

## Renata Tebaldi to run for European Parliament

World-famous Italian soprano Renata Tebaldi, the "angel's voice," who still today is a symbol for bel canto singing and classical culture around the world, will run as an independent candidate on the slate of the Patriots of Italy for the European Parliament next June. The announcement was made by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, initiator of the Patriots slates for the European Parliament, during the conference on "Giuseppe Verdi and the Scientific Tuning Fork" on Feb. 10 in Parma, Italy.

"The compromise reached in the Italian Senate on the legislation we proposed to return to Verdi's low tuning in order to save voices and classical interpretation," Mrs. LaRouche said in announcing the Patriots slate, "demonstrates the weakness and corruption of the political institutions which were not even able to respect and defend Verdi's will. It also shows how important it is for us to emerge in Europe as a new institution which is able to reject any compromises on scientific ideas and principles."

In her message to the conference, Tebaldi herself explained that "the politicians' decision to abandon Verdi's proposed tuning of A = 432 Hz, the scientific tuning, for a compromise on A = 440, demonstrates that the senators are not willing to change anything. Their decision is due to commercial considerations and has nothing to do with our culture and the need to safeguard our music heritage, which is the one that made us famous all over the world." Because of her determination "to prevent opera and classical music from dying because of the incompetence of present political and government institutions," Tebaldi agreed to run as an independent candidate for the European Parliament on the Patriots of Italy slate.

Together with her on the slate, running on the same classical culture agenda, are Fedora Barbieri and Prof. Bruno Barosi, director of the Acoustical Laboratory of the Violin Building School in Cremona, who has worked with the Schiller Institute in its efforts to revive Verdi's scientific tuning in order to save the precious old Cremona stringed instruments. Mezzosoprano Barbieri is famed for her singing of such Verdi roles as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, which she recorded with Zinka Milanov and Jussi Bjorling in a legendary recording.

## Giuseppe Verdi: A = 432 only scientific tuning

by Marco Fanini

In the course of the debate over the rising tuning pitch, the Italian daily *La Stampa* recently wrote that the "limit of 432 Hz has been maintained by the Schiller Institute, whereas Verdi had supported a limit of 435." Considering the fact that some musicologists publicly support the same thesis, we believe that *La Stampa* did not stumble into a error, but deliberately published a thesis whose falsity we shall demonstrate once again in this article.

First let's hear from the man directly concerned, Giuseppe Verdi, who wrote to Arrigo Boito on Nov. 8, 1885: "Principal aim: unity of the tuning fork. To concede, if one cannot do otherwise; but not without stating openly, loudly, and publicly, the error, from the scientific standpoint, of A = 435. You are a clear and able speaker, and you will easily set the truth in evidence. One could very well, with the authority of our Conservatories, declare that we maintain the A = 432 tuning because it is the most correct; but this firmness could seem like obstinacy, childishness that could almost lend itself to the ridiculous, and would be immediately caught by our brothers beyond the Alps."

The background to this letter is that the poet and librettist Arrigo Boito represented Italy, together with Professor of Experimental Physics Pietro Blaserna, at the International Conference on the Tuning Fork, held in Vienna in 1885. That conference was the epilogue of a dispute on the subject that had gone on for several years. The French had adopted in 1859, a tuning fork of 435 vibrations and had asked the rest of Europe to unify the tuning on that metric. In 1881 a congress of scientists and musicians held in Milan came out in favor of an international standard pitch of A<sup>3</sup> (Concert A, or the A above Middle C) at 432 full vibrations per second. The Congress considered that since the tuning fork should be unified, they preferred, over the French tuning fork, called "normal," the 432 tuning fork, called "scientific," because of its relationship to a Middle C set at 256.

Initially Verdi supported the French pitch of 435, but then he became convinced by the scientists and he turned into a decisive advocate of the scientific A = 432 tuning fork, as

noted in the cited letter to Boito. In 1883 the Italian Ministry of War established as the only tuning pitch for the military bands of the Kingdom of Italy  $A = 432$ , also thanks to the opinion expressed by Verdi, as we read in his letter date Feb. 10, 1884, to the chairman of the commission that was deliberating the matter:

“Since the normal tuning fork was adopted in France, I advised that the example should also be followed by ourselves; and I formally asked the orchestras of several cities of Italy, among others that of La Scala, to lower their tuning fork to bring it into uniformity with the French normal one. If the Music Commission instituted by our Government believes, for mathematical reasons, that the 870 vibrations [ $A = 435$ ] of the French tuning fork should be reduced to 864 [ $A = 432$ ] the difference is so small, almost imperceptible to the ear, that I am most happy to associate myself with this. It would be a very, very serious error to adopt, as is proposed by Rome, a tuning fork of 900 [ $A = 450$ ]. . . .”

