

# The year of LaRouche's C=256 tuning victory

by Liliana Celani

In August 1986, when he told me and other musicians meeting in Leesburg, Virginia for a music seminar, "Great voices cannot last with present high tuning, it is high time to go back to the scientific tuning fork based on a middle C of 256 vibrations to save classical music," Lyndon LaRouche was certainly aware that he was launching a proposal which would make history. As often happens with great minds such as his, the world understood how important his idea was only in the course of 1988, when it became the most discussed and supported music idea in centuries.

The year 1988 was the year of LaRouche's C = 256 proposal, which took many names in the international media. In France it was called *La guerre du la* (the war of A, the note that sets the pitch to which orchestras tune). In Italy it was the fight for *La verdiano* (Verdi A) because it was precisely Giuseppe Verdi in 1884 who had the Italian government adopt the scientific tuning fork of A = 432 vibrations (corresponding to C = 256). In Germany the press, radio, and musicians called it the *Verdi Kammerton*, the Verdi orchestra tuning, and similar characterizations appeared in the course of the year all over the international media, from the Swedish, Spanish, French, Danish, German, and Italian to the American press. All these "nicknames" refer to LaRouche's initial idea, which has since been endorsed by more than 1,000 professional musicians (see box), and including such "legendary" names as Renata Tebaldi, Carlo Bergonzi, Piero Cappuccilli, Joan Sutherland, Fiorenza Cossotto, Birgit Nilsson, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and many, many more.

How did 1988 become the year of LaRouche's music proposal? Publicly, it started on April 9, 1988, at a big international conference which took place in Milan, at the historic "Casa Verdi," organized by the Schiller Institute, and attended by Renata Tebaldi (the "angel's voice," as she is also known), Piero Cappuccilli, considered the greatest Verdi baritone in the world, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, LaRouche's wife and the founder of the Schiller Institute, Maestro Arturo Sacchetti, a well-known organist and conductor, and Bruno Barosi, of the International Cremona Violin Building School, which still today makes violins in the tradition of the scientific concepts of Stradivari, Guarneri, and Amati.

Renata Tebaldi and Piero Cappuccilli launched a moving appeal to save opera at this conference, warning that unless tuning were lowered, we would not in the future have great dramatic sopranos or tenors, true mezzosoprano or baritone voices, not to speak of real basses or altos, because the present high tuning, misplacing all register shifts which are the key to the Italian bel canto school, is preventing great voices from coming into being, and is one of the main causes of the "opera crisis" many talk about.

Sacchetti added that the cause of this situation is the fact that music and morality, music and nature have been split in today's wrong concept of art and interpretation, and this connection should be reestablished. Barosi showed that the same problem faced by opera voices is faced by the old violins of the Cremona schools, which risk extinction since the incredible tensions imposed on the instruments today (we have reached in many concert halls A = 448-450 and even higher) are destroying their static balance.

## Law debated in Italy

Tebaldi and Cappuccilli were the first two famous singers who endorsed the Schiller Institute petition to go back to Verdi's tuning. In the aftermath of the conference, the petition demanding in Italy a similar decree to Verdi's 1884 one, was endorsed by hundreds of singers, instrumentalists, music teachers, orchestra conductors and music lovers. It was already in July 1988 that LaRouche's C = 256/A = 432 idea entered the Italian Senate, when two senators of the Italian majority party, the Christian Democracy, introduced a bill modeled on the the Schiller Institute's proposed legislation, demanding that "the official tuning fork of Italy shall be A = 432, and no public funds shall be conceded to state orchestras unless A = 432 is respected." The two sponsors, Senators Carlo Boggio and Pietro Mezzapesa, the former a singing teacher himself and the latter a well-known Dante scholar, announced the bill at a joint press conference with the Schiller Institute, which was also attended by baritone Piero Cappuccilli and by the director of the Cremona Violin Building School, Sergio Renzi.

Overnight the C = 256 bill was being discussed through-

out the whole music world and the international media, with hundreds of letters of support for it reaching both the Schiller Institute all over the world and the Italian Senate directly. Some newspapers, who had joined the Soviet-style slander campaign against LaRouche in the past, as in the case of the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet* and the Italian daily *La Stampa*, openly expressed their rage at LaRouche's success, complaining that all attempts to put LaRouche into jail had not worked, and he was instead becoming the hero of the opera world internationally. *La Stampa*, which even ran an anonymous slander letter, had to withdraw its slander against LaRouche because Senator Boggio wrote back a letter assuring that "the Italian Constitution allows the Schiller Institute in Italy to campaign for a proposal made by an American politician such as LaRouche," and acknowledging that "even those who do not agree with LaRouche politically should recognize that the Schiller Institute had the undoubted merit of reviving Giuseppe Verdi's tuning proposal, and bringing it to the attention of the music world."

