Bergamo

musical notices from Città e Provincie



In the weeks leading up to Christmas there was no lack of musical activity - dominated, of course, by numerous orchestral and choral contributions to religious and lay celebrations. But apart from a concert performance of *Rigoletto* promoted by the "G.B.Rubini" Circle at Romano di Lombardia, no opera was heard. The Teatro Donizetti is at this time of the year mainly occupied by drama productions with an occasional lighter piece - *"Chorus Line"* was 1991's offering. One of the few orchestral concerts celebrated the centenary of the Credito Bergamasco; Gavazzeni conducted Mendelssohn's 2nd Symphony *"Lobgesang"* with the chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Giuseppe Verdi of Trieste. The venerable conductor, now a writer too on his beloved Bergamo, has been much in the news; married to Denia Mazzola the soprano some 40 years his junior together they have been honoured by local societies, particularly the "Simone Mayr" Circle of which Gavazzeni is President (Teodoro Rovetta, a stalwart bass on the local musical scene resigned from the directorship of the Circle, on health grounds); he was presented with a golden baton for his work with the orchestra "YOuth of Europe - Parisian Section"; Palermo recently saw and heard the Gavazzeni's in *Lucrezia Borgia* and other performances are scheduled for them.

Also at Palermo, Pieralberto Cattaneo, a prominent figure in Bergamo music circles, gave a talk at a conference entitled *Il repertorio sommerso: musica storica per la banda d'oggi;* he dealt with the music composed for wind instruments by Mayr, and Gaetano and Giuseppe Donizetti, referring to those of their compositions held in the Civic Library at Bergamo. The conference closed with a concert which included a recently discovered *Sinfonia* by Mercadante with the title *Omaggio a Bellini,* a *Qui Tollis* by Donizetti and a *Salve Regina* by Mayr.

To translate *"la banda"* as "the band" probably gives too little indication of the repertoire of the local musical associations in Italy and one is also surprised to learn of their long history and great number. Donizetti's other brother Francesco was, despite (or because of?) his (reportedly) childish enjoyment of uniform and drum, instrumental in setting up *"Banda di Bergamo"*. The early regulations, particularly regarding the design of uniforms, care of instruments and attendance at rehearsals etc., throw interesting sidelights on the musical scene since the 1820's. There is no room other than to make brief reference to one or two recent concerts; the band at Nembro included Haydn's Symphony No.100, that at Seriate was joined by the chorus from the "Simone Mayr" Circle in escerpts from *Trovatore, I lombardi, Norma* and *Lucia* and finally that at Calvenzano included, in their concert, works by Verdi, Wagner, Elgar and a selection of "Herr Alput" (sic).

Other events noted included a series of talks entitled *I tenori bergamaschi* which, in order, dealt with Rubini, Donzelli, Giacomo David, Elidoro Bianchi, Viganoni, Adamo Bianchi, Giovanni David, Nozzari, Bordogni, Bolis, Gambarelli and Alessandro Dolci; a Mass at Santa Maria Maggiore for those who had supported the *"Misericordia Maggiore"* (itself an integral part of the history of Bergamo since the 13th century) included for the offertorium, Donizetti's *Lacrimosa dies illa,* and for the communion Mayr's *Libera me Domine;* a new ballet by Beppe Menegatti, *Cristoforo Colombo,* to be given at La Scala this year will employ music by Donizetti.

Three prospective matters should be noted; what is described as a new *"point of reference"* for those interested in music was inaugurated on 14 December 1991 to offer instrumental classes, study courses and the like. This "Centro Musica Antica di Bergamo" will concentrate on vocal and instrumental music of the 15th-to 18th centuries and a programme for 1992 is to be announced. Secondly, work approved in 1990 (and financed largely by Regional funding directed to the refurbishment of theatres

in Lombardy) got under way recently adding to the west side of the Teatro Donizetti a room to seat 400 and the foyer will be doubled in size (by becoming L shaped). Restoration work to the facade will be undertaken during the summer and special care is to be taken to preserve the trees nearest to the theatre in the Piazza Cavour. Lastly a plan to make Donizetti's birthplace a major attraction for tourists has been approved (noted in the previous Newsletter). The immediate concern this provokes is somewhat ameliorated when one learns that the actual area occupied by the Donizetti family is to have only minimal attention and that 80% of the structure has been found to be safe. The important work therefore will be largely confined to the upper floors where it is hoped to house the *"Fondazione del Donizetti"* with a library of books and records with other aids to research, offering a number of facilities for music lovers. It is said the Foundation will be charged with analysis of the works of Donizetti and of associated documentation. It is to be hoped the notorious difficulty of gaining access to the house will then be a thing of the past. One might so hope because there has been some relaxation on recruitment of local authority employees and of 29 new part-time "operatives", one is for the botanical gardens, another to be an electrician at the Teatro Donizetti, and three of them are destined for *"museums"* - what price one of these being assigned to Borgo Canale? It is hoped to be able to report further developments.

