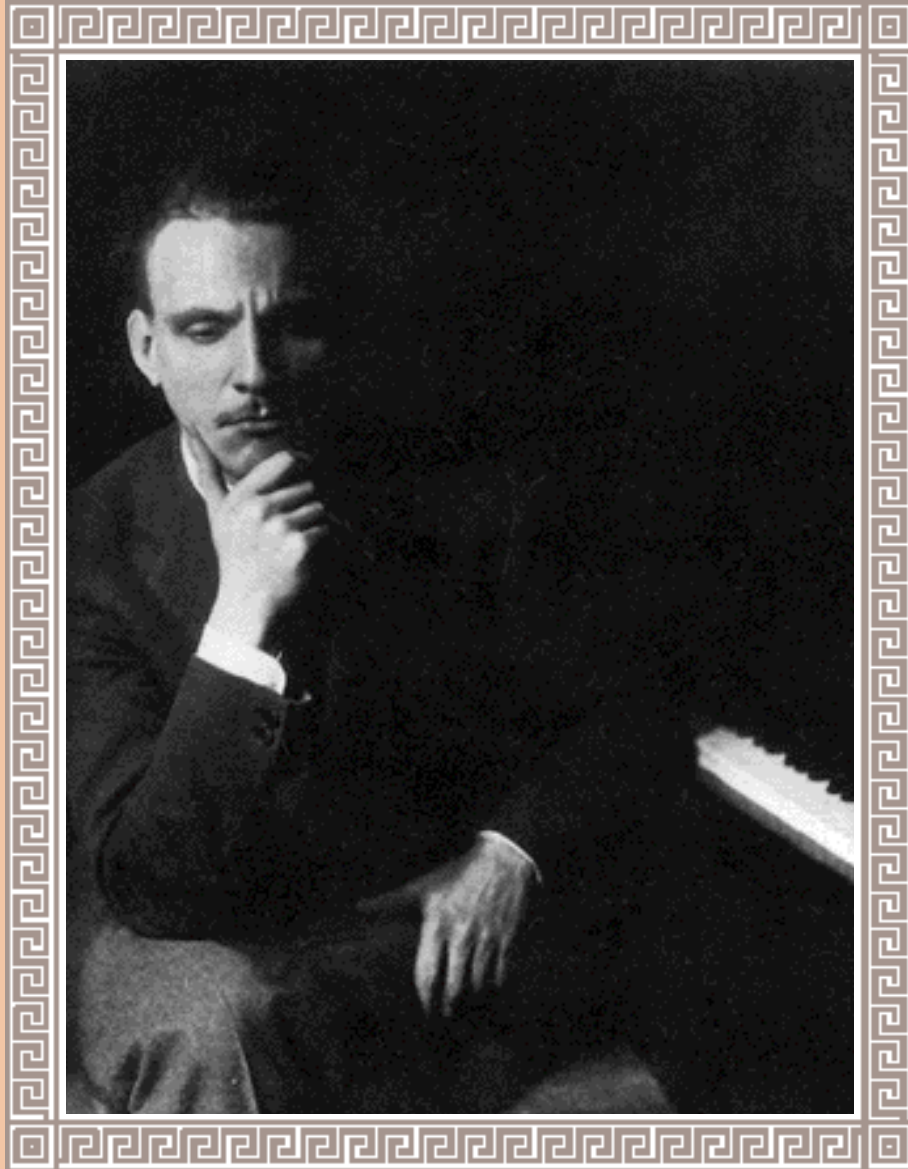


Perfection becomes music

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli

by Pier Carlo Della Ferrera

texts by Marco Vitale (with an interview with Isacco Rinaldi) and Lidia Kozubek



PIANO

Concerto

BIENNALE DI VENEZIA
XVI FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE
DI MUSICA CONTEMPORANEA
6 - 21 SETTEMBRE 1953

TEATRO LA FENICE
Mercoledì 16 Settembre 1953 - ore 21

CONCERTO SINFONICO

HERBERT VON KARAJAN
con la partecipazione del pianista
ARTURO BENEDETTI MICHELANGELI

PROGRAMMA

FRANZ LISZT - *Concerto in sol maggiore (1857 - 59)*
Piano
Solo

HERBERT SPINER - *Concerto in sol maggiore per pianoforte e orchestra (1925)*
Pianoforte
Piano Solo
Orchestra

FRANZ LISZT - *La Morte di Arturo (complesso simfonico) (1904 - 05)*
Orchestra
Piano Solo
Pianoforte
Piano Solo

FRANZ LISZT - *Impressioni di Walden, Op. 122 (1886 - 88)*
Orchestra
Piano Solo
Pianoforte
Piano Solo

Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana
D. CARACCIOLO, A. ARONCO, G. B. B. B.

PREZZI (tutti compresi)

Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	1	Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	1500
Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	2	Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	1000
Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	3	Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	500
Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	4	Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	250
Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	5	Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Radio Italiana	150

Per biglietti, programmi e informazioni rivolgersi al Teatro "LA FENICE" - Teatro S. Maria della Salute - Venezia - Tel. 041/520000

Previous page:
Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in the late Forties in a picture by Ghitta Carell, the famous Hungarian photographer, who immortalised the most important personalities of the twentieth century in her portraits.

Theatre-bill of a concert given by Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli with the RAI Symphony Orchestra at the Fenice Theatre in Venice on 16th September 1953, one of the extremely rare instances of cooperation between Herbert von Karajan and the Maestro.

Right:
The "Venturi" Music School in Brescia, where Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli began studying the piano at 4 years of age. With his first teacher, Maestro Paolo Chimeri, he established a very close relationship also on a personal level.

Bottom:
Little *Ciro* at 9 years of age with his mother and Maestro Chimeri in one of the very few family photographs taken during his childhood. Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli had a brother, Umberto, first violin in important orchestras, and a sister, Liliana, who died of pneumonia at only 8 years of age.

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was born in Brescia on 5th January 1920 of Umbrian parents, who had moved to the city in Lombardy just a few months earlier. His father Giuseppe descended from a notable family from Foligno; he had a degree in Law and in Philosophy, practised the profession of lawyer and simultaneously gave lessons in the history of music, theory and harmony, having also obtained a diploma in composition and piano. His mother, Angela Papanoni, spent her childhood and adolescence with her parents and aunts and uncles, first in Terni and then in Bologna; she had obtained a diploma at the teachers' training school, had taken up university studies in literature and mathematics without finishing them, and spent her time educating her children and running the household.

At home, in an environment dominated by an innate predisposition and keen interest in music, little *Ciro* – as Arturo was called for some of his curls which made him resemble *Cirillino*, a then well-known character in "Corriere dei Piccoli" – began studying the piano at three years of age, under the guidance of his father. But it was above all his mother, who exerted a considerable influence on the artistic development of her son and urged him to study the piano, to the point that, apparently, she decided not to send him to school and to educate him herself.



At four years of age, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli gained admission to the "Venturi" Civic Institute of Music in Brescia, as a pupil of maestro Paolo Chimeri, and at seven years of age, on 10th March 1927, he aroused general amazement and admiration when he performed for the first time before an audience, during the recital marking the end of the 1925-26 two-year course of studies. In the spring of 29 he attended private lessons with maestro Giovanni Anfossi in Milan, where his mother accompanied him each week. On 22nd October 1931 he obtained the first-level certificate in piano-forte at the "Giuseppe Verdi" Conservatory in Milan and on 11th June 1934, at only 14 years of age, he concluded the basic cycle of studies, obtaining a piano-teaching certificate. During the same period and the subsequent years he also attended violin courses with maestro Ferruccio Francesconi and organ and composition courses with maestro Isidoro Capitanio.

It was during his frequent visits to Milan that Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli happened to be heard by Maria Lentati de' Medici, a cultured and sensitive expert of musical art. Having recognised that the young pianist had the makings of a future genius, the noblewoman cultivated his natural gift and stimulated his talent; it was she who presented him with his first Steinway baby grand and who played a decisive role in this stage of the Maestro's artistic development.

After distinguishing himself in several national competitions between 1936 and



1938, Benedetti Michelangeli made his appearance on the international scenario; in May 1938 he came seventh, but was the moral winner, in the “Eugène Ysaÿe” competition promoted by the Queen Elisabeth Music Foundation in Brussels, and in July 1939 he was victorious in the Concours International d’Exécution Musicale in Geneva, and was acclaimed by the critics as the new Liszt. The success in Geneva earned him the chair “due to his great renown” at the Conservatory of Bologna.

At the end of January 1942, at the height of the second World War, he was enlisted in the Third Medical Subdivision in Baggio, near Milan. Very little is known of his adventurous experiences during the war, the dubious reconstruction of which is entrusted to the testimonies written by several people very close to him. After 8th September 1943, to



avoid the round-ups carried out by the Germans and the subsequent obligation to report for military service requested by the government of the Republic of Salò, he took refuge in Borgonato di Cortefranca, in Franciacorta, as a guest in the castle of the Berlucchi family. Here, on 20th of September, in the Church of San Vitale, he was married to Giuliana Guidetti, from whom he was to be legally separated, by deed of the Court of Brescia, on 10th March 1970. During the following months he stayed with his wife in Sale Marasino, in the villa overlooking Lake Iseo belonging to the Martinengo family. He remained there until November 1944, when he was forced to evacuate following an air-raid which hit the building and, among other things, damaged the first “concert grand” that the Maestro had purchased with the earnings from his first concerts. He then moved on to Gussago, to the Togni resi-

dence, where he was found and arrested by the fascists and taken prisoner to Marone, also on Lake Iseo, to the headquarters of the SS. A few days later, thanks to the intervention of the head of the province of Brescia, Innocente Dugnani, he was transferred to the capital of the province, where he remained for some time, hidden in the loft of the Vittoria Hotel.

Despite the call-up and the war, with its tragic events and vicissitudes, Benedetti Michelangeli was able to continue to carry out a limited concert activity, thanks to the protection of the future queen, Princess Maria José, daughter of Queen Elisabeth the Queen Mother of Belgium, who had appreciated his talent at the time of the competition in Brussels. He played at the S. Cecilia Academy in Rome, La Scala in Milan, the “Maggio Musicale Fiorentino” (Florentine Music Festival) and held concerts in various cities throughout Italy and in Switzerland; he made his first appearance in Barcelona (1940) and in Berlin (1943).

During this period he also began to make recordings; his first 78 rpm, for “La Voce del Padrone”, came out in 41. He was to continue his recording activity with His Master’s Voice and Telefunken until the late Fifties.

When the war was over, he went back to teaching – he was assigned the chair of pianoforte at the Conservatory in Venice – and contributed decisively towards the revival of music in his city as Chairman of the “S. Cecilia” Brescian Symphony Concert Society. He held the office until September 1947, when he was forced to resign due to the increasing concert engagements which took him to all four corners of the world: in 1946 he performed at the Royal Albert Hall in London, in 1948-49 he made the first of his numerous tours in the United States (the following tours were in 50, 67, 68, 70 and 71), in 1949 he played in South America and in 1951 in South Africa.

