an immersion in great Classical music regenerated those creative powers of the mind which he relied on in his scientific work. "Classical music is a representation of how the mind works," LaRouche said. The point is that people are no longer able to distinguish real great music from what is just labelled as "classic." Great Classical music is based on what St. Paul calls *agapē*, or Christian love, as opposed to *eros*, or sensual pleasure. "That is why, after the performance of a Wagner opera, there is no dry seat, whereas after Mozart, there is no dry eye," said LaRouche, amid general laughter.

To illustrate the Classical principles of composition, which is the theme of the second volume of the *Manual* soon to be published in the United States, Maestro Arturo Sacchetti took on the task of analyzing Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus," a piece chosen by LaRouche because, although very short, it

contains all aspects of a great Classical composition. (See LaRouche, "The Essential Role of 'Time-Reversal' in Mathematical Economics," *EIR*, Oct. 11, 1996.)

The "Ave Verum" was performed by the chorus of the Collegiate of San Bartolomeo, in the nearby Santissima Trinità Church. This is the church where, on May 4, 1836, Verdi married Margherita Barezzi, daughter of his patron, Antonio Barezzi.

Maestro Sacchetti showed how Mozart had built the short, but intense composition, as if working backwards from the end, where the key passage on the "test of death" is located. In doing that, Mozart made great use of the interval of the fifth and its inverse, the fourth, which occur again and again in the composition. The other key element, the chromatic progression, is first stated in the soprano line and then repeated, in imitative or reversed form, in all other voices. Unfortunately, Sacchetti said at the end, what you heard today is not Mozart's "Ave Verum," because the church's organ is tuned a half-tone higher than at Mozart's time.

The conference then moved back to the Sala Barezzi, where Professor Barosi explained the damage wreaked on historical instruments, such as the Stradivarius violins, by the high tuning. Stradivariuses, Barosi explained, are the best violins in the world, but they are not eternal. They last up to 500-600 years, then their descending parabola starts. By tuning them high, Barosi said, we have already started the descent of their parabola.

After that, Maestro Sacchetti presented a series of musical examples, both vocal and instrumental recordings, some of them as old as 70 years, to show the progression toward high tuning. A lively debate followed, with singers, instrumentalists, and medical doctors intervening and asking questions to Sacchetti and LaRouche. After the five-hour-long conference, participants left with a new commitment and a formidable weapon, the *Manual*, with which to fight for great culture.