Bergamo

Musical notices from Città e Provincie

Spring and early summer, perhaps, offers more musical activity than at any other time - the winter season of concerts and 'initiatives' about to come to an end but with new summer season events already underway. "Estate,vivi la tua città" is a catch-all banner for a variety of cultural diversions, many musical, for the benefit of bergamasques, who are at home during the summer and of the tourists. New this year, but also promised for 1994, is "Percorsi fra musica e architettura" conceived "to discover the city, its monuments and lesser known corners, through music" provided by wind and string ensembles offering varied programmes whilst, for example, stood outside the sacristry at the east corner of Santa Maria Maggiore. Another significant contribution to "Estate..." comes, of course, from the bands - the local association now boasts 96 member bands which means nearly 5000 instrumentalists giving something like 800 concerts before the end of September! A number of bands, schools and institutes continue to offer instrumental (and directorial!) tuition with free loans of instruments to those enrolling. Band anniversaries, properly celebrated by day-long festivities, this year include 90th for Albegno, 145th for Mapello and, even older, 170th for Corpo musicale di Calvenzano. There were 25 signatories to their original regulations of 1823 containing provisions for a fine of 30 Austrian lire on those members leaving without good reason and an annuity at Christmastime of 6 lire for those conscripted into the "reggimento", so placing them under an obligation to return to the "Società filarmonia" upon their discharge. Many bands responded to the "call" for concerts on Republic Day, 2nd June; they included the Corpo musicale "G. Donizetti" from Brembate Sopra, Corpo musicale "Cav. G. B. Rubini" of Romano di Lombardia and the Banda cittadina "G. Legrenzi" of Clusone. This rare acknowledgement of Legrenzi only emphasises the obscurity to which he is presently consigned, despite a "Convegno" in 1990 for the tercentenary of his death, the transactions of which (and a CD of his music) await publication. Another "convegno", in September this year marking the centenary of the death of Antonio Ghislanzoni, Verdi's librettist, will be mounted in Lecco, his birthplace, Milan where he worked for many years as a journalist and at Caprino Bergamasco (12 miles from the city) where he spent his last years - some of them, it is said, as a hotel keeper! He was a man of many parts (including a brief but undistinguished career as a baritone - though he once received favourable comment on his performance of the Marquis in "Linda di Chamounix") but described himself as "an odd fellow who does not recognise the power of any established authority".

The 30th International Piano Festival (shared with Brescia) was principally concerned with Schubert and Brahms, just as was the 7th Festival back in 1970. Despite the considerable exploration (some may feel duplication) of the piano repetoire during the last 30 years, Dr Siebaneck is confident that new artists and new perspectives will ensure the future of this important international event.

Many of the musical instruments from the Museo Donizettiano have recently under gone restoration work and are now on view there again. This and other curatorial work, revision of the catalogue, etc., continues as the recently formed "Fondazione Donizetti" strives to improve matters at the museum and the "Casa Natale". The museum and the important Civico Istituto Musicale are both housed in property owned by "L'Opere Pia Misericòrdia Maggiore" (MIA), which recently announced a thorough going review of its position to put to best use its not inconsiderable wealth and property. It envisages 10 years work on various buildings, including that in Via Arena and Santa Maria Maggiore, with a new realisation of its distinguished inheritance (that dates back to 1265), to benefit cultural, educational and social interests. Its liaison with bodies from outside Bergamo to determine the direction of its revitalised energies to galleries, museums and archival material, will, hopefully, not betray its bergamasque heritage. Pupils from the Civico Istituto Musicale gave concerts during May and June as part of their "finals" and, with their last concert, offered homage to "I maestri di Gaetano Donizetti", playing music by Capuzzi, Salari, Gonzales and, of course, Mayr, recalling Mayr's 'petition' in 1805 to MIA, to found the "Scuola Caritatevoli di Musica", forerunner of today's body.

