

## The Schiller Institute's fight

Finally we have found the Schiller Institute, which is fighting, and I am happy for the young people, because I hate to see voices which are being destroyed this way. We need voices, we need incubators, because it is not possible that Italy can no longer export voices and hold high in the world the name of bel canto. Bel canto was invented by us, no one taught it to us; it is an unmistakable style, and everyone has come to Italy to learn it. We have to get busy so that our rights to a correct tuning, which are established by law, shall be respected. Everyone could take the responsibility to tell the director: "If you don't want to come down (on the pitch), then I won't sing."

If we continue to be silent, then the world will go on this way. We can continue to hear 18th century repertoire, which requires voices which are like gold filigree and very beautiful; but there are also such things as heavy golden bracelets. I absolutely cannot believe that all the voices have disappeared, and therefore I appeal to those who can change things so that I, as well as others, may no longer be forced, as in the past, to leave rehearsals.

In fact, many times I had to walk out on rehearsals for an opera and that was my right; of my colleagues, only Mario Del Monaco stood by me because he also had a voice with quite a lot of body, and more than the others, he understood the problem. Mario Del Monaco had one of those voices which we feel the lack of today; but I repeat, I cannot believe they don't exist any more: I am sure they exist and the public has to have the right to hear them.

## Oversized orchestras

These voices must be able to come out of the mouths of singers in such a way as to fill houses like La Scala, reaching the audience by overpowering the 150 orchestra players and the voices of as many chorus members who stand behind us soloists. The voices are smothered by the orchestral sound, and this can be remedied by cutting back the number of orchestra players to a maximum of 40.

I think all of you listeners and the people who sponsored this conference have probably understood, that the subjects we are dealing with have stirred me up mainly because I feel bad about the voices which will never be able to be heard if the current situation goes on; to hear these voices fills those who hear them in the opera houses with joy. That goes even for the small voices, utilized in their proper repertoire, but it has to be established once and for all that there is a difference between a mezzosoprano and a normal soprano, then there is the lyric soprano, the spinto, and then the dramatic soprano, and they can't be inverted, absolutely not; the roles can't be switched around. Everyone has to stick to his or her own repertoire.

Putting together everything which has been said, we can return, finally, to the great joy of everyone, to the golden age of Italian opera.

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## Piero Cappuccilli

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# 'We must bring pitch back to normal'

"I must say that if in the beginning, in the era of Verdi," Cappuccilli began, "the standard pitch was at 432 vibrations, and he was writing his works for that pitch, Verdi was an intelligent person, who understood voices and wrote for voices. Taking the tuning pitch up to the present level puts too much physical force on the vocal cords. This is why many singers, after two, three, or four years of their career, run into major problems. Because they are forcing their vocal cords in an unnatural way. In a period when voices are rare, we must return the tuning to normal, to not create problems for those voices that exist.

"Returning the tuning pitch to normal changes the very color of the voice." Piero Cappuccilli then gave concrete examples of the problems created for voices by unnatural changes in tuning, especially in the notes in which the voice passes from its center register into the high register.

Responding to questions about the concept of registral passage, Maestro Cappuccilli continued:

"First I must say that in the *mezza voce* first one covers and then one creates a certain color and a certain style, but the closing on an E-flat or even on a D-flat, is still too soon and that is dangerous, it crumbles because there is not enough breath support to sustain these notes. But with the tuning set at A = 432 this does not happen; the voice passes in a natural way—it is not necessary to sustain the voice beyond the physical capacities of the singer, and it is not useful to pass on E-flat; the passage will take place on F but in fortissimo also the E-natural can be broadened, with the low tuning. Whereas, with the present tuning to broaden or even to open up the E-natural means for the singer to jeopardize his career. Many of my colleagues have serious problems, and even a certain fear in facing these passages. Why did the great singers of the past sing on a normal tuning, and why were they still able to sing at the age of 50-60 years? The answer is simple: With natural tuning, they did not strain their vocal cords, which remained unchanged over time. Orchestras are not tuned to this natural tuning, and this is particularly noticeable in the woodwinds and brasses, which drown out the singers. Not even three Carusos could make their voices heard by the entire audience of the theater.

"Whereas by lowering the tuning pitch the sound of the orchestras would become 'richer,' especially that of the violins."

The audience asked whether he had contacted the major orchestra conductors such as Muti and Abbado.

"I have not had a chance to speak with them, but the organizers of this conference have had contact with many orchestra musicians. What has emerged is their willingness to meet the singers halfway, but it is also true that many have put off serious discussion of the problem to the future. Technically speaking, we are already at the limit with this tuning, but many orchestra directors do not want to give up the position they have conquered and hence refuse to condescend to the demands of the singers. But today, unlike in the past, we singers are much more unified and we hope, above all based on the Bill presented on this occasion, to finally succeed in obtaining the natural tuning for orchestras."

Finally Piero Cappuccilli was asked a question about the registral passage which is used "expressively" in *Macbeth* and about the influence which it would have on the character in the Verdi opera, if the passage took place on a different tone. The baritone answered: "If I pass that note with the natural tuning I can then develop it; but with the high tuning one cannot succeed in giving the needed dramatic quality to the character."

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## Fiorella Operto

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# The challenge to become heroes

*From the welcoming remarks to the conference by the president of the Schiller Institute in Italy:*

It is no exaggeration to state that our conference is an historic event which the world will regard as the moment in the 20th century when the *bel canto* tradition was defended and advanced. As Italians we are all the happier that this conference is held in Milan, Verdi's city.

In fact, the reintroduction of scientific standard pitch,

Bring About a Musical Renaissance!

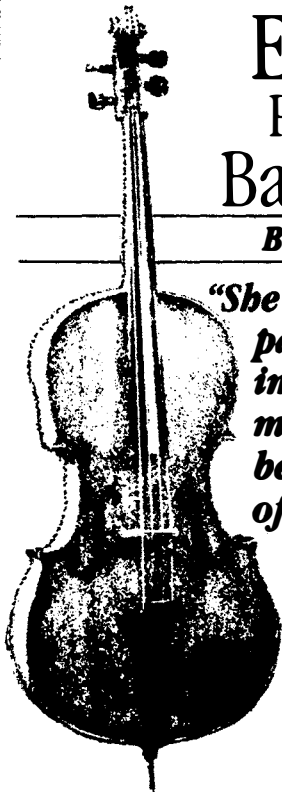
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