Since the turn of the year there have been numerous recitals and chamber music concerts with little opportunity for the opera lover. Dott.Francesco Bellotto, in a talk given at the Ateneo, was looking at the instrumental music scene in Bergamo at the time Donizetti was composing his quartets. Bellotto commented on the German influence he found in those works and traced it to the particular pleasure Bergamasques found at the time in works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Music by all these composers has also figured at concerts in the early months of 1992. Chamber groups heard included the Kocian L'European Piano, Eder, and Janacek Quartets, Il Trio Hernadi, Il Trio Lafont and numerous duos. Piano recitals abounded, many by students graduated from the Conservatory. There was little of special interest to *Donizettiani*, but two young pianists, Dirani and Amelotti, have recorded seven sonatas for four hands by Donizetti (not further identified but hopefully material with the CD's, to be issued by Fonè, will be informative). A wind group directed by Vittorio Bonolis gave a concert in the Sala Piatti on 7 March and included works by Porpora, Paisiello, and a nocturne by Mayr for 9 instruments: flute; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons; 2 horns; trumpet and trombone. The "Mayr Circle" continued its regular offerings, further sopranos from the East featured in recitals there, and elsewhere, were Masako Deguci, Yasuko Sato, Aoi Nichinobo, and Satomi Yanagibashi (quite an invasion!)and there was a performance of *"Il risveglio"* - described by the Bergamasque composer Andrea Migliorini as *"vicenda da lirica in due tempi"*.

A collaboration between the local authority, one of the Bergamasque banks and the Associazione Musica Aperta, known as *"Incontri europei con la musica"* has been responsible for bringing a variety of artists to Bergamo, and on 29 February it promoted a performance of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*. The singing of Rossini's music was the topic for discussion between Riccardo Allorto the artistic director of the Teatro Donizetti and Giancarlo Landini, critic and singing specialist, at the first *"Salotto del lunedi"* at the end of which Maestro Allorto made reference to the forthcoming *Convegno internazionale donizettiano* next September, with the learned committee to include Cavazzeni, William Ashbrook and others. Will it be called *"secondo"*, the first of what one then understood would be quinquennial, being in 1975!

The Ateneo remembered Alessandro Dolci at a talk in mid-February. When his singing career was over he gave lessons at the Istituto Donizetti and in his own house. His fame relies almost entirely on reports of his performances throughout Italy and the Americas, there remains only one recording, made in 1914, with Mascagni conducting excerpts from his *Parisina*.

The 29th *"Festival pianistico di Brescia e Bergamo"* with the theme *"La civilità musicale di Parigi da Chopin a Debussy"* runs throughout May. Naturally the emphasis is on the piano but there are to be three orchestral concerts and an *Omaggio a Rossini* with a promised premiere of a flute concerto and a *Suite di melodie francesi* arranged by Corghi featuring Cecilia Gasdia.

At the Teatro Donizetti the second orchestral concert of the season was devoted to Mozart and Sibelius, Grieg and Saint-Saens were on offer for the third. There were two performances of Lehar's *Vedova allegra* and a rarity on 10 February - *Das Lied von der Glocke*. This cantata by Andreas Romberg (1767-1821) first performed in January 1809 with a fleeting revival in 1938, sets a text by Schiller and was apparently rediscovered recently. The performance was jodged, somewhat calmly, as a *"piacevole sorpresa"*.

The choir *"Voci dell'altipiano"* of Clusone took the bronze medal at the 6th International Choirs Festival in Prague and *"Il Coro Idica"*, also of Clusone, are arranging a festival there in May with strong representations from America and the Baltic States but none it seems from England. One of the Italian perticpants *"Il Coro dell'Innominato di Vercurago"*, will, before then be touring Czechoslovakia. Bands have continued their activities with that of Sarnico including works by Dvorak and Verdi alongside those of Lloyd Webber and MacCartney! At Gazzaniga the band was joined by the organist Gianfranco Moraschini who included works by three Bergamasques, Padre Davide, Daniele Maffeis and Vincenzo Petrali, and La Fanfara *"Città dei Mille"* are celebrating 20 years of existence. The Associazione bergamasca bande musicali is organising a three-year course of *"improvement for band leaders"*. Not only it is said, must they know about music but, as the course will address, they ought to know *what* music in *what* circumstances. A number of prominent local musicians will participate to deal with wind and percussion instruments, conducting and composing.

Having mentioned composing, the present *Maestro di Cappella* of Santa Maria Maggiore (a position held by many illustrious predecessors) is *mons.* Giuseppe Pedemonti who has recently published a motet *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus* for four voices and organ, dedicated to the new Bishop of Bergamo.

Highlights from the *Rigoletto* at the beginning of the year were performed at a number of locations including, at the end of March, the theatre of the Casa del Giovane. This was a meeting of the "Mayr Circle" who were entertaining the Mayor and other visitors from Mendorf, Mayr's birthplace, to repay a visit of Officials of the Circle to Mendorf some time ago. The previous meeting was a concert of piano music by Rachmaninov and arias and duets from *Fedora, Tosca, Boheme, Traviata* and *Trovatore*.

The fourth concert in the "Stabile" season (an orchestra *"underemployed"* with regard to its potential in the view of the conductor Severini in a recent interview) included music by Respighi, Ravel, Ginastera and Franco Mannino's 9th Symphony. The concert was conducted by Thomas Briccetti.

Notes compiled and annotated by Brian Thornton

Stop Press - the Festival de Bel Canto Romantique has rescheduled its season to September (no dates yet) giving *Maria Padilla* which we shall visit in force (there will be a recording), and *Lucia "avec-une Lucia qui sera sans aucun doute une grande révélation"*; there will be an International Mayr Festival at Ingolstadt 24 October 1992; Pierre-Jean de San Bartolomé is staging *La Favorite* in a new production at Seoul - *La Favorite* (his Vichy/Paris edn) will be given at The Hague 25/27 June 1992; the Spoleto *Il duca d'Alba* will be repeated at the Carlo Felice of Genova and in an edition prepared by Alberto Maria Giuri close to the 1882 original.

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Editor or Committee of the Donizetti Society

Published from 11 Buckland Crescent, London NW3 5DH