It is heartening to note several new courses in music being offered in schools at all levels from age 5 upwards (British schools please note!); the 2nd season of "Incontri con la musica" for students at high schools and university, promoted by "Musica Aperta" (another contributor to "Estate..") with backing from the Comune and a local bank, offered prizes of recording contracts with the chance to participate in the 11th season of "Donizetti, e il suo tempo". One can now, it seems, whether with a band or in school, learn and play music at any age unless one wishes to reply to a recent recruitment drive for new members of the state police bands; then there is an upper age limit of 40 except for those who are older with, intriguingly, special dispensations!

"In...canto" musical evenings included a recital by Denia Mazzola (Bellini and Donizetti, Roberto Devereaux "Vivi ingrato") and another by Eugenio Cade, a sopranista, who ranged from "Ombra mai fu" through Azucena's aria, Olivero's song from "Gianni di Parigi", the Habanera ard Seguidilla from "Carmen" to "Casta diva"! His encore was "O mio babbino caro"!!

Music by the maestro featured in the programmes of quite a few of the many concerts and recitals; of the lesser known works one might mention the piano sonato for 4 hands "for Dolci and Donizetti" (Zavadini 331) at the Circolo Artistico two "decidedly operatic" Offertori in Sant' Alessandro della Croce, two pieces from the Miserere and an Ave Regina in S. Bartolomeo and in a concert (no entrance charge!) at the Castello of Palazzolo Sull 'Oglio Donizetti was represented by an oboe sonata, the concerto for "corno inglese" and "O mio Fernando" in a varied programme which also included works by Pasculli, Pagani and Verdi. Music by Mayr was less frequently scheduled but an international festival of religious music masterpieces at Lecco (about 20 miles from Bergamo) promised two of his works, "Sisara" in July and "Samuele" in October. La Camerata Strumentale Pietro Antonio Locatelli visited Rome to assist at Mass in the Pantheon where they also gave a concert of Mayr's Miserere for 4 voices, Tibi Soli for tenor, Docebo Te for baritone and, the first performance in modern times, of Posuisti Domine for tenor and baritone. The MIA and the "Arciconfraternità dei Bergamaschi in Roma" hope to sponsor similar events in future "to bring the history and musical culture of Bergamo to the capital".

The Teatro Donizetti is making improvements to the bar(cheers) and attending to ceiling decorations, installing new handrails and new grills for the air vents and adding new divan seating in convenient corners. The cost is being met from savings against the budgets in the last two years for fire damage repair and the formation of the new "ridotto". The theatre has now been valued for insurance purposes at about £7.5 million though at the time of the fire some 18 months ago, it was, apparently, rather undervalued and the insurance claim amounted to one-sixth of the loss. There have now been changes in personnel!

The newly re-activated "Dante Society" in Bergamo devoted a 'giornata' to Locatelli and with the "Dante Society" in Amsterdam intend to promote interest in this somewhat lesser known son of Bergamo; the tercentenary of his birth in 1995 will be an early opportunity to do so.

Pupils of Paolo Montarsolo closed the Circolo Mayr-Donizetti season with the bass warmly applauded when he joined the soprano in the duet from "L'Elisir". A concert performance of "Cavalleria Rusticana" at the Circolo Mayr was the last offering in their season though both groups later collaborated with other societies in promoting their concerts. The learned Ateneo di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti devoted its May meeting to hearing about the noted organ builders, Locatelli, a bergamasque firm which provided instruments for Genoa, Lyon, Turin and, possibly their masterpiece, the 3500 piped organ at the Liceo Musicale Pesaro. At its June meeting there were three presentations on the life and works of Padre Davide followed by a short recital of his compositions for the organ.

Space prevents anything more than the briefest acknowledgement of the many recitals and choral and orchestral concerts during the period with the Orchestra Stabile building a growing reputation in Bergamo and further afield. Despite the enormous number of Societies and the like providing all this musical activity

there seems to be no end to newcomers; this year saw the first season of concerts by the newly formed "L'Associazione chitarristica Benvenuto Terzi", named after this bergamasque guitarist and composer (1892-1980). It is difficult to think of any aspect of music making not now represented by an appropriate society catering for the needs of its members, at the same time contributing to the extremely active, varied and enviable musical life of Bergamo and its environs.

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