Meanwhile, in 1950, he had obtained a transfer to Bolzano, called upon by the Director of the “Monteverdi” Conservatory, maestro Cesare Nordio, with whom he founded the “Busoni” piano competition. He taught in Bolzano until 1959, supplementing the state courses with those of the private specialisation school he opened in Paschbach Castle, near Appiano, in an attempt to meet the

A rare, tender picture of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli with little Donatella at Villa Berlucchi in Borgonato di Franciacorta in October 1945.



numerous requests from pianists all over the world already holding diplomas, some of whom had already won important competitions, and had consequently not been admitted to the conservatories. These activities were followed in 1952 and in 1953, and then from 55 to 65, by the courses in Arezzo (organised by the local “Associazione Amici della Musica” - Music Lover’s Association - and with the decisive support of a magistrate, Mario Bucciolotti, who was very keen on classical music), from 1960 to 1962 the courses in Moncalieri (financed by FIAT thanks to the good offices of Lidia Palomba) and lastly, in 1965 and 1966 those of the Chigiana Academy in Siena. Michelangeli’s courses were exclusive, intended for not more than twenty-five to thirty pupils; the lessons were personal. The Maestro looked upon teaching as a real mission and a precise moral duty; he devoted himself to it with indefatigable passion and singular and exemplary generosity, always working free of charge.

This intense teaching activity did not prevent Benedetti Michelangeli from making equally frequent appearances in concert halls throughout the world. In 1955 he played in Warsaw (on that occasion he was also a member of the panel of judges of the Chopin Competition); in 1957 he made his debut in Prague and in 1964 in Moscow. Between the end of the Fifties and the early

Sixties, he held concerts in Spain, Germany, Portugal, France, Austria and Switzerland. In 62 and in 66 he performed in the Vatican, first in the presence of Pope John XXIII, then of Pope Paul VI. In 1965 he made his debut in Japan, where he was to return in 1973, 74, 80 and 92. During 1965, on the initiative of maestro Agostino Orizio, the “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” International Piano Festival of Brescia and Bergamo was founded. An unofficial preview of the Festival had been given the previous year with a series of concerts to celebrate the Maestro’s twenty-fifth year of teaching.

His recording activities however dwindled considerably. With the exception of several important recordings in 1965 (published by Decca-BDM), throughout the Sixties he hardly ever set foot in recording studios. This circumstance contributed towards the circulation of numerous pirate editions of his records, against which he fought strenuously by taking legal actions which, however, came to nothing. He started recording again during the Sixties for EMI and for Deutsche Grammophon, the record company with which he collaborated steadily from 1971 until the end of his career.

After having left the Bolzano Conservatory in 1959, Michelangeli planned on setting up a high-level international piano course, in which to accomplish his teaching mission to the full. But the Ministry was slow in recog-

Benedetti Michelangeli performing before Pope John XXIII in the Benediction Hall at the Vatican, on 28th April 1962. The concert was promoted and conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni as a tribute to the Pope from Bergamo, his fellow-citizen.



Benedetti Michelangeli in conversation with Arthur Rubinstein in 1974. The photo was taken by Dr. Marco Miele, the former Director of the Italian Institute of Culture in Tel Aviv, during the reception held at the Italian Embassy at the end of the Festival organised by the State of Israel in honour of the Polish-American pianist.

nising his great merits and in meeting his requests. So he decided to set up a small private school in what seemed to him to be the most suitable place, in the silence of the mountains; he purchased two mountain chalets in Val di Rabbi, on the Tridentine side of the Stelvio National Park; he used one of them as a home and the other as a centre for the courses. Here he spent a brief period of peace and serenity, surrounded by nature in the stillness of the alpine landscapes, the ideal setting for his activity as a musician, enriched in the meantime by a new experience: the harmonisation of nineteen songs of the S.A.T. chorus, which he had begun successfully working together with years earlier, in 1954.

The peace and calm were rudely interrupted on the evening of 13th June 1968. As a partner of the B.D.M. recording company of Bologna Benedetti Michelangeli was involved in the bankruptcy of the latter. Without being over-particular and without paying attention to the clauses of the contract which would have exonerated the Maestro from all liability, the bailiffs served him a precautionary distraintment on his property and on all the proceeds of the concerts that he would have held in Italy, for the amount of eighty-nine million Lire. In addition to the humiliation and moral damage, this caused him considerable financial problems, which forced him to carry out his professional activities abroad. He maintained his residence in Bolzano, but from that moment

on he spent his time between Rabbi and Switzerland and never ever played again in his homeland, except on the occasion of the charity concert at the Teatro Grande in Brescia, in June 1980, in commemoration of Pope Paul VI.

Benedetti Michelangeli entered Switzerland on 24th July 1969 (this is the official date shown on all the documents filed in the registry offices of the various towns in which, one after the other, he was domiciled) and first lived in the Canton of Zurich. Towards the end of September of the following year he obtained a residence permit in Canton Ticino, thanks to the intervention of Gianna Guggenbühl and maestro Carlo Florindo Semini, who put in a good word on his behalf with Dr. Solari of the Federal Police Bureau for Foreign Citizens in Berne. In 1969 and in 1971, together with Semini, he created two specialisation courses in Villa Hélénaeum in Castagnola, the last ones of his career as a teacher. Until September 1974 he lived in Massagno, then in Riva San Vitale and Sagno, where he moved in December 1977. On 1st August 1979 he went to live in Pura, in the rented villa that some time later he was to leave to another great pianist, Vladimir Ashkenazy. He then moved to a house immersed in the shade of the chestnut groves, just a few hundred metres down the road from the previous house; here he spent the last years of his life, far from the hue and cry and the crowds, in almost Franciscan simplicity. The suffering

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Maestro Carlo Florindo Semini in Lugano during the early Seventies.

caused by his precarious health was alleviated by the care and attention of Anne-Marie-José Gros Dubois, who was also his faithful secretary.

His concert activities gradually diminished, but his fame had now taken on the proportions of a myth and each time he performed in public it was an event that made the headlines. In 1977 he held a recital in the Nervi hall in the Vatican (he was to return there ten years later) and in 81 he played at the Auditorium of the RSI (Italian Swiss Broadcasting Station). In 1985 he suffered a hemiparesis following cardiovascular problems; he was absent from concert halls for almost one year and planned to return in the spring of 1986 in Paris and Zurich, where however he was forced to interrupt the concert after the interval. In January 1988 he played in Bregenz and on 17th October the same year he was on stage in Bordeaux, in a dramatic evening performance during which he collapsed in pain over the piano suffering from an aortic aneurysm. He underwent a delicate surgical operation and less than one year later, in the month of June, he went back to perform in Hamburg and Bremen. In June 1992 he held a series of

Ravel were his favourite composers; his performances of their works took him to the incontrovertible heights of international pianism of all times.

In June 1995 he was admitted to the Cantonal Hospital in Lugano after suffering another heart attack. He died during the night between 11th and 12th June. He was buried in the small cemetery in Pura, in a very simple grave which, in accordance with his wishes, is without a headstone.

“For those who remember the Maestro as an outstanding artist and a man of the utmost moral integrity, Memory is not an idle thought but a welcome and concrete participation in the world of the Spirit of which Music and the Maestro himself are now an immortal part”.¹

This was the end of the worldly story of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, a man and an artist who sought Truth through the perfection of his performances, and about whom the truth is yet to be written.

¹ With these words Anne-Marie-José Gros Dubois addressed herself, in her letter of thanks, to all those who shared in her grief for the death of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.



memorable concerts in Munich, accompanied by the Münchner Philharmoniker conducted by Sergiu Celibidache, on the occasion of the Rumanian conductor's 80th birthday. It was probably the apotheosis of a unique and unrepeatable career, which ended in Hamburg on 7th May 1993. Chopin, Debussy, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and



Not only a great pianist but a truly great Maestro

by Marco Vitale*



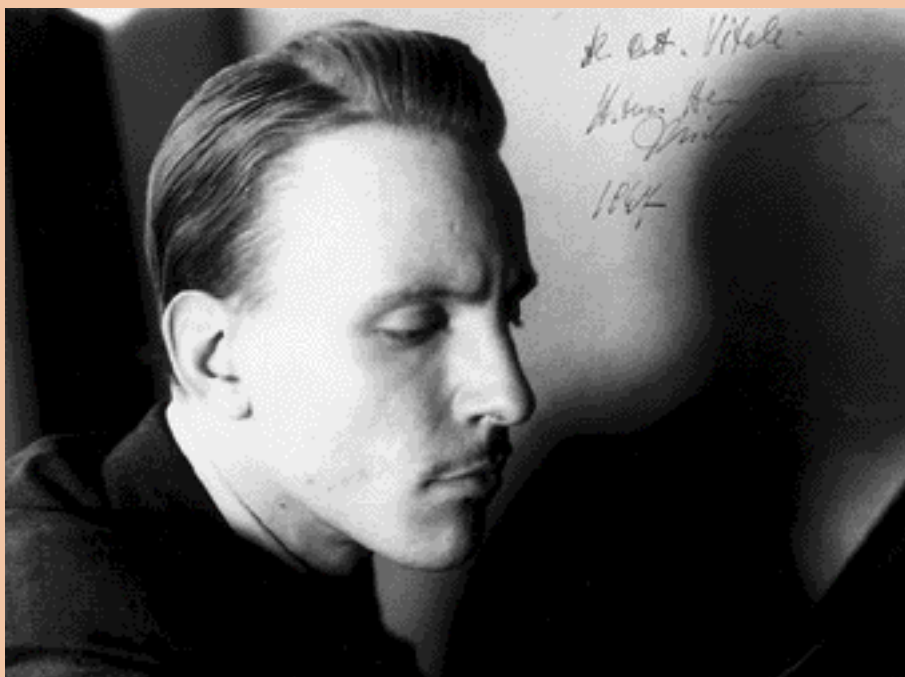
Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli
at the piano in 1943.

Left:
Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in a
"Hollywood-style" picture.

I am not qualified to talk about the Maestro from the point of view of his piano-playing. I am merely one of those enthusiasts who Lidia Kozubek mentions right on the last page of her book: “Despite the fact that his extremely reserved behaviour did nothing to further his popularity, connoisseurs and enthusiasts of his art went on pilgrimages to various countries just to be able to hear him play”. In a certain sense I represent those returning from Bregenz, from the unforgettable concert in Munich with Sergiu Celibidache, from Lugano, from Bremen and from Hamburg. “Pilgrimages” Lidia Kozubek called them (Lidia Kozubek, the Maestro’s Polish pupil, wrote a good book entitled *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Come l’ho conosciuto - Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. As I Knew Him -*, published in Japanese in 1992, while the Maestro was still alive, in Polish in 1999 and in Italian in 2003, L’Epos publishers), and she described them very well, because those were not journeys in search of fan worship, but, on the contrary, in search of spirituality, contact with mystery and the divine through music, feelings that nobody was able to arouse like Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. As a scholar of leadership and professional ethics, the Maestro always fascinated me, not only as an unparalleled musician, but as a man, an educator, an example of coherence and depth. His way of being a man of our day and age but shunning the perverse characteristics of our times: superficiality, haste, marketing, avidity. As the chairman of an important Milan music company I am devastated by the greed of many of today’s music stars who, for the most part indirectly financed with public money, demand appearance fees higher than the sums paid to football stars that for some time now we have been criticising. At times like these I think of the extraordinary unselfishness and generosity of the great Brescian Maestro, documented by numerous sources; his so very generous teaching commitments (his high-specialisation schools were always free of charge), but here too without compromise, without ambiguity, without convenience either for himself or for his pupils. Years ago I attempted to set up a foundation named after Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in Brescia, the Maestro’s and my home

town, with the aim of collecting all the documentation concerning him and, above all, of keeping his ideas and his teachings alive by means of concrete accomplishments. In the proposal-document that I sent round, I wrote: “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was not only a great pianist, but also a great musician and a man of profound humanity, spirituality and religiousness, often disregarded and distorted by the press. He was one of those rare people who, with his art, gave an insight into the supernatural. His memory, rendered alive and operative, can be an exceptional incentive for promoting studies and authentic musical culture. [...] If nothing serious is done, his memory will fade in a few years time, and will remain alive for just a handful of enthusiasts. As a community, and as the city where he was born, we will have cast to the wind a unique opportunity to contribute towards the revitalisation of an authentic musical culture. As people, we will have the moral responsibility of not even trying to do anything”.