Another attempt to block the Schiller Institute proposal failed miserably in November 1988, when the Italian friends of the drug mafia financing the slander campaigns against LaRouche in America, namely, the Radical Party of Marco Pannella, known for his proposals to legalize drugs and promote homosexuality in Italy, even introduced "counter-legislation" in the Chamber of Deputies, proposing against Verdi's scientific tuning fork, a standard pitch of  $A = 440$ , the tuning fork which was adopted at a London conference of 1939, organized by Goebbels's Radio Berlin, and which started the rush to only play at a higher pitch, since it broke any connection between tuning and natural and scientific law. The "counterproposal" was promoted by a Radical Party outfit, the Bucchi Foundation, led by Pannella's sister, who even tried to organize a conference pushing for their proposal one week before the Schiller Institute conference to debate the scientific proof of  $C = 256$  in Rome, scheduled for Nov. 24.

This attempt also failed, because the conference organized by Pannella's sister was not attended by anyone, except four members of her foundation, while the Schiller Institute conference the week after attracted the music elite of Rome, including well-known singers, violinists, harpsichordists, conductors, and music experts, who listened with great attention to the scientific proofs brought by the Schiller Institute in support of the  $C = 256$  legislation and expressed their joy that finally someone had come to defend music, and that it was the Schiller Institute to do so internationally. What moved the packed audience of the Discoteca di Stato was particularly Cappuccilli's demonstration of the superiority of Verdi's tuning when he sang the moving Posa death aria "Per me è giunto il di supremo" from Verdi's *Don Carlos*, first at a piano tuned to Verdi's scientific pitch ( $A = 432$ ) and then at a so-called "normal piano" tuned very high, and everybody could hear the difference in color of the voice, and how much more

natural and more beautiful Verdi's music sounds when it's played with Verdi's tuning.

Another moving demonstration was given by Norbert Brainin, first violinist of the Amadeus Quartet, who played a Bach adagio for solo violin at  $A = 432$  and then at  $A = 444$ , showing how the sound is much richer and the timbre of the violin much warmer at Verdi's tuning. Professor Barosi of the Cremona Institute then demonstrated scientifically with an oscilloscopic printout how  $C = 256$  is precisely the point of "maximum efficiency" of the violin.

## Historic concert in Munich

On Dec. 12, in Munich's famed concert hall, the Max Joseph Saal of the Residenz, an audience of 300, largely made up of professional musicians, teachers, and music students, heard violin and piano duo Norbert Brainin and Günter Ludwig perform the Schumann sonata Opus 105 in A minor, and the Beethoven sonata Opus 30 No. 2 in C minor, with the instruments tuned to the frequency  $C = 256$ . Brainin also played a demonstration performance of the Bach Adagio he had played in Rome, in two tunings—at  $C = 256$  ( $A = 432$ ) and at the high modern concert pitch.

Before playing the Bach sonata, Brainin had studied a musical score in Bach's own handwriting, which showed by the direction of the musical staff, and other penciled-in marks, that this violin sonata was actually written in four voices. At the lower tuning, the indicated voicing is realized in clearer and more direct way on the violin.

The concert was performed on a special Petrof concert piano, built in 1920 and lent by Frick, a famous German piano restorer. The violin was the Gibson or Huberman Stradivarius, built in 1713 in the golden period of Antonio Stradivari.

As a result of the scientific demonstrations, and of Pannella's failed attempt, rumor has it in Rome, Milan, and Cremona that the  $C = 256$  bill will be approved at the beginning of 1989. Musicians are already congratulating the Schiller Institute for its successful campaign in defense of classical music, which they never believed one year ago would be victorious so soon.

Their only concern and regret was that LaRouche could not attend personally many of these musical and scientific events, although he was the one who inspired them, because of the legal frame-up keeping him prisoner of the U.S. injustice system. Many of them followed with distress, over the months, the attempt to shut up the only honest American politician, and the only one who has a sense of European history and culture, and asked us, on different occasions, "How is it possible that America, once known as the land of freedom, can be the site of a worse injustice than that of the Soviet gulag?" We turn their question to the U.S. government, knowing very well that LaRouche is expected in Italy and the rest of Europe to be celebrated by the thousands of friends he has, as the victorious initiator of the "tuning war."