Thus Verdi, in 1884, admits the “mathematical exigencies” of the tuning fork, and in 1885 (given the letter to Boito) he is already more convinced of it, speaking of  $A = 432$  as “more correct” and of the “scientific error” of  $A = 435$ . Verdi had been convinced of the rightness of this tuning following the studies of Charles Meerens (*Mémoire sur le diapason*, Brussels, 1877) presented to the Institute in Geneva, which replicated analogous demonstrations by Ritter. Meerens perceived a “Pythagorean” relationship by which  $A = 432$  was in a precise relationship with  $C = 256$  (v. Adler in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 1888, p.143).

### Verdi versus 440

Scientific rigor is obligatory when we speak of music, because the harmonic relations expressed by the well-tempered musical scale are not accidental but reflect the Golden Section proportions which are present throughout nature and the universe. Hence, the polemic between  $A = 432$  and  $A = 435$  is less academic than it may appear: In any case, it serves to demonstrate how far from all scientific criteria and arbitrary is the  $A = 440$  supported by ignorant Italian senators (apart from the general problem of ignorance among politicians) and also by ignorant and corrupt musicologists who really ought to know better. Meanwhile Verdi spins in his grave to hear what is “proposed by Rome.” If the viewpoint of the great Maestro could seem doubtful on this subject, let us cite yet another letter of his, addressed to Maestro De Giosa in 1871:

“To get back to the question we still do not. I wanted to propagate the normal tuning fork and make it as universal as possible. You proposed to me an accommodation which was a worse remedy than the disease. . . .”

In short, for Verdi, a unified tuning for the entire world was needed, and he first thought that this could be the French standard pitch ( $A = 435$ ), was then convinced of the scientific correctness of the Italian tuning fork of  $A = 432$ , and also

thought that any “accommodation” of a different sort should be rejected. Certainly Verdi would not have had his works sung at  $A = 440$  or  $A = 450$ , as occurs today. It is interesting to cite in this regard from an article that appeared in *Gazzetta Musicale*, Milan, Nov. 14, 1886: “We have just learned that Maestro Verdi, who prefers facts to all the interminable discussions, has established that *Otello* cannot be performed except in those theaters where the normal tuning is used, and he has made this the condition known to the publisher, who, in the contrary case, cannot give permission for performance.”

### Italy sold out

Unfortunately the Congress of Vienna of 1885 did not adopt the Italian  $A = 432$  due to an incredible series of compromises and political pressures, which saw Italy defeated, after it had already adopted the scientific tuning fork of 432 for a year, and Italy was forced to go back on its law and adapt to the Vienna decisions, i.e.,  $A = 435$ . The scientist and musician Archimede Montanelli described the Viennese compromises in a book entitled *Il diapason italiano e la Conferenza di Vienna* (also see by the same author, *La riforma del diapason in Italia*, 1884), where he speaks of compromises “in homage to the interests of the musical instrument manufacturers” and of the treason of Professor Pietro Blaserna, one of Italy’s representatives, who left as a supporter of the Italian  $A$  and returned the convinced assessor of the French  $A$ . With the necessary changes for the worse, it seems, we should read into that story what just happened in the Italian Senate, where Senator Carlo Boggio presented a bill to introduce the  $A$  at 432 and ended up modifying his own bill in favor of  $A = 440$ .

Finally, on the “Italian” or “Verdian”  $A$ , let us cite an article which appeared in *Gazzetta Musicale* of Milan on Nov. 8, 1885, signed Oscar Berggruen:

“The international Congress convened in Vienna . . . will be held in the second half of November. The Commission wants to make the proposal of the French  $A$  of 435 vibrations but there are many partisans of the Italian  $A$  of 432 vibrations. The difference is not major, but in my opinion, the Italian  $A$  is particularly to be recommended because it is divisible by octaves by the organ. The French  $A$  arrives, two octaves down, at a fraction, i.e., at 217.5 vibrations, corresponding to 216 vibrations of the Italian  $A$ . The Italian  $A$  also corresponds to the laws of science. . . .”

Senator Bompiani, chairman of the Education Committee in the Italian Senate, who blessed the rotten deal by which the  $A = 432$  law suddenly turned into an  $A = 440$  bill, seems to have told a journalist that laws are not scientific disputes, but that they have to be practical. Evidently for him and for our politicians the relationship between science, music, and morality, is not very practical. Too bad the singers, the musicians, the conductors don’t think that way—and neither did Giuseppe Verdi.