I tried, unsuccessfully. I stopped trying when I realised that the people I counted on in Brescia were people more interested in speculating on Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli’s memory than in keeping it alive and materialising it in something live and topical. I should like to take the opportunity that has been offered by the Banca Popolare di Sondrio (SUISSE) to document an aspect of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and a phase of his life and his activity which to my mind have been ignored and which highlight the figure of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli as a truly great Maestro and an example of outstanding moral and professional rectitude. When Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli - one of my idols and not only musical - died, I was struck by the fact that nobody remembered his extremely important contribution to the rebirth of musical life in the post-war period. This gap appeared evident despite the fascinating exhibition and rich catalogue that Brescia dedicated to him at that time. And yet I have vivid recollections of the very substantial part that Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli played towards the rebirth of musical life in the city. I was only a boy at that time, but I very clearly remember the magic short-lived meetings, along with my father, between the Maestro and the



other generous people who, during that period, devoted great efforts towards making musical life flourish again in Brescia. My father was one of these people, and among the papers that he left I found a dossier relating to the years in which, as an active member of the board and, later, as chairman, he did everything in his power to develop the “S. Cecilia” Brescian Society of Symphony Concerts, of which the “honorary”, but extremely active, chairman from 1940 to 18th September 1947 (this is the date of his letter of resignation) was precisely Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. So I started skimming through that pile of old, untidily filed papers and I found ideas, notes and documents that seemed to me to be interesting and, sometimes, very touching testimonies. This is the explanation of the genesis of this essay, and at the same time an explanation of its incompleteness and partiality. All I can do is merely offer what I have found, with the hope that this material may be of some use to whoever undertakes the task of professionally drawing up the detailed story of the life of the Maestro, which we are still anxiously awaiting.

Brescia had counted for many years on the Concert Society specialising in chamber music, whose initial statutes of incorporation had been approved by the shareholders’ Meeting on 20th May 1914. Consequently, it was created at the beginning of the First World War. And, by disconcerting analogy, it

was at the beginning of the Second World War, between 1939 and 1940, that a new musical initiative took shape. Its primary objective was to develop the skills and knowledge of symphony music in the city, by creating a permanent string orchestra. In fact, its original name was: “S. Cecilia” Permanent String Orchestra. It was created for cultural purposes only, for playing music, and not for organising concerts. Its main advocates included the lawyer Pedrali Noy, in whose home the first performances were held; Maestro Ferruccio Francesconi, who conducted the first ensemble; and the very young (he was only twenty years old at the time) Maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. The members of the first steering committee included the lawyer Pier Paolo Cicognini, engineer Emilio Franchi, engineer Emilio Pisa, Dr. Angelo Vitale, the surveyor Arturo Gatti, and Maestro Gino Francesconi. The lawyer Cicognini was the first chairman, while the “honorary” chairman from the very start was Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. As will be seen, he was in actual fact a highly active chairman, and a point of reference and guidance especially as regards the choice of performers and musical programmes, both during the first period (1940-1943) and during the period of resumption, marked by the first concert of the season, on 16th December 1945, and until the 1947-48 season. As early as the 1941-42 and 1942-43 concert seasons an

Photographic portrait of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli taken in 1947, with a handwritten dedication from the Maestro to Angelo Vitale.



important change had taken place. From an association dedicated to creating a permanent string orchestra, “S. Cecilia” also became an organiser of concerts, with the presence of famous soloists and ensembles. The work carried out by Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was decisive in identifying performers and programmes and in establishing contacts and arousing interest in the new musical association. Mention was also made of him in 1942 with regard to “an outstanding concert at the Teatro Grande, towards which our great Pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli gave his incomparable, precious and altruistic contribution”. The documents at my disposal do not give any other information about this concert, but it is mentioned in the chronicle of the concerts by Harry Chin and Carlo Palese which accompanies the book *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Il Grembo del Suono (Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. The Womb of Sound)*, Milan, Skira, 1996. The concert was held on 12th or 13th April at the Teatro Grande, with the “S. Cecilia” orchestra conducted by maestro Ferruccio Francesconi. The programme included Beethoven, Concerto op. 73; Grieg, Concerto op. 16, whilst the Maestro added an additional

Scarlatti, Sonata; Chopin, Étude and Waltz; De Falla, *Ritual Fire dance*; Mompou, *Cançion y Danza*; Albéniz, *Malagueña*; Chopin, Mazurca.

At the height of the war, during the early months of 1942, once again on the incentive and suggestion of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, the society purchased a magnificent Steinway & Son concert grand piano. The purchase was made possible by the limited association funds together with a bill of exchange subsidy granted by Banca San Paolo, guaranteed by Pedrali, Franchi, Folonari, Vitale, Cicognini, Francesconi. The bill of exchange was later redeemed with a generous contribution by Pedrali, Franchi, Folonari. Music made its come-back on 29th May 1945 (some sources date it as 27th May), with an extraordinary concert at the Grande. The proceeds were assigned entirely to the welfare Committee of the Curia in aid of persons who had been deported to Germany, on their return to their homeland. Organisational recovery was marked by the first post-war meeting held on 29th October 1945. The opening speech, the first report made on the activity of the society, the letter dispatched to the public, the announcement prepared for the press give a clear idea of the history of the association from its foundation and of the objectives and sentiments that inspired the small group of tireless promoters. My papers do not show who made the opening speech. But it was undoubtedly drawn up, as results from the draft with the hand-written corrections, by Angelo Vitale. And if there had been no manuscript to prove it, it would have been sufficiently clear from the warmth with which the document refers to Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and the decisive part attributed to him; these were sentiments and convictions that had been deeply rooted in Angelo Vitale from the first time he heard the Maestro play in 1940. The report, which illustrates the five years of work, which were profitable despite the hardships of the war, began with these words: “The ‘S. Cecilia’ Brescian Society of Symphony Concerts was established in Brescia in 1940 under the unassuming name of ‘S. Cecilia permanent string orchestra’. It gave rise to the setting up of a group of enthusiastic lovers of the musical art and especially the lawyer Carlo Pedrali

Two pictures of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli at the piano during the Fifties.

Noy, in whose home the first rehearsals were held under the guidance of the Maestro Ferruccio Francesconi. Our great pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was its advocate and honorary chairman” (underlining added).

Shortly afterwards it states:

“First and foremost, I should like, if I may, to express, on your behalf and on behalf of the Board of Directors, a word of affection and gratitude to Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. As you know, he, together with the others, was the moving spirit of the institution, even though his incomparable art took him far from the Society. The Directors of the Society are aware of all that he has done for S. Cecilia and of the gratitude that is owed to him” (underlining added).

Further on it states:

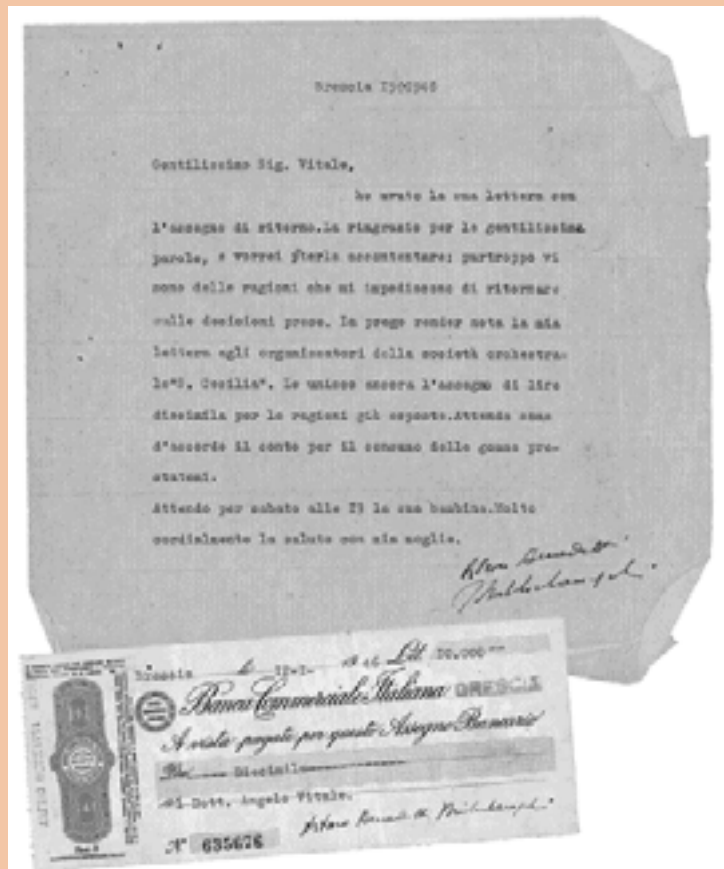
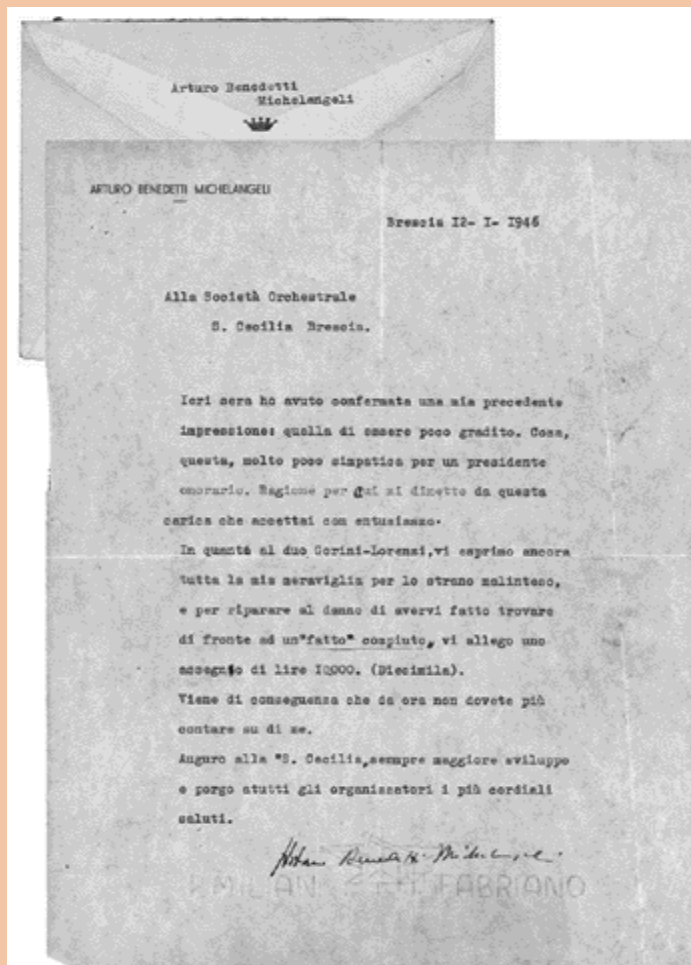
“We should like to recall the wonderful Concert by the Piano duo Sergio Lorenzi and Gino Gorini, devised and organised by Maestro Benedetti, which was performed by S. Cecilia in cooperation with the Concert Society, as was the final grand Concert of the Season with Maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli for both the Societies” (underlining added).