# Petition to lower the tuning fork

## Whereas

the continual raising of pitch for orchestras provokes serious damage to singers, who are forced to adapt to different tunings from one concert hall or opera to the next, thus altering the original texture and even key of the works they perform;

## Whereas

the high standard pitch is one of the main reasons for the crisis in singing, that has given rise to "hybrid" voices unable to perform the repertoire assigned to them;

## Whereas

in 1884, Giuseppe Verdi had the Italian government issue a decree establishing A = 432 cycles (corresponding to middle C = 256) as the "scientific standard pitch," correctly stating in a letter to the government Music Commission that it was absurd that "the note called A in Paris or Milan should become a B-flat in Rome";

## Whereas

even for many instruments, among them the Cremona violins, ancient organs, and even the piano, modern high tuning is deleterious, in that it does not take physical laws into account;

## The undersigned demand that

the Ministries of Education, Arts and Culture, and Entertainment accept and adopt the normal standard pitch of A = 432 for all music institutions and opera houses, such that it become the official Italian standard pitch, and, very soon, the official standard pitch universally.

## Partial list of signers

*As we go to press, the Schiller Institute is continuing to receive new signatures. Affiliations are for identification only:*

**Italy:** Marco Balderi, master of RAI Symphonic Chorus, Milan; Fedora Barbieri, mezzosoprano; Ornella Bazzini, teacher, Milan Conservatory; Carlo Bergonzi, tenor; Ettore Campogalliani, teacher of singing, Mantua; Piero Cappuccilli, baritone; Maria Chiara, soprano; Luciano Chailly, conductor; Wilma Colla, teacher of singing, Parma Conservatory; Fiorenza Cossotto, mezzosoprano; Oslavio di Credico, singer and teacher of singing at Genoa Conservatory; Edgardo Egaldi, chorus master, Teatro Regio, Parma; Mirella Freni, soprano; Gianandrea Gavazzeni, conductor; Gianni Lazzari, chorus master, Teatro dell'Opera of Rome; Luisa Gorini Magenta, teacher of singing, Milan Conservatory; Nicola Martinucci, tenor; Vittoria Mastropalo, teacher of singing, Milan Conservatory Marcella de Osma, soprano; Carlo Perucci, artistic director, Arena di Verona; Ruggero Raimondi, bass; Bruno Rigacci, conductor; Gian M. Sanzogno, conductor; Giuseppe Di Stefano, tenor; Renata Tebaldi, soprano; Carmen Vilalta, soprano, teacher of singing at N. Paganini Conservatory, Genoa;

**Around the world:** Anthony Amato, conductor, director, Amato Opera Theater (New York); Elly Ameling, soprano; Gabriel Bacquier, baritone; Ann-Charlotte Björling, soprano; Richard Bonyge, conductor; Norbert Brainin, violinist; Frans Brüggen, flautist; Grace Bumbry, soprano; Nedda Casei, mezzosoprano, Metropolitan Opera, New York; Nico Castel, teacher of diction, Metropolitan Opera; Gardar Cortes, tenor, director, Opera Theater of Reykjavik, Iceland; Gilda Cruz-Romo, soprano, Metropolitan Opera; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone; Ib Hansen, bass, Opera Theater of Copenhagen; Emily Hastings, mezzosoprano, Dusseldorf; Josef Hochmann, first violin, Philharmonia Hungarica orchestra.

Marilyn Horne, mezzosoprano; Helmut Hücke, oboist; Dianne Kesling, mezzosoprano, Metropolitan Opera; Lone Koppel, soprano, Opera Theater of Copenhagen; Rafael Kubelik, conductor; Jodi Laski-Mihova, founder, Lubo Opera, New Jersey; Styrbjörn Lindedal, director, Gothenburg Opera Theater, Sweden; Thorbjörn Lindhjern, baritone, teacher, Oslo Opera; Christa Ludwig, mezzosoprano; Günter Ludwig, pianist; Eliane Magnan, violoncellist; Elizabeth Mannon, mezzosoprano; Prof. Heinz Marten, former teacher of singing at Cologne; Alberta Masiello, assistant conductor, Metropolitan Opera orchestra; Kerstin Meyer, mezzosoprano, headmistress, Stockholm Music Academy for Opera; Sherrill Milnes, baritone; Leona Mitchell, soprano; Jonathan Morris, pianist.

Birgit Nilsson, soprano; Siegfried Palm, violoncellist; Reinhard Peters, conductor; Louis Quilico, baritone; Ellen Repp, teacher of singing, Metropolitan Opera and Manhattan School of Music; Bidú Sayão, soprano, Metropolitan Opera; Peter Schreier, tenor; Norman Shetler, pianist; Jascha Silberstein, first 'cello, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; Joan Sutherland, soprano; Peter Volpe, bass, New Jersey State Opera; Klaus Weise, conductor.