

Musical notices from Città e Provincie



Since the last Newsletter the Casa Natale has reopened and the first sign of the new proprietorship of via Borgo Canale 14 are two rooms at street level housing a small, but interesting, exhibition of papers and manifesti illustrating five phases of the composer's life: "origins and birth"; "formative years"; "the return from his studies at Bologna"; "illness and death" and "the Donizetti legacy in Bergamo". There is some previously unpublished material to be seen but if we learn little new from the exhibits or accompanying notes, the project is to be welcomed as evidence that the "Fondazione Donizetti" *comincia finalmente a muovere* and is an attractive introduction to the life and work of the Maestro for those previously unaware or unappreciative of his real achievements.

"Progetto Bergamo" is a continuing programme of restoration of notable, though often neglected, monuments in the city - the ninth of which to benefit from attention will be the monument to Donizetti by Jerace near the Teatro named in his honour. Work is to begin in mid-September and will take three months to complete. The results that can now be seen of this initiative (particularly pleasing is the bust of Ruggeri da Stabello in Piazza Pontida) raises hopes that Donizetti will in turn be refreshed in time for his bicentenary and the centenary of the monument itself.

The showing on Italian TV of a film about the life and work of Verdi prompted a request that Donizetti should be similarly treated in anticipation of 1997. There was, it is suggested, sufficient romance and incident in his life to make something more than a simple recital of his successes and failures.

The new Ridotto of the Teatro Donizetti has been musically tested to determine if it is acoustically suitable for use as a concert hall. A suggestion that the theatre was overgenerous in eager allocation of complimentary tickets met with a sharp response: while regulations envisaged a maximum distribution of 10%, the actual figure in 1993 was 3.42%. The selection of orchestras for operatic performances was also questioned, and, as might be expected, as Maestro Allorto explained, the choice is determined largely by financial considerations. Subsidies that might otherwise not be forthcoming roughly halve the cost of employing - say - the "Orchestra Stabile".

Twenty-three schools and musical institutions participated in the "rassegna" conducted by the Circolo lirico Mayr-Donizetti which awarded their prize to the school run by Gabriella Ravazzi. They will perform *Anna Bolena* next January. Franca Mattiucci of Tortona's school took the Amici della lirica "G.B. Rubini" prize, and will perform a Bellini opera in December. The Circolo has now twinned itself with the Club Amici della lirica "Mario del Monaco" of Crema and held their first joint meeting last May.

The Circolo Simone Mayr was very active during April (including an address by John Allitt), and in June promoted, in conjunction with the Istituto Musicale "Gaetano Donizetti" a concert of works by the Maestro's teachers, including Gonzales (born in Gromo, about 15 miles from the city), Salari, Capuzzi, and, of course, Mayr himself.

The success last year of the "Percorsi fra musica e architettura" led to a new series of concerts this summer in architecturally interesting locations about the city, one of which was the Casa Natale. The Chamber Orchestra of Frankfurt, for their contribution to the annual "Incontri con la musica", gave the first performance in Bergamo, of Donizetti's *Introduzione per archi*. Another initiative during the bergamasque musical season is "Musica Antica" which, this year, is in its 10th season of tuition courses for choral singing. The "Associazione Giulietta Simionato" is now in its 6th season and the famous mezzo expressed herself happy with "*la mia bambina*" at a concert at Bonate Sotto (a mile or two outside the city). An organ recital in the parish church there, earlier in the year included Donizetti's *Grande Offertorio in Re maggiore*. There is, as early as 1623, documentary evidence of the cultivation in the Bonate area - on land owned by M.I.A. - of "granturco" which provides us with that bergamasque staple, polenta, in turn lauded in a song by Emilio Pizzi, who gave us such diverse pieces as an "Inno a Donizetti", and the curiously-named "The Brac Brac-Willy", an operetta popular it seems in London in 1895. Can anyone supply any more information? (Who was Willy for example?)*

*Colette's husband? *Edit.*