But the tendency was now towards grand music, as was to be attested by the outstanding 1946-47 season. After the aforementioned extraordinary concert in May 1945, the first concert of the season of the resumption, 1945-46, took place on 16th December 1945, with the participation of the violinist Alfredo Poltronieri, with a pro-

gramme based on Bach and Mendelssohn (the overall cost was 51,275.20 Lire). The second concert took place on 6th January 1946 with the “S. Cecilia” orchestra and the female chorus of the Teatro Grande in Brescia, with the participation of the soloists Ciani and Iachia, in *Stabat Mater* by Pergolesi (this time at a cost of 53,410 Lire). The other concerts of which I have documentary evidence are: the third concert, on 20th January 1946, with the piano duo Gino Gorini and Sergio Lorenzi, held in cooperation with the Concert Society, which I should like, if I may, to go back to further on; the fifth concert with the young pianist Agostino Orizio, on 19th March 1946; the sixth concert, on 7th May 1946, conducted by maestro Sergio Failoni, with the participation of the pianist, Paul Baumgartner. The 1945-46 season was already a good season, but the 1946-47 season was to be outstanding.

At the beginning of 1946 a serious crisis sprang up in the relationship between Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and “S. Cecilia”. The crisis began with a letter from the Maestro dated 12th January 1946 in which he announced his intention to resign from the office of honorary chairman and to discontinue his cooperation. He reported a state of general unease, and the feeling of “not being very welcome”. However, the specific fact is that one of the committee members (perhaps, as I seem to understand from the reply, Angelo Vitale himself) must have criticised him for having promoted a con-





cert by the duo Gorini-Lorenzi and undertaken commitments, including economic commitments, heavier than the usual appearance fee for a single soloist, without first coming to an agreement with the steering Committee with regard to this commitment.

Deeply offended, the Maestro enclosed a cheque for ten thousand Lire in the letter to remedy the alleged damage (the appearance fee for a single soloist was usually ten thousand Lire, while the duo Gorini-Lorenzi had cost twenty thousand Lire).

The reply from the committee member Vitale, who in fact during that period was the person who acted as factotum of "S. Cecilia" and who carried out the organising activities in his professional office, was immediate and bore the same date of 12th January. In his letter he expressed his sincere regrets together with words of conscientious self-criticism. The cheque was returned to the Maestro.

At the same time a letter was sent to the duo Gorini-Lorenzi, confirming the commitments undertaken by the Maestro, including

the agreed appearance fee of twenty thousand Lire. Strangely enough, the letter is dated 11th January, one day before the Maestro's letter. However, knowing Angelo Vitale, I think that it is highly probable that, although the letter was dated 11th January, it was written on the 12th, after receiving Benedetti Michelangeli's letter. In short, the committee member Vitale, who, besides absolutely worshipping the Maestro, fully grasped the significance of the outstanding contribution he had made to "S. Cecilia", and wanted to put the matter right quickly. And he immediately confirmed all the commitments with the duo Gorini-Lorenzi, to be able to then say to Benedetti Michelangeli, as he said in his letter of the 12th, that the "matter has been settled".

But the Maestro was immovable and, with a letter dated 15th January 1946, the cheque was once again returned to the sender.

There was only one way out for Angelo Vitale, a person no less stubborn than the Maestro: not to cash the cheque, which still lies among my papers, pinned to the Maestro's letter of 15th January 1946.

What is striking about this exchange of correspondence is to observe that the coherence and severity of the Maestro (he was a

The two letters dated 12th and 15th January, 1946 which Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli sent to the "S. Cecilia" Society in Brescia concerning the concert by the duo Gorini-Lorenzi.

twenty-seven-year old boy conversing with people who were almost twice his age, who were important in their respective professions and in the life of the city, some of whom had played important parts in the Brescian Resistance) were not accompanied by feelings of ill-will on a personal level. That's the way it was and there could be no discussions, but the greetings and personal gestures remained absolutely cordial. Moreover, the disagreement did not distract the Maestro from his professional engagements. He was working on the preparation of the concert to be given by the duo Gorini-Lorenzi and he continued to do so. In fact, a letter in which the Maestro announced the final programme of the concert is dated the same day, 15th January.

The crisis, however, was overcome. The cheque was never collected by Benedetti Michelangeli but it was never cashed and Michelangeli remained chairman (until 18th September 1947) continuing his invaluable work. This episode, therefore, documents at least one case in which the Maestro, at least partially, stepped back on his initial decision. And this was a very lucky thing for Brescian musical life and for "S. Cecilia", because Benedetti Michelangeli's efforts yielded considerable rewards, at least on three fronts.

First and foremost with his concerts. In the 1946-47 season there were two: the first, which met with outstanding success, opened the 1946-47 season on 12th January 1947, at the Teatro Grande, with the conductor Mario Rossi and the "Pomeriggi musicali" Orchestra of the Teatro Nuovo of Milan.

The second on 27th April 1947, also at the Teatro Grande, conductor Nino Sanzogno, again with the "Pomeriggi musicali" Orchestra of the Teatro Nuovo of Milan. The two concerts of the new 1946-47 season had been preceded by an extraordinary concert, on 25th May 1946, with a splendid programme, which went from the Toccata and fugue in D minor by Bach-Busoni to Stravinsky. The concert was offered jointly by "S. Cecilia" and the Concert Society. For non-members admission to the stalls cost a hundred and fifty Lire and to the gallery thirty Lire.

The Maestro's second contribution was in choosing the artists and programmes, in

developing contacts with the world of music and in stimulating the desire to discover new things. In this sense we have already seen the episode of the duo Gorini-Lorenzi. But what appears to me to be particularly significant is the episode of the concert featuring *Pierrot lunaire* by Schönberg. The Roman Philharmonic Academy, which was planning a Schönberg tournée in Italy and was interested in including Brescia in the tournée, and had already contacted the Concert Society, also aroused Benedetti Michelangeli's interest in the project. He was enthusiastic about the proposal and in turn suggested that the concert be organised jointly with "S. Cecilia". He insisted vehemently in this sense, as can be seen in a letter from his wife, Giuliana Benedetti Michelangeli. The letter is not dated, but was undoubtedly written between 23rd February 1947 (date of the letter from the Roman Philharmonic Academy) and 26th March 1947, the date of Angelo Vitale's reply. As can be inferred from the correspondence there were practical difficulties in inserting the Schönberg concert into the already defined programmes. But the concert took place, and jointly, according to the Maestro's wishes.

Benedetti Michelangeli's contribution was significant also in connection with the development of the new, invaluable relationship with the "Pomeriggi musicali" Association of the Teatro Nuovo of Milan directed by Remigio Paone. The Association had been created on 21st November 1946, as a result of the success of the first 1945-46 season, organised by Remigio Paone's Enterprise "Spettacolo Errepi". There were twenty founder members and, as curious proof of what we mean when we talk about Milan as an open city, only six of them were born in Milan. The moving spirit, Maestro Nino Sanzogno, was from Venice, the others came from Brindisi, Rome, Gargano, Cuneo, Orvieto, Monza, Padua, Brissago (Canton Ticino), Lesnà (Dalmatia), St. Gallen (Switzerland), Ancona and Viareggio. A spirit of close cooperation immediately sprang up between "Pomeriggi musicali" of the Teatro Nuovo and "S. Cecilia", as an example of how, also in this day and age, we should work together. Without this cooperation, the extraordinary 1946-47 season would not have been

possible. Just as, moreover, this cooperation was also advantageous for the “Pomeriggi musicali” of the Teatro Nuovo, not only to enable it to balance its accounts better but also to make itself known outside of Milan. This solid mutual interest immediately gave rise to an intense relationship characterised by great cordiality. It was strengthened by mutual fellow feeling and by the friendship which grew up between Remigio Paone and Angelo Vitale. But its innermost strength lay precisely in the active presence of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, who was Paone’s main advisor in the definition of the programmes. And Paone, like the great and shrewd impresario that he was, “used” Benedetti Michelangeli, subordinating certain appearances in Brescia to as many of Benedetti Michelangeli’s engagements in Milan, as clearly emerges from the correspondence.

The third contribution was indirect, undoubtedly endured and not desired by the Maestro, but borne patiently. The managing partners, and especially Angelo Vitale, had established contacts with the competent public authorities to obtain subsidies. In this effort, the presence of the great Maestro was always used to advantage, to try to make them realise that “S. Cecilia” had something special, and that something special was called Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, with the result that the Maestro was occasionally involved in matters of a purely administrative nature, as can be seen in various letters. I cannot find any trace of the two great concerts of 1947 at the Teatro Grande, the first and the fifth of the outstanding “S. Cecilia” 1946-47 season in the chroni-

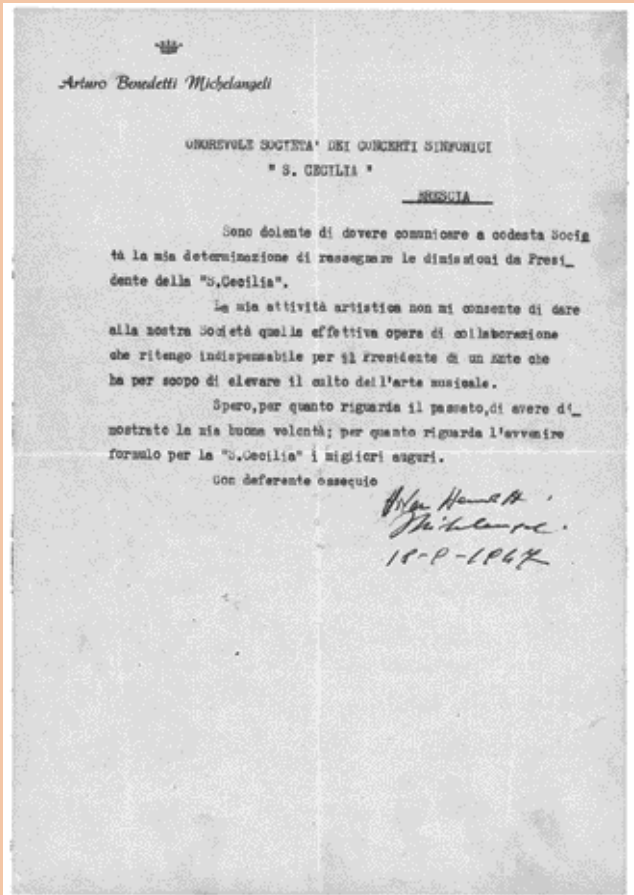
cles of the concerts by Harry Chin and Carlo Palese, included in the aforementioned volume *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Il Grembo del Suono*. This is a lacuna which must be put right. Because those were not just ordinary concerts. They were civic events which aroused emotion, pride and love in the city. They were genuine contributions towards the rebirth of musical life in Brescia and towards the launching of “S. Cecilia”, which, thanks also to these concerts during that period, assumed particular importance. I remember all this very clearly, but it is sufficient to glance through the press of that period to rediscover that atmosphere. I think that a significant demonstration of this is offered by the exchange of correspondence with Professor Alessandro Redaelli of the Civil Hospitals of Brescia who, on being called in to give medical treatment to the Maestro during the concert inaugurating the 1946-47 season and on being asked by “S. Cecilia” to specify his fee, refused to be paid, satisfied by “having contributed, together with you all, in the accomplishment of an artistic event of such importance”.

I should also like to recall the Brescian pianotuner Facchinetti, who was the Maestro’s piano-tuner for those wonderful concerts. I cannot find any traces of his activity in the documents. But I remember him and how attentive and patient he was. I remember my father’s recommendations to stay close to the Maestro and comply with his every wish. Facchinetti’s silent and patient work was undoubtedly invaluable for the successful outcome of those concerts.

