

## Bergamo

Musical notices from Città e Provincie



The opera season comprised *Il turco in Italia* and *Il matrimonio segreto*, both received with less than enthusiastic approval from a less than full house, and *Traviata* that fared much better. There were also three performances of the ballet *Cristoforo Colombo* with Donizetti's music arranged by Bepe Menegatti, choreography by Alberto Mendez. The score of the cantata with this title contained some scenographic and directorial indications in the composer's hand and Menegatti completed the ballet by adding music from the *Messa di Gloria*, *Messa di Requiem per Bellini*, *Dom Sébastien*, *Maria di Rohan*, *Roberto Devereux*, *La Favorite*, *Les Martyrs*, *Poliuto* and *L'assedio di Calais*. It was generally well received as it had previously been in Milan. Luciana Serra included three Donizetti songs in her delayed recital, though she had not fully recovered from her indisposition and limited herself to one encore and apologies to a good audience. Later there was a short season of operetta, also at the Teatro Donizetti: *Sogno di un valzer*, *La vedova allegra*, *La principessa della Czarda* and one Italian contribution from Italy's leading "operettista" Carlo Lombardo - *Il paese dei campanelli*.

The Fondazione Gaetano Donizetti has now been set up by the Comune and Province of Bergamo with initial financing of Lire 150 million. The Casa Natale will be the "*primo punto di riferimento per tutti coloro che, professionalmente e non, si accostano a Donizetti*" with facilities for study, research, meetings etc. An autonomous body, with a six member directive, should soon be in existence to liaise with the Teatro Donizetti and others connected with the Festivals and having 1997 very much in mind. During an interview with Riccardo Allorto, Artistic Director of the Teatro Donizetti, he mentioned promises of help with the bicentenary celebrations from the Accademia di S. Cecilia and the Institutes of Studi Verdiani and Rossiniani. Questioned about the Donizetti Festival, he believes it will continue, but there are differing views on whether it should be biennial - alternating with the customary autumn season of opera - or annual, replacing the season. Finance, as ever, is a problem and a suggestion that Bergamo could not support a Festival brought an interesting comparison with Pesaro where tourists, towards the end of a summer holiday period, can be persuaded to participate whereas Bergamo's economy - based more on industry - makes it more difficult to find support for a Festival in the form many would wish it to take.

Audiences still prefer the well known (*cf Il turco, Il matrimonio and Traviata!*) rather than discover the little known. If that is a fact one wonders if a suggestion from the 'round table' at the end of the September Convegno - that the number of Donizetti operas for critical revision and production in the period 1988 to 1997 be increased from five to eight - has much hope of fulfilment. There will be further debate on the frequency and content of the Festival - and on the extent of support and degree of participation by Bergamasco musicians, but for the time being we are assured by Maestro Allorto that there is some sort of future for the Festival.

Meanwhile there is no lack of music to be heard in Bergamo including, naturally, many concerti di Natale, during Epiphany. There was a successful series of "*Armonie di Natale*" around the province with participating choirs coming together for a performance in the Duomo. Across the square in S.Maria Maggiore (SMM), Fiorella Pediconi, standing in for Denia Mazzola, substituted a Donizetti *Offertorio* for the originally intended Mozart piece (K158a). The Circolo Artistico Bergamasco organised a concert for the 350th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Accademia degli "Eccitati", forerunner of the present day Ateneo. All the music was the work of Bergamascs, Piatti, Camozzo (who conducted *Les Martyrs* at the 1975 Convegno), Esposito, Ravelli, Mazzoleni, Berlendis and others. Many less well known compatriots of Donizetti are referred to in Forcella's book (see p.11). A new body "*Coro lirico di Bergamo*" has been formed, participating in Rossini's *Petite Messe* in various cities. SMM has been offering tuition in choral singing, at the same time looking for additional voices for a number of sections of the Basilica choir. The organ of SS Lorenzo and Margherita was found to be a Farinelli of 1729, the oldest recorded example now in Bergamo and district by this maker. Restoration has begun on the instrument at the Basilica at Gandino where, in the Venetian tradition, there is a second independent organ, that dates from 1718-1722.

The Assoc.Simionato di Filago continued their successful concerts of operatic highlights performed by promising singers and marked the 150th anniversary of *Don Pasquale* with a concert performance - "*un omaggio alla memoria di Gaetano Donizetti*" was their President's dedication. Circolo lirico Mayr-Donizetti also had regular concerts at one of which Roberto Juliano impressed; he was said to be at ease with "*falsetto, mezzavoce*" and "*il pieno voce*" and that if he is patient, studious and parsimonious in what he sings "*avremo trovato un tenore*". The Christmas meeting of the Circolo Simone Mayr included excerpts from *Lucia di Lammermoor* (and *White Christmas* with artificial snow descending on a gratified audience). Circolo Mayr are hoping for a twinning arrangement with a similar body in Altmannstein and were encouraged by a visit from the Mayor and Baron von Bassus (descendant of that Thomas who took Mayr to Italy in 1787) though they were disappointed that only two Italians made presentations at the Ingolstadt Symposium. [There was a railway strike in Italy *Ed.*] Their own Convegno took place early in March (see p.12).

Maestro Gavazzeni was presented with a gold medal by the Amici della "Mai" for services to music and literature (his diary "*Il sipario rosso*" was published recently) and he was also at La Scala to receive the "*Bacchetta d'oro 1992*" when he recalled Toscanini always calling him "*il ragazzo Gavazzeni*" because he had known him in short trousers.

There were some late acknowledgements of Rossini's bicentenary and the state railway's experiment with bringing music to commuters was continued with a *Carrozza Rossini* attached to trains between Milan and Bergamo (non travellers could visit its films and recorded music). *Buon viaggio Rossini!* The Milan/Lecce intercity is now called *Gaetano Donizetti*. All very odd.

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