

EIR Feature

Music and the moral fitness to survive

by Nora Hamerman

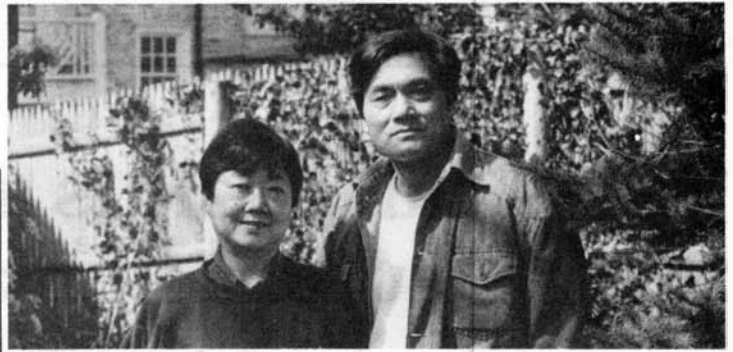
It is now exactly four years since the Schiller Institute convened a conference in Milan, Italy, which brought together some of the world's most respected singers and instrumental musicians to demand a return to rationality in musical tuning and performance.

The conference on April 9, 1988 pivoted around the proposal advanced by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.—and welcomed subsequently by a stunning plurality of leading professional opera and chamber singers—that musical performance be returned to what was known as “scientific pitch” until a century ago.

An Italian collaborator of LaRouche, Liliana Celani, unearthed long-buried documents proving that the great opera composer Giuseppe Verdi, disturbed by the detrimental effects on the voice of rising pitch, had used his influence with the Italian government to have a decree enacted in 1884 making the scientific pitch, where middle C is set at 256 hz, the standard tuning for all military bands and orchestras of Italy. Verdi went on to fight—although unsuccessfully—to impose this standard in all performance internationally.

During the Milan conference, the celebrated baritone Piero Cappuccilli spontaneously demonstrated the difference between singing a Verdi aria from the opera *Il Trovatore* in today's prevailing tuning of A-440, and then in the tuning advocated by Verdi himself, where the concert A is set at A-432, the highest possible pitch allowable when middle C is tuned to 256 hz. As Cappuccilli showed, the “color” and registral contrasts of Verdi's music were more correctly realized only in the lower tuning.

Later in 1988, legislation was introduced into the Italian Parliament to enact a new “Verdi tuning” law for all state-supported musical performances. A petition campaign led by the Schiller Institute gathered signatures in support of the measure from the entire musical world. Although a pragmatic maneuver blocked that historic bill from passing, the movement for the “Verdi A” was now unstoppable. Conference succeeded conference, throughout Europe and the United States, along with concerts



Chinese composer Jin Xiang with his wife, Li Daochuan, during a recent visit to Washington, D.C. for a performance of Jin's opera "Savage Land."

Violinist Seth Taylor and his wife, pianist Monica Ripamonti. Taylor is the concertmaster at the Eisenach State Theater in the east German state of Thuringia.

at the Verdi tuning, too numerous to list here.

Violinist Norbert Brainin, the first violinist of the Amadeus Quartet, became convinced by scientific analyses conducted at the Cremona Institute of Violin Building that his own Stradivarius violin was indeed built to be played at C-256, and he demonstrated the superior sonority and polyphonic voicing of the old tuning in a concert in Munich in 1989 where he played part of a Bach solo violin partita in the classical tuning, and then in today's prevailing higher pitch.

In March 1992, the Schiller Institute announced the forthcoming publication of Vol. I of a new textbook on the composition of classical music, the *Manual on the Rudiments of Tuning and Registration*, commissioned by LaRouche. The text is aimed at documenting that classical composition of the school of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven is a science which can be taught, and executed, on the junior high and high school level, as the physical sciences were once taught.

The complete text will be in two volumes: Volume I, "Introduction and the Human Singing Voice," demonstrates that every classical composer, from Dufay in the 1430s to Brahms in the 1890s, composed for the C-256 tuning because they based music upon the voice registration of the human singing voice. Volume II, "The Instrumental Voices," will demonstrate that registers and other construction of the classical Mozart orchestral instruments were based on the human singing voice. Both volumes are illustrated with hundreds of musical examples.

As LaRouche has underlined, the tuning issue provides

the entry-point for the broader discussion of music and morality. If the unity of art and science is affirmed by setting the pitch based on the laws of the physical universe as they are reflected in the human voice in all of its various species, then this provides the basis for a restoration of true creativity, which is the key to the survival of any human society. LaRouche has upset the use of "classical" and "romantic," as period-designations, to show that instead these reflect a deep conflict in method which frequently divides composers living in the same time.

The report below provides insight into the issue of musical morality in determining the future course of two great nations—China and Germany. In the interview, composer Jin Xiang speaks eloquently on the degradation to which the Cultural Revolution's assault on western classical music subjected China's intellectuals. Ironically, a more disguised form of a "Cultural Revolution" is proposed now for the former East Germany, in the name of free-market economics. Recent visitors to Thuringia, the cultural heart of Germany which includes J.S. Bach's birthplace Eisenach, as well as Weimar, the capital of the German classical poets Goethe and Schiller, report that while the former communist regime's maintenance of the local cultural tradition was selective and one-sided, today pragmatists in the state government propose to cut the already meager budget for cultural activities by 30%. The Open Letter by Eisenach concertmaster Seth Taylor, a longstanding collaborator of the Schiller Institute, addresses this folly.