And lastly, documentary evidence must be

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli with a group of friends and acquaintances at the end of a concert. Here we can see the conductor of the orchestra Ettore Gracis (second from the right) and Remigio Paone (talking to the Maestro), director of the “Pomeriggi musicali” Association of the Teatro Nuovo in Milan.



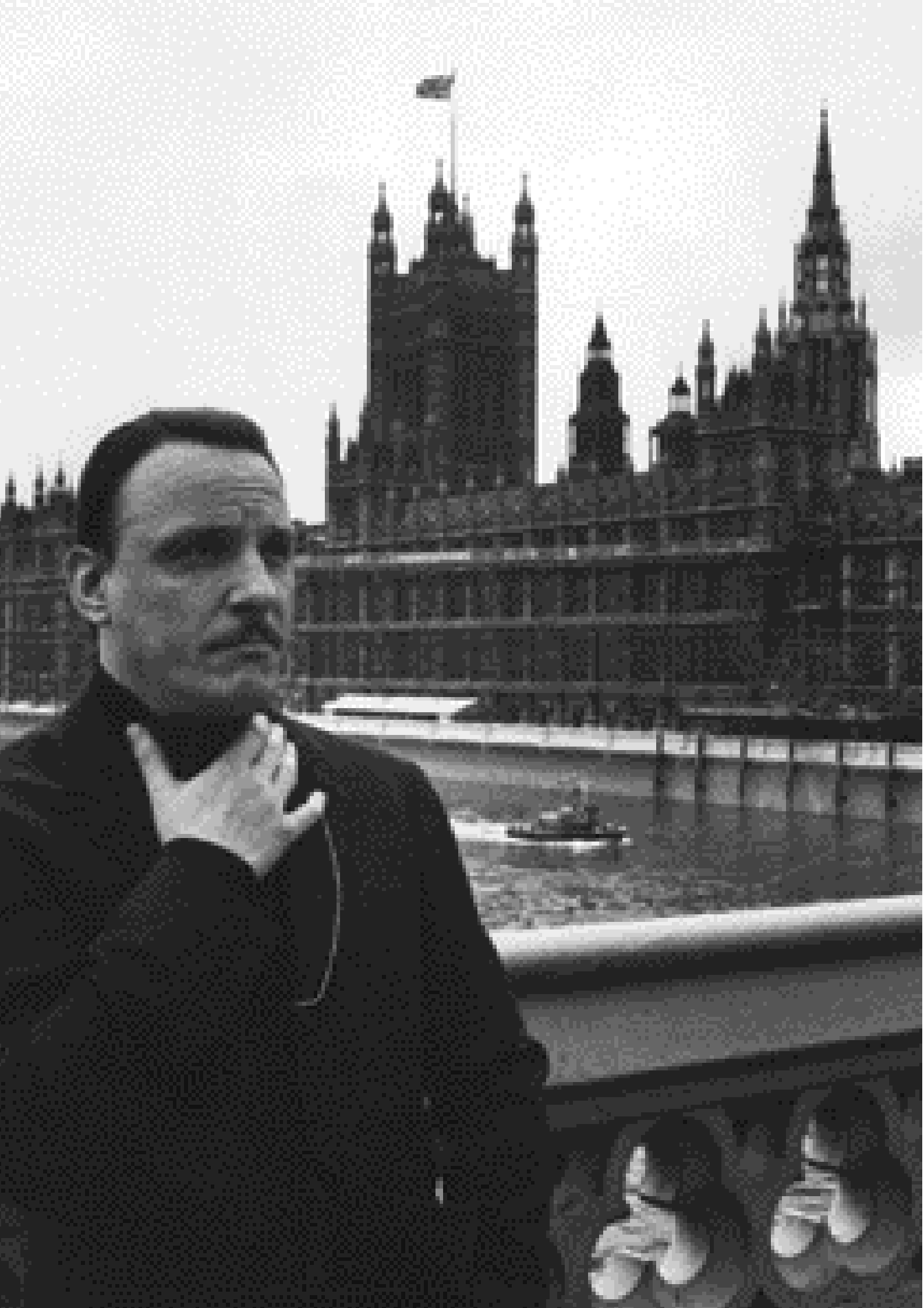


given of a particularly important episode, which was also mentioned in the report for October 1947. In the wake of the enormous enthusiasm aroused by Benedetti Michelangeli's opening concert Mrs. Esterina Conti Togni, of Santelle di Gussago, Brescia, expressed her encouragement and promised her support. This support took on concrete form in an extraordinary contribution of twenty thousand Lire, a very handsome sum in those days, sent on the understanding that she would remain anonymous. This understanding was scrupulously honoured and, after fifty years, it has fallen upon me to open Mrs. Esterina Conti Togni's visiting card, attached to the letter of thanks with a pin which is now rusted with age. I hope that in view of the time that has elapsed, I will be forgiven for now violating that obligation of secrecy. But it is important to remember these people, these examples and this atmosphere that Benedetti Michelangeli, and Benedetti Michelangeli alone, was able to create. However, the profitable Benedetti Michelangeli - "S. Cecilia" association was drawing to a close. The letter from the Maestro announcing his final resignation as chairman of "S. Cecilia" was dated 18th September

1947. This time his resignation was related to the engagements of the great call. Benedetti Michelangeli had become too important for Brescia. He belonged to the world. This awareness was very clear in the letter of reply, drawn up by Angelo Vitale, that the Board of directors sent to him. The simple gift, a souvenir of an outstanding season, was a gold watch, handed personally by Angelo Vitale to Michelangeli's wife, together with the card of thanks, on 22nd September 1947, as is documented by a handwritten note on the envelope from Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli containing his letter of resignation. Even the request by "S. Cecilia" to retain a link as honorary chairman was not convincing. Benedetti Michelangeli was not, and could never have been, an honorary chairman. He was a "Chairman", as he defined himself in his letter of resignation, without adjectives. And so he very courteously turned down the offer to be the honorary chairman of what he significantly referred to as "our society". An important season in the resumption of musical life in the city and throughout Italy had come to an end. But I believe, and it is what I was anxious to point out, that the documents examined prove that Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli was not, as I have happened to read, a Brescian by chance. He was, precisely during the years in which he finally made a name for himself, from 1940 to 1947, a Brescian profoundly linked to the musical life of the city, to which he gave an enormous, generous, unselfish and painstaking contribution. Neither was he an isolated, unsociable, self-centred artist, but a person who had an extremely high opinion not of himself but of music, which he perceived as a way of approaching God. And I should like to conclude with a brief reflection. In 1940 Benedetti Michelangeli was twenty years old. In 1947 he was twenty-seven, not much more than a boy. And yet, on skimming through this correspondence and these documents, from the very start you can breathe an air of magical respect and reverence towards him which is truly remarkable. From twenty years of age he stood out in the eyes of all those who knew him not only as a great pianist, but as a Maestro, born great, ageless.

* *Business economist*

The letter dated 18th September, 1947 with which Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli handed in his resignation as Chairman of the "S. Cecilia" Society in Brescia.



Music like prayer

Interview by Marco Vitale with Maestro Isacco Rinaldi *



Benedetti Michelangeli in front of the Houses of Parliament in London in 1965. During his visit the Maestro gave two concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, on 8th and 17th June.

You were always very close to Maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, practically all your life, cooperating with him especially in the teaching activities that he loved so much. Can you tell us in substantial detail about your experiences with him?

My first memories coincide with yours; 1940-41 and then, especially, 1946-48. I was a child and then a young boy; I remember the magical figure of this very young musical genius and his intense magnetic presence in Brescia. For me this presence was even more important, because I too had devoted myself to studying music and the piano. I was also a precocious and appreciated musician. I also remember that during that period in Brescia I was awarded a prize for a local competition by a panel of judges of which the Maestro was also a member. In 1945 I passed my 5th year examination in Pianoforte at the Parma Conservatory with full marks and honours, earning myself the flattering nick-name of “little Mozart” given to me by the director of the Conservatory. In 1946, at fourteen years of age I was employed as organist at Brescia Cathedral, where I remained until 1961. At sixteen years of age I passed my 8th year examination in Pianoforte at the “Arrigo Boito” Conservatory in Parma, obtaining full marks and honours in all the examinations and the following year my diploma examination in Pianoforte with full marks. This paved the way for me towards the decisive meeting of my life, the meeting with Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. At that time the Maestro had already held the chair at the State Music Conservatory for some years (from 1939) first in Bologna (where he had been called upon due to his great renown by the director Cesare Nordio) and then, from 1950 in Bolzano, where he also held a specialisation course.

It was his wife, Giuliana, who suggested that I request an audition with the Maestro to take part in his specialisation course. That was what I did with great emotion and reverential fear. The Maestro answered me promptly and fixed me an audition in Bolzano. That was in 52, the Maestro was thirty-two years old and I was twenty. On the appointed day I arrived at the Conservatory in Bolzano and waited from 3 o'clock to 7 o'clock in the evening, but the Maestro did not turn up. I went back to Brescia, feeling



very downcast and dejected, as you can well imagine. However, shortly afterwards the Maestro telephoned me to ask why I hadn't turned up at the appointment. One of us had got the hour wrong, but the only important thing for me was that the Maestro fixed me another appointment. I rushed to Bolzano again. And this time the meeting took place, and it was unforgettable. I knocked on the door that the porter had indicated to me, saw a boy and, thinking that I had made a mistake, was about to turn away, apologising. But it really was the Maestro. He invited me to sit at the piano while he sat in a corner and listened to me playing for an hour and a half without uttering a word. In the end, staring at me with a look that went straight through me, he asked me: “But exactly what do you want from me?”. This was my first impact with his essential, penetrating, radical way of going straight to the point without beating about the bush, which was one of the fundamental features of his personality. I don't remember the exact answer I stammered out at that time. But I know now for certain what I should have replied: “Maestro, I'm here to learn music, not the piano, but music”. What music is, and what part it plays in man's life; to understand why it is music that makes us feel the sense of the divine more and better than any other thing; why everybody has a right to music; why music has to speak to the heart and not to the mind (according to the note by Beethoven at the foot of the *Missa Solemnis*: “Springing from the heart, it may reach the heart”); why music exists not when we talk about it or when we write it but when we play it (from a grand concert to a children's chorus, or the S.A.T. chorus); why music requires an “affective sharing”

Maestro Isacco Rinaldi at the piano during a session of the specialisation course in Arezzo in 1955.

(*Liebesgemeinschaft*) between the performer and his audience. All this, in fact, is what I learned from the Maestro, much, much more than improving my piano-playing technique, much, much more than at that time I could ever have imagined and hoped for. But from him I learned many other things, from the standpoint of human relations and professional rectitude and precision. As for his relationship with his pupils, the most surprising thing was his humility and his open-mindedness, which were not in contrast with his severity; indeed, they explained it and justified it. The first audition of an hour and a half also gave an insight into this great quality of the Maestro, which I was later able to experience and examine closely on many other occasions.

When I had finished the Maestro said to me: “Good, prepare yourself by studying Beethoven’s Sonata in F major n. 5 *Primavera* for violin and piano and César Franck’s Sonata for violin and piano”, two stupendous musical compositions, which I later also performed in my first concerts. This was the beginning of the relationship between us, which lasted for forty-three years and was interrupted only by his death on 12th July 1995.

Now tell me in greater detail about your teaching experience.

