

## EIR Feature

# A new front opens in the battle for scientific tuning

by Nora Hamerman

The march toward the recovery of sanity in musical performance and composition which was initiated just over eight years ago with a conference at the Casa Verdi in Milan, Italy, passed a new milestone this past May 29 with a press conference in the same hall, where the book *Canto e diapason*, the Italian edition of *A Manual on the Rudiments of Tuning and Registration, Book I* was released to the public. It was in April 1988 in the Casa Verdi, a retirement home for musicians established in Milan through a bequest of the beloved opera composer and Italian “founding father” Giuseppe Verdi, that the Schiller Institute first threw down the gauntlet to the musical world, challenging it to recover the scientific tuning pitch accepted by all the Classical masters and defended in a special way by Verdi.

At that 1988 conference, such legendary names of the operatic world as Renata Tebaldi and Piero Cappuccilli joined with scientists, Schiller Institute spokesmen, and other musicians to call to battle against the constantly rising pitch of modern opera and concert performances. The petition that came out of that conference, calling for a tuning fork based on the “Verdi A” of 432 Hz—marginally but significantly lower than International Standard Pitch of A=440 and even more dramatically lower than the high concert pitch prevailing in today’s major concert halls and theaters—was signed by some 2,000 singers and musicians around the world, including the most revered artists, from Placido Domingo to Mirella Freni.

*Canto e diapason* demonstrates, with more than a thousand examples drawn from the Classical repertoire, that the correct standard pitch for the human voice is the one which corresponds to a Middle C of 256 Hertz (full vibrations per second). Opera composer Giuseppe Verdi, in 1884, promoted a decree which established a concert A of 432 vibrations calculated on the basis of that Middle C. The Schiller Institutes have promoted a return to that pitch, warning that otherwise, the vocal registers will be thrown off, and entire species of voices may disappear. Even the old instruments, such as the Stradivarius violins, which were built for that tuning, are destined to come to an early end if standard pitch is not lowered.



*Soprano Antonella Banaudi demonstrates the superiority of the scientific C=256 tuning, at the Schiller Institute's conference in Milan on May 29, 1996.*

The most sensitive orchestral conductors also agree. As *La Stampa* reported on the Schiller initiative, among them is Carlo Maria Giulini. The celebrated conductor stated: "The problem of the standard pitch exists and it must be reevaluated, above all to avoid physical damage to the singers."

### **The tuning campaign**

Months after the original Milan conference in 1988, the initiative known as the "Verdi A" had been turned into a bill before the Italian Parliament to establish A=432 as the pitch for State-supported musical institutions. But by mid-1989, a series of byzantine maneuvers had deprived the bill of its revolutionary thrust, by establishing A=440 (the already existing, but widely disregarded tuning fork) as the "norm."

Meanwhile, however, the Schiller Institute was joined by numerous other individuals and institutions as the debate over tuning sparked excitement in the world of performing musicians and musicologists. On Feb. 10, 1989, Carlo Bergonzi, one of the century's most celebrated tenors, joined the initiative. A highlight of the campaign occurred in April 1993, when Bergonzi gave a master class at New York City's Carnegie Recital Hall, demonstrating the need for the "Verdi A."

In 1989-90, several cities in the United States hosted concerts in the Verdi tuning. On June 20, 1989, the Cini Foundation of Venice hosted a seminar on "Giuseppe Verdi and the Scientific Tuning Fork." Norbert Brainin, the former first violinist of the Amadeus String Quartet, became convinced of the correctness of the classical tuning after he visited the Insti-

tute for Violin Building in Cremona, Italy, the home of the Stradivarius violins.

Even as the Italian bill was being sabotaged, collaborators of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.—the American philosopher who had inspired the campaign for the lower tuning in the first place—were hard at work on a book on the problem of musical tuning and vocal registers, edited by John Sigerson and Kathy Wolfe. The book, which includes a preface by Mr. LaRouche, was originally published in the United States in 1992. The Italian edition, the first of several foreign-language versions now in progress, was edited by the Schiller Institute of Germany, and published by the Casa Editrice Carrara in Bergamo. It was co-edited by Liliana Celani of the Schiller Institute, who rediscovered Giuseppe Verdi's campaign for the A=432 tuning fork, and Arturo Sacchetti, an organist, music teacher, and former artistic director of Radio Vatican.

*EIR* has reported on the campaign for C=256 (or A=432) since its inception in 1988, and we have printed groundbreaking studies on music by LaRouche which have continually given renewed impetus to this effort. Below, we present excerpts from the speeches to the recent Milan conference, and to a second event on June 10 at the auditorium of the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music in Rome, where the book was also presented. (The speeches are translated from Italian and edited for publication.) We also include the text of the new preface LaRouche wrote for the Italian edition, and an interview with the operatic basso Ruggero Raimondi, a longtime supporter of the tuning initiative.