

The First Mayr Conference in Bergamo, March 5-7, 1993.

If anyone had said to me a year ago that their would be two Mayr conferences within six months of each other, I would have said that they were joking. But the Mayr renaissance has begun for sure, thanks to an ever growing group of friends and enthusiasts who long to see Donizetti's great teacher properly re-established in the annals of music.

The Bergamo Conference, like the one held in October in Ingolstadt (Mayr's university town), was a great and vibrant success. It could not have been organized better. It was the collaborative work of Bergamo's Amici della Musica Simone Mayr and an especial triumph for the Society's President Lidia Cucciniello and the conductor Pierangelo Pelucchi. Throughout the three days the sessions were fired by a great affection for Mayr and the desire to know his music and simply who was this great man. The lecture rooms (first at the Teatro Donizetti, then in the same room as used for the September Donizetti Conference) were throughout full with enthusiasts, among whom was the City's mayor.

A lot happened within three days: a Mayr prize was announced for the best critical edition of a Mayr composition; Mayr's friends of Bergamo became twined to their German counterpart with the solemn oath to work together for the great man's revival (I could hardly believe my ears!); Pierangelo Pelucchi conducted a fascinating evening of Mayr in the Sala Piatti; Solemn Mass was celebrated with Mayr's music in S. Maria Maggiore and there was a very positive sequence of papers presented to an audience made up of people from Germany, Italy, Hungary and our own land. It was particularly good to meet once again Dr Hofmann and Herr Batz of Ingolstadt who were responsible for the Autumn Mayr Conference and who worked so hard to make those days so memorable. The publication of the Ingolstadt and Bergamo papers will undoubtedly become essential foundations for future generations.

Space allows me only to indicate at the wealth of topics discussed at Bergamo. Gianandrea Gavazzeni had sent an opening address which was read to us and which set the tone of the Conference. The lecturers who represented Altmanstein (the area from which Mayr originally came) presented papers which helped

us to understand Mayr's background, from his connection with Baron v. Bassus, to hearing recordings of organs which Mayr would have played and which are preserved to this day. Dr Hofmann and Herr Batz continued their themes of Mayr's education in Ingolstadt and the intellectual world and spirituality which he would have encountered there. All this was most helpful and once more we must wait for the publication of these fascinating papers.

Unlike the recent Donizetti Conference when lecturers grossly indulged in speaking well over their time limit, this conference was a model of courtesy for every speaker kept within the 30 minutes time-slot designated to them. Pieralberto spoke on Mayr's compositions for wind instruments; Marcello Eynard (one of the cataloguers of the Fondo Mayr) made a most valid contribution concerning the music copied by Mayr for his and his students's edification; Valeriano Sacchiero gave a fascinating paper on Mayr's teaching methods. He surprised us all by illustrating a theme and variations for flute and cembalo. Mayr had written the most beautiful keyboard part and then told the young Donizetti to go away and for his homework compose a flute line! This contribution was followed by an equally intriguing paper by Gabriele Rocchetti on Mayr's interest in the development of the horn and his writings on the matter; Pierangelo Pelucchi contributed a paper on Mayr's settings of Vespers; Maximillan Kantner analysed Mayr's great G Minor Requiem in the light of the influence of Mozart and Madyn. (Letters, calligraphy and style would suggest that this is an early piece dating from about the time of the foundation of the Lezioni Caritatevoli. This fact draws attention to another amazing side of Mayr's intellect, the extent to which he was aware of what his fellow German and Austrian colleagues were composing, long before their works were published.) David Bryant deepened his theme begun at Ingolstadt on Mayr's Venetian farces; Pierluigi Forcella gave a fascinating paper on Mayr's charitable works (yet another side of this amazing man!); Annaliza Bonazzi further explored her theme and studies into Mayr's correspondence. It is to be hoped that the publication of the Mayr-Bonesi correspondence will be followed by other volumes. Bernardino Zappa presented thoughts from Mayr's Zibaldone or Notebooks. I gave Signora Cucciniello a paper indicating ten aspects of Mayr's life which may be used as keys to understanding his development, but played to the audience tapes of examples of the composer's music from the Te Deum, S. Luigi Gonzaga, The Cantata for the death of Beethoven and the Concerto for piccolo, flute, clarinet and basset-horn. To my surprise the audience applauded the extracts. It was lunch-time and we all had by then a considerable appetite - Italian style!

But what was the big, big surprise? Next year Germany will hold yet another Mayr Symposium and in 1995 (150 years after the composer's death) Mayr's Friends in Bergamo will organize a second Conference. On that occasion let us hope that the Teatro

Donizetti will authentically and sensitively stage one of Mayr's operas.

Be prepared, this Mayr Renaissance is going to change our understanding and appreciation of Donizetti, as well as the musical world of the first fifty years of nineteenth century Italy. Maybe people will at last stop comparing Donizetti to Verdi, insinuating that his music is only good when it foreshadows, say Stiffelio, and start understanding Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi in the light of Mayr and the change he brought to the development of Italian music.

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