I attended the specialisation course in Bolzano and then the summer course in Arezzo, interrupting all my concert activities, and concentrating on studying and on the endeavour to assimilate the special rela-

tionship with music that radiated from the Maestro (“trust in music” he loved to repeat). Then I became his assistant both in Bolzano and in Arezzo in 1959 and in 1960. He paid me regularly (he used to give me fifty thousand Lire) and I settled in Appiano, where the new school was located. The specialisation course moved to Paschbach castle, which belonged to the Province, in Appiano near Bolzano, near Lake Kaltern at an altitude of 416 metres above sea level, among the vineyards. The atmosphere of the course was severe and demanding, but also very serene. The pupils adored the Maestro because they felt him close to them, due to that humility and devotion I spoke about previously. And he perceived this great, sincere affection of his pupils and I believe that this did him good. He loved being with his pupils, eating (he was a connoisseur of good food and an excellent cook), going for walks, joking, chatting, playing ping-pong or sitting, all together, on a beautiful summer night contemplating the stars. Definitely no-one who had attended his schools can accept the cliché of a bad-tempered, unsociable, egoistic man that was pinned on him especially by those who did not know him, or left him all alone, or criticised him when he was alive, and then pounced on his memory, for their own gain, when he passed away, like vultures. He was always ready to help his pupils, who needed advice and explanations concerning their studies. For all the pupils he represented a living example of devotion to music and study. He showed them, not so much by words but by behaviour, the path to follow in



Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli with some of the pupils of the course in Arezzo in 1962 during a stroll in the Tuscan countryside.

order to achieve positive improvements. As I mentioned previously, I also followed him to the summer school in Arezzo. Thanks to the Association “Amici della Musica” in Arezzo, the Maestro had started up a specialisation and piano interpretation course in that city, which he was especially fond of. It was a summer course, addressed to Italian and foreign students holding a diploma and was completely free of charge (several pupils were even guests of the Maestro at his own expense. The Maestro did not receive compensation but, on the contrary, shouldered part of the expenses for the financially weaker pupils). The first course took place from 26th July to 31st August 1953 with 25

time and a limitation to the number of pupils admitted, which was hardly ever more than about thirty. But the applications for admission were much more numerous. Consequently, many were rejected, to the great regret of the Maestro, who always maintained: “Everybody has the right to play music; music is for everyone”. These were the factors (outstanding success, the need to harmonise the teaching activities in Bolzano and Arezzo more closely, the chance to institutionalise and stabilise the initiative and expand its dimensions with extraordinary positive potential throughout the international world of music) which induced the Maestro and the Association



pupils. It was interrupted in 1954 and 1955 due to the Maestro’s illness (tuberculosis). It was resumed in the summer of 1956 (20th July – 20th August) with 30 pupils. And it continued, with growing success, in 1957, 1958, 1959 (from 15th July to 30th September with 30 pupils from 11 different countries: Italy, Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Poland, United States, Turkey) and in 1960. I helped the Maestro as assistant and executive manager of the courses during 1959 and 1960. The atmosphere of the course in Arezzo was as pleasant as the one in Bolzano, perhaps with a more international component. It was an exacting task for the Maestro also because he devoted precisely the summer period that is usually dedicated to relaxation, to these schools free of charge. His lessons were always individual and therefore required an enormous amount of

“Amici della Musica” of Arezzo to develop the project for an “International Piano University, for pianists with diplomas, under the control of the Ministry of Public Education, like the State conservatories, but under the exclusive pedagogic and artistic guidance and responsibility of Maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli”. Nowadays we would call it: a great international Master of Piano, directed by the greatest pianist in the world who, even though still young (in 1959 he was not yet forty years of age), already had twenty years of teaching activity behind him, in which he had proved to possess not only an extraordinary teaching vocation, but also exceptional generosity. No other country in the world could offer such a unique possibility. For this reason, the request submitted by the Association “Amici della Musica” of Arezzo to the competent Ministry rightly refers to the

A smiling Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli between Isacco Rinaldi (left) and the secretary of the course in Arezzo in 1959.

“immense prestige throughout the world” that the initiative would have brought to Italy. The reply was total silence. The competent Ministry gave no reply or even the slightest sign of life. During 1959 and 1960 the Ministers of Public Education were Aldo Moro, Giuseppe Medici and Giacinto Bosco. It was this silence and this incredible discourteous behaviour which led the Maestro to end his public teaching experience, which culminated in 1960 with his resignation from his teaching post at the conservatory. I read that Cesare Nordio, director of the Conservatory in Bolzano, who had taken steps in the same direction, apparently obtained authorisation from the Ministry to start up a high level international piano course to entrust to him. But it was too late. Besides, after twenty years of great generosity in teaching, the Maestro wanted a school and not just a course. I am not aware of the developments of what I read. But I can only testify that one day, on our way down from the Alps of Poti near Arezzo, he said to me with great bitterness and disappointment: “It’s the end. The company is winding up. All that work and all that effort for nothing!”. It was here that his first real intellectual and sentimental break with Italy as a system began to take shape, and a few years later came to a head when he finally abandoned the country for good in consequence of the well-known judicial affairs. After his resignation there were a few other indecorous initiatives from the Ministry: they offered to send him to Rome to teach at the Academy of “S. Cecilia”, but classified within the institution as a normal schoolmaster. And yet the school of the project of Arezzo would have cost not even one tenth of the smallest detached section of a normal conservatory and would have placed Italy at the centre of worldwide piano teaching. The Maestro did not lose his love of teaching and had other occasions to satisfy this love, but now always on a private basis. He also continued in Arezzo, on a more limited scale, for a number of years, until 1965, I believe. But 1960 marked the end of a great episode, and an enormous opportunity which would have made Italy the centre of worldwide pianism was lost.

After your teaching experience came to an

end, how did your relationship continue?

On the recommendation of the Maestro, in 1960 I had taken part in the competitive examination for the post of Piano teacher at the Conservatory in Ferrara and had won the competition. It seemed only obvious and natural to me that I should leave Appiano and move to Ferrara. This annoyed the Maestro because he thought that I would have continued to stay in Appiano, and go back and forth. But then, on the occasion of one of his concerts at the Fenice Theatre, I met him and we cleared up the misunderstanding completely, which led to the full recovery in our relationship. We also cleared up the matter of my attending his concerts. In the past he had forbidden me to go and listen to his concerts. I asked him the reason for this prohibition. And he replied: “Because you must play the way I tell you to play and not how you hear me play”. And I retorted: “But Maestro, I need to hear you play, not so much in order to learn, but for the joy of hearing you play music”. Some time later I received an invitation to one of his extraordinary concerts in Lugano, for Sunday 5th April 1981. He had booked me a seat right in front of him, so that during the concert we looked at each other repeatedly. I attended many of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli’s concerts. But that concert, that evening was absolutely memorable. The programme included the two Sonatas by Beethoven opus 26 and 22, the Sonata in A minor D. 537 by Schubert and the four



Ballades opus 10 by Brahms. I am certain that many people from Lugano still remember that extraordinary evening. Always outstanding, that evening he was divine; you could feel a mysterious contact with something that was beyond us all, even beyond the Maestro himself. It seemed to us, that

Benedetti Michelangeli during the concert held on 7th April, 1981 at the auditorium of the RSI (Italian Swiss Broadcasting Station) in Besso.

evening, that he had offered us his soul. Just as I was about to leave, feeling almost humbled, the loudspeaker called out: "Maestro Isacco Rinaldi is kindly requested to go to Maestro Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli". I rushed to him and we hugged each other in an extraordinary, intense embrace. I had never seen him so overjoyed, so serene, so profoundly happy. He too felt that that evening he had truly achieved what for him was: playing music. He kept me there for a few minutes, then he took leave of me, saying: "I have to leave you now. See, they have brought my supper; I'll have a bite to eat then I'll get back to work". I was astounded; after that miracle and that triumph the Maestro, with great humility, got back to work again for the next concert. I read that maestro Giulini apparently declared that, playing the piano was suffering and torment for the Maestro. One would have to know in what context and with what meaning this phrase was pronounced. But one thing is certain: that evening in Lugano for the Maestro playing the piano was no suffering; on the contrary, it was profound, intimate, genuine joy. And so it was joy many other times. The Maestro had a natural very happy relationship with the piano, an instrument which "with hard work" had enabled him to discover and reveal the most intimate and true emotions hidden in music for the joy and happiness of us all. There were other things that made him suffer, but certainly not the piano. Whenever he was unable to reach the level of quality that he aspired to, when the work was incomplete he was dissatisfied. But it was not due to an anxious desire for perfection as an end to itself, as many have ensinuated, but because he was always in search of the truth, of what the author does not write, in that it is implicit, in the relationship existing between the various elements that come into play, but which should be revealed out of absolute respect for music, for the audience, for the moral and professional duty of excellence. "Never leave anything to chance", he told me that same evening in Lugano. I found out later that the great Benedetti Michelangeli had been in Lugano for a week, shut up in the auditorium, with his piano tuner, preparing that concert, which opened up our souls towards the supernatural.

We are now nearing the final phase of this extraordinary life...

In the meantime, the Maestro had broken away from Italy for good, while in 1969 I had won the competitive examination for the position of director of the Conservatory of



Modena, where I had the chance attempt to introduce some of his teachings, some of his professionalism, some of his love for music into the activity of that institute. We continued to see each other, but it became increasingly difficult. I had to go to visit him in Pura. In 1984 and 1985 the Maestro suffered a second serious misfortune in terms of health, of which little or nothing is mentioned in the texts that I have had the opportunity to read, also because those who took care of him tried to keep it hidden. He suffered a severe form of paresis, which for a certain period robbed him of the power of speech and totally paralysed his right hand. When he began to recover I went to visit him and found him very sad and bitter. "Once more – he said – I am forced to start all over again, like a baby". It was then that I began to think that it was necessary to free him from the (economic) obligation to give concerts. I returned, this time with other incentives, the idea of a big school where the Maestro, freed from economic needs thanks to a satisfactory remuneration, could concentrate on the task of conveying his extraordinary, unrepeatabe relationship with music and limit his concert activities, as he desired, to a minimum.

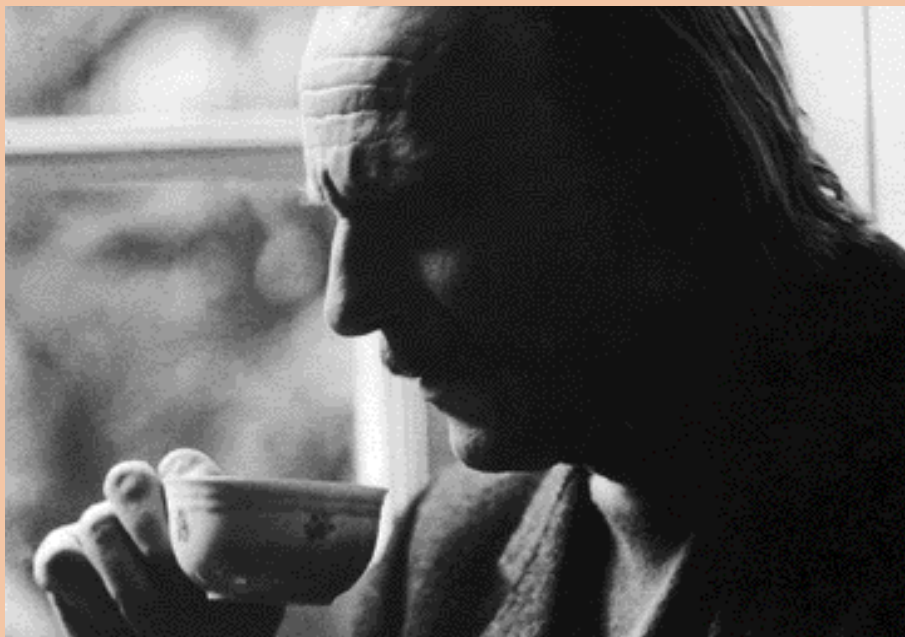
His return to the concert world took place

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and the piano-tuner, Guido Vicari, in what was probably the Maestro's last photograph, taken in Pura in January 1995.

in Zurich on 16th May 1986, with a programme of Chopin, op. 35, Debussy, *Images* Series I and II; the second part, which contemplated Ravel's *Valses Nobles* and *Gaspard de la Nuit*, did not take place. I was there and, knowing that just a few months earlier his right hand and his speech had been paralysed, I realised perfectly what an enormous effort that concert must have been for him. In addition, the temperature in the hall was high, and the humidity very high, and the piano was in bad condition. I greatly admired his strength of mind in bringing to completion the first part of a concert which, in no way, could have been continued. That evening I loved him more than usual and deeply detested several of the vultures who hung about the hall, one of whom came to me and said: "He is not himself any more". I cannot find this concert in the aforementioned chronology by Harry Chin and Carlo Palese, and that should be put right because this was a highly significant concert. The suffering caused by his illness had carried him even higher. In the meantime, in 1984 I had left Modena and accepted the management of the "Gaetano Donizetti" Istituto Musicale Pareggiato in Bergamo, an institute of great prestige and historical renown (it was established in 1804). I did so also in order to be close to the Maestro and to be able to go and visit him. I often went from Bergamo to Pura to see him. Even though he was, as ever and more than ever, a man of few words, we spoke

about many things. He was well-informed about everything. Above all, he asked me lots of questions about Brescia, about Lake Garda (which he loved, especially Limone), and about Bergamo, where some years earlier he had held a specialisation course, moreover arousing very little local interest. He retained his old love for good food and for *Formula One* and fast cars.

I attempted to propose an advanced specialisation course directed by the Maestro in Bergamo, also in order to free him from the need to give concerts. I suggested organising it together with the Gioventù Musicale musical youth group (of which Bulla was the chairman). I don't know whether the Maestro would have accepted. I never spoke to him about it, because he was not a person to whom you could propose a simple hypothesis. If the project had been finalised, we would have submitted it to him. But the project did not materialise; it fell through due to the ostracism of the local musical circles. When I finally spoke to him about it he said: "I have given up these activities. You do it". Then, in 1988 the Maestro suffered serious heart failure followed by risky major heart surgery. I met him for the last time about six months after the operation. It was a very sad meeting. He received me in his home in Pura, in his small room unadorned like a monk's cell. His trustworthy piano-tuner, Tallone, told me that he was a Franciscan tertiary. His funeral took place with Franciscan simplicity, with the coffin resting on the

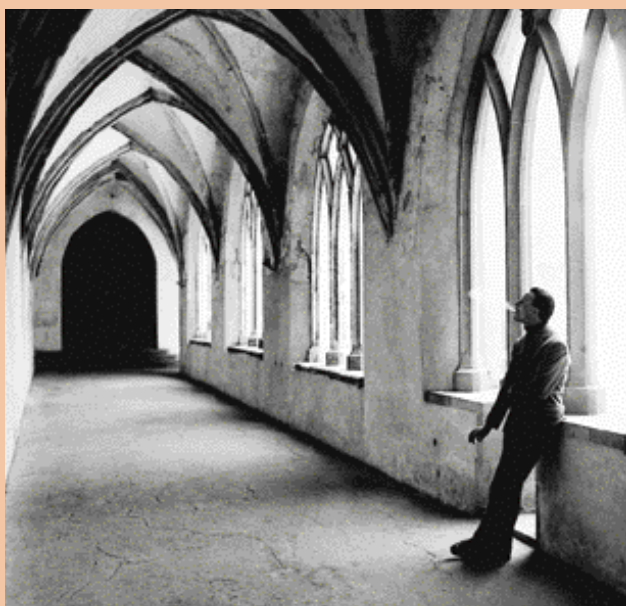


A private picture of the middle-aged Maestro.

The Maestro during a relaxing break, accompanied by the ever-present cigarette.

floor of the altar. Many years earlier he had very often stayed, for periods of regeneration, in the Franciscan convent of La Verna. I don't know whether he really was a Franciscan tertiary, but I have never had the slightest doubt that he was, in substance, a true monk; for him, working was like praying. I don't want to talk about the very last few years, which were very sad for him. I didn't go to visit him in Pura any more because I didn't want to add sadness to sadness, and because I disagreed with the way he was almost segregated by Marie-José Gros Dubois and Mrs. Lotti Lehmann. But I attended his concerts (those in Munich in 1992 on the occasion of Celibidache's eightieth birthday were memorable). I wrote to him keeping him informed of my activities and telephoned the ladies to find out about him and to confirm that they could rely on me for anything that was needed. But I received only evasive and reassuring answers: "The Maestro is well, the Maestro is fine". When he lost the house in Pura and especially the alpine chalets in Rabbi, which he loved so much, he suffered tremendously. Just as the thought that nothing would have remained of his great divine effort of teaching music made him suffer. Perhaps, by joining forces and rallying Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's numerous real friends, it would have been possible to ensure that things turned out in a different way.

I remember Benedetti Michelangeli very young, from 20 to 27 years of age in Brescia,



and I have had the opportunity of analysing the original documents of that period, which bear witness to his activities not only as a concert pianist but also as a promoter and organiser of the musical activities in Brescia. They reveal the figure of an already great artist, full of verve and generosity, and I have attempted to illustrate and document this in a short essay that you have seen. You associated with him also at the height of his maturity when he was engrossed in his great concert and teaching activities. And you later associated with him also in the final stage of his life. What similarities and differences, what continuity and discontinuity do you see between these phases of his life? You will have realised that I am trying to understand which of Benedetti Michelangeli's values, convictions and sentiments remained unchanged over the course of his life, over and beyond the inevitable adjustments that the various phases of life bring with them. His basic conceptions of music and life remained extraordinarily stable and consistent. As you wrote, right from a very early age he was "not only a great pianist, but a Maestro, born great, ageless". It is impressive to reconstruct the outstanding continuity between his ideas about music in the letters and the few works he wrote as a young man, and what he taught in his courses and what he always believed in and bore witness to until the end. The afflictions of life undoubtedly led him to continuous soul-searching experiences, sometimes to painful experiences, but they never undermined his basic values. Without doubt, he also had evolutions and, at times, the odd involution, but only on secondary aspects. On all the basic themes and especially on the one referring to music, his coherence over time is astounding. I am talking about his basic concept of music and its relationship with life and not about his stylistic and interpretative evolution, which was obviously important and had its phases and its evolutions.

What was music for Benedetti Michelangeli? Everything. Music was his whole life. In 1954, when he was forced to give up all his activities due to tuberculosis, he wrote to the mother of one of his pupils very dear to him: "It has been nine long months since I

abandoned everything and, by everything, I mean the thing most dear to me, my only reason for living: Music". He was a cultured, well-informed, inquisitive person, with numerous interests and certainly not the "grumpy, ill-mannered person" that they tried to have us believe. But after all, there were only two really essential things for him: music and teaching. All of music, not only the piano. The Maestro had studied not only composition but also the violin. His sense of legato derived from the violin, the organ and the human voice. Certain timbres, uniquely his, do not derive from the piano but from other sources, from other stimuli which he applied and brought to the piano. He was a complex and cultured person. He knew many things. But about music he knew absolutely everything. He had an enormous musical knowledge and, contrary to the nonsense that has been written about him, an immense repertoire.

What was the piano for Benedetti Michelangeli?

It was simply an instrument, undoubtedly, but an instrument without which you cannot play music. And therefore an essential element. It was like the S.A.T. chorus for mountain songs. If the instrument has a perfect intonation, like the S.A.T. chorus, the mountain songs are wonderful. If the chorus is out of tune or not well blended, the singing is awful. Beethoven was practically born together with the piano. His piano compositions were also a continuous search for the expressive possibilities of the new instrument. Until his 111, where he drew from the new instrument everything that no-one, perhaps not even he himself, thought possible up till a few years earlier. The instrument must be perfect to be able to obtain the maximum from it. The attention he paid to the instrument, which some idiots wrote about as a sort of mania, was respect for music, for the audience, for playing music. It was the natural consequence of his need to express the contents of music to the full. And at the same time it was a constant search for new possibilities of expression. The piano is an extremely complex instrument, also from the mechanical standpoint, and is very sensitive to humidity, cold and to outdoor conditions in

general. In order to understand that the attention he paid to the piano was not a mania, as several stupid critics would have had us believe, it is sufficient to read what the great technicians who cooperated with him say on the subject. Angelo Fabbrini, for example, with great force, said: "For him, the piano was like a huge violin; he was there to heal all its slightest disturbances and was capable of experiencing them together with the instrument that he loved and hated (because it was the source of his torments). He lived like a great violinist lives with his Stradivari and we, who have worked with the Maestro, were a bit like the lute-makers of his instruments. He was a great example for all those who worked with him, as well as for the piano manufacturers, who held the Maestro in the highest esteem".



What was teaching for Benedetti Michelangeli?

I don't think I need to repeat but merely to underline once more that teaching for him was an integral part of playing music. Playing music also means teaching music. For him the two things were indissoluble, right from the very start. In 1943 his friend Angelo Corelli (the Maestro was 23 years old) wrote in his diary: "Today he spoke to me about his great interest, or should I say, love of teaching". Hence the great length of time, the great passion and the great generosity lavished on teaching.

He was naturally very demanding, both with himself and with everybody. He had great respect for work and did not tolerate lapses in this sense. But he had great respect for his pupils. He wanted it to be the pupil who was the one to discover the solution and not for it to be imposed upon him by the teacher. He wanted us to discover what is in the text. He used to say that playing music is like

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli "conducting" several members of the S.A.T. chorus in Madonna di Campiglio, on 13th September, 1976, on the occasion of the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the chorus. The pianist's relationship with the association of Trent began in March 1946, continued cordially and profitably for many years and led to the harmonisation of 19 mountain songs.

slowly climbing up a mountain which, little by little, captures you. You must let yourself be captured, “put your trust in music”. He felt and conveyed great joy whenever a pupil played particularly well. He was a person and a teacher of incredible tenderness.

Also for this reason, when he saw that this love and generosity of his were neither understood nor appreciated by those who should have understood and appreciated them, he resigned from his post as conservatory professor.



How do you explain his love for mountain songs?

I don't know how to distinguish between his love for mountain songs and his love for the S.A.T. chorus. The Maestro had studied composition, he knew how to write music and, during the early years, he also wrote music. He harmonised various mountain songs for S.A.T. (about twenty). He was attracted by the mysterious perfection of the singing in tune of the S.A.T. chorus. Those choruses represented a magic combination of gentle harmonies with an extraordinary instrument. He had some of his pupils listen to performances of the S.A.T. chorus both in order to illustrate the distinctive repertoire and to let them hear and become aware of (learn) the outstanding emotional capacity of the natural intonation expressed by the human voice and which only the human voice is capable of expressing to the full.

Can you render an account of these courses in the balance? What did they produce?

What is left? What is the main heritage that Benedetti Michelangeli left you personally?

I believe that in the official schools, in the conservatories that teaching, those courses did not produce anything. They are firmly impermeable to these phenomena. It is like asking yourself what Don Milani's school in Barbiana has left in the official school. Whereas, those courses left a great deal to all the pupils who attended them. And, hopefully, through them, have penetrated, in part, also into the methods of teaching and the way of playing music with their own pupils. What the Maestro left me is so great as to make it difficult for me to answer your question. He simply taught me music as a whole. He taught me music like a never-ending discovery, music like the long, slow, patient ascent of a mountain, in search of the most hidden things. And he also left me with the conviction that music is simplicity, clarity and not abstruseness.

You have already said many things about him. But if I were to ask you to express in a single phrase the basic feature of his personality and his behaviour what word or expression would you use?

I would say what I have already said before: work like prayer and playing music like going in search of God.

Let me also say that anyone who worked with him carries within him an indelible lesson of absolute professional seriousness and precision. The myth of the cancelled concerts should also be put back into rightful perspective. Those cancelled concerts were no way near as many as the story would have it and each time there were well-founded and important reasons, related either to his precarious state of health, or to non-reassuring conditions as to the place and the organisation of the concert, or to non-fulfilment of the conditions stipulated by the organisers. As Celibidache said, each time Michelangeli questioned the feasibility of a concert “I sensed that behind it there was a well-founded musical reason and not a whim”.

On various occasions we have experienced common feelings of intolerance for the way Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's personality was depicted by many critics and by the press. I should like to closely examine the

reasons for this intolerance, in order to underline those aspects of the personality and the precepts of Benedetti Michelangeli that we feel have been, if not distorted, at least ignored.

I believe that all this emerges from what we have said up till now. Your analysis of the first period highlights a man of extraordinary generosity. My memories of the specialisation courses and the memory of all the pupils and the testimonies of the organisers of the courses confirm the figure of a Maestro of enormous generosity. I know of no other great Italian musician or performer who has spent so much and gratuitously for young people. But who has ever written this in no uncertain terms? He was a great professional and they described him as a sort of maniac. He was a great all-round musician and they described him as a sort of cold, expressionless virtuoso. Religious feeling was an essential part of his art, but even this fundamental aspect has been ignored. He sought perfection and this was at times almost a cause of derision, without understanding that the perfection that Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli sought was not the perfection of the exhibitionist and the egocentric person, but Evangelical perfection: be perfect, as is perfect the Lord who is in Heaven, He who created you in His own image. You wrote very effectively: he was a man of our day and age but “shunning the perverse characteristics of our time: superficiality, haste, marketing, greed”. It was his rejection of these ills of our time that made him so difficult to understand for those who, on the contrary, are intoxicated by these ills. Benedetti Michelangeli’s mother, Angela Paporoni of Terni, a schoolteacher, was an extremely strict and stern woman. Perhaps this caused feelings of lack of affection in the little Arturo, which found their way into the make-up of his complex personality. But she never had any doubts as to the great vocation of her son and supported him in every way, also at the cost of considerable sacrifice such as allowing him to attend the private school of the maestro Anfossi in Milan, where she accompanied him personally. One day his mother told me about this episode: Arturo was born on 5th January (1920) at 12 midnight; it was a very particular night because, even though it was in the depths of

winter, there was a raging storm with thunder and lightning; at a certain point a flash of lightning accompanied by a roll of thunder exploded with such force as to knock down a painting hanging over the headboard of the bed where the mother lay about to give birth; a few minutes later Arturo was born.

I have thought about this episode many times and about its symbolic significance. Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli is like a summer storm that breaks out on a dark night in the depths of winter, a flash of lightning that lights up the gloomy winter of our mediocrity. For this reason, while his audiences loved him and his pupils adored him, many intellectuals attempted to belittle his character. As Giorgio Pestelli very rightly said (in *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Il Grembo del Suono*): “Benedetti Michelangeli felt out of place in the system; he was not outside of culture, he was outside of the organisation of culture, which is something very different”. As Edmond de Stoutz (the great founder and conductor of the famous Chamber Orchestra of Zurich) said: “They like his way of playing but not his way of being a man because the world is not hon-



An intense picture of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. The photograph was used for the theatre-bill of the recital in London on 8th June 1965 and for a number of covers of EMI record editions, including his recording of the concertos by Rachmaninov and Ravel with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Ettore Gracis in 1957.



est. [...] Michelangeli is like a clear, clean-cut, faceted crystal, and crystal is at the service of light”.

It’s not a question of cultivating myths. Like everybody, Benedetti Michelangeli had his weaknesses, his defects, his manias, his mistakes and his limits. But it’s a matter of reacting against the distortions of his personality that have become prevailing clichés, in spite of the true testimonies of those who really knew him, from Celibidache to Edmond de Stoutz and Alceo Galliera (“He had a beautiful character then and he was certainly not ill-humoured as they made him out to be”), from Giorgio Pestelli (“he was an open-minded, loyal, sociable man”) to his pupils (see the abundant testimonies in *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Il Grembo del Suono*) and to his piano-tuners. Keeping these clichés alive makes it difficult to preserve and transmit the essence of his lesson, which was not a lesson of piano virtuosity, but of music, of humanity and generosity. Because, as Emilia Bonzi (granddaughter of those members of the Lentati family who did so much to help the young Arturo take wing) recalls in her testimony, referring to an unspecified source: “Benedetti was a true musician and not a profiteer of the piano”.

When he suffered a heart attack in Bordeaux on 17th October 1988, he was giving a charity concert for the victims of the flood disaster in Nimes. And his biography is full of acts of financial generosity, from the first documents of “S. Cecilia” cited by you, to all that he did for the specialisation courses and to

numerous free concerts to raise funds for cultural or social purposes. But his financial generosity was merely a manifestation of an even greater generosity, of total generosity. And yet, there are those who have tried to depict him as a spoilt, capricious and exhibitionistic young man.

A few years ago, together we attempted to start up a foundation in Brescia which set itself two main objectives: to meticulously collect all the documentation existing worldwide on Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, to maintain and revive his teaching by means of musical training courses. Unfortunately, the insensitivity of the town where he was born and the petty behaviour of certain people caused the attempt to fall through. Despite this, the efforts of two scholars (Stefano Biosa and Marco Bizzarini) have resulted in the creation of an "Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli" Documentation Centre which is doing an important job in selecting and cataloguing documents and articles, and is also carrying out editorial, journalistic and study activities as well as promoting conferences, concerts and meetings in memory of the Maestro. The Centre deserves to have some public and private financial backing. But the dream of a place of teaching where music and piano-playing is taught as he intended them to be, and where a living memory of him is cherished, has yet to come true. Do you think this is a dream that could still come true, perhaps in Lugano, or do we have to put it back neatly on the shelf?

This is an initiative that we have the moral duty to undertake. I told you about how I tried to set up a new institute for specialisation courses in Bergamo, when the Maestro was alive, also in order to alleviate his last few years of isolation in Pura. But I was unsuccessful. In 1994, with the enthusiastic support of Massimo Rocca, the Mayor of Desenzano del Garda, I started up the “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” International Piano Competition which was held for five years (from 1995 to 2000) and a piano specialisation course aimed at passing on the teachings I received from my Maestro to the young people concerned. I kept Maestro Arturo constantly informed about my activities with telephone calls and letters. In my

The poster of one of the "Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli" International Piano Competitions organised by the city of Desenzano del Garda from 1995 to 2000.

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli walking away from his Jaguar in Lugano, in February 1971. The Maestro had a real passion for cars and possessed more than one Ferrari.

last letter, dated 3rd March 1995, I wrote: "Throughout the period of the event, we felt the beneficial spiritual influence of my incommensurable Maestro Arturo, re-evoked through the teachings that I passed on to them during the course of the lessons. The youngsters fully understood the great value of the humility of the work, and of respect for music". I received letters of appreciation at national and international level. I like to recall the one from Salamita Aronovsky, the founder and chairwoman of the World Piano Competition in London, one of the world's most prestigious piano competitions. Even maestro Orizio wrote me a very pleasant letter of approval. However, the backing for these initiatives dried up with the political change in the local government of Desenzano and vanished completely together with the plan to



set up the "Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli" Study Centre, which was being drawn up and which included among the foundation members and supporters the town council of Desenzano del Garda itself. One of the initiatives carried out during that period which is worthy of mention due to its importance was the exhibition *Gaspard de la Nuit*, where the pages of the musical text of the same name by Ravel were displayed. The text had belonged to Benedetti Michelangeli, and he had given it to me saying: "You keep it". Displayed together with the musical text, full of precious annotations by the Maestro, were several of his portraits and nine collages on the theme of *Gaspard* produced by the painter, Nani Tedeschi. The publishing house Durand of Paris was informed of this latter initiative and did not fail to express its enthusiastic approval and interest. Then came our attempt of a few years ago which you recall and which, nevertheless, fell on deaf ears.

The Documentation Centre in Brescia is doing an excellent job. But as the Maestro used to say, music is made by playing it. The subject of preserving and reviving his extraordinary teachings, by playing music, has remained unanswered. Can it still be done? I no longer believe in miracles but, technically speaking, I must say yes, I believe it can be done. Many of his pupils are still alive and I believe that a number of them would respond to a call of this kind. There is still a lot of material to be studied, such as the piano versions with his annotations. Besides the aforementioned *Gaspard de la Nuit*, the Maestro also left me *Carnaval* op. 9 by Schumann and *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* by Ravel, of extraordinary interest. We should also link the Documentation Centre of Brescia to the school, in order to reconstruct the project we had a few years ago. And then we would need some funds to put the school on a firm footing. It would be wonderful to create it close to his simple grave in Pura. The Maestro's last attempt to create a school that could preserve everything he had done with so much effort was, in fact, precisely in Lugano during 1970 and 1971. But, even though he was alive and still at the height of his prime, this attempt also fell through. Why? Because in order to do something of this kind it is necessary to love music; to believe that we need real musicians and not profiteers of music; it is necessary to believe in the usefulness of all the positive values that he embodied; it is necessary to love the clear, clean-cut, faceted crystal, at the service of light. Is there still room for these values in our culture?

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My encounters with Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli

by Lidia Kozubek*



Benedetti Michelangeli caught off guard in an unusual and curious attitude at the end of a concert held during the Fifties.

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli at the piano during the late Forties.

My first encounter with the art of this great musician occurred many years ago, long before his journey to Poland. It was when the Concerto for pianoforte and orchestra in A minor by Robert Schumann was broadcast on the radio. I was struck not only by his beautiful surname which called to mind the great artists of the Renaissance, but also by the exceptional warmth of the musical rendering, despite the fact that at that moment I was under the influence of the “objective” beauty of the performance.

My second encounter with the art of Michelangeli took place in 1955, during the series of concerts he held in Warsaw; at that time he was a member of the panel of judges of the “Fryderyk Chopin” International Competition. From the very first bars of the Chaconne by Bach in the re-arrangement by Busoni we were all astounded. Later on, we listened to his brilliant interpretation of the Sonata in C major op. 2 by Beethoven, then the *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* op. 26 by Schumann – played with youthful passion and verve – and were finally enchanted by the Variations by Brahms on a theme by Paganini. I recall the invisible thrill which spread through the gallery of the National Philharmonic – I was seated behind the row occupied by the panel of judges, whose celebrated members were then to give concerts one after another, as soon as the competitors’ auditions were concluded. Each of them turned to the others with an expression of

wonder and even of disbelief at the thought that anything as sublime as the pianistic art of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli could exist on earth. This astonishment was mingled with supreme admiration!

At the end of the concert the artist was called back on stage, time and time again, and gave several encores: a Sonata by Scarlatti, *Cançión y danza* no. 1 by Mompou, ending with the Waltz in E flat, a posthumous work by Chopin, which had recently been discovered and published.

But the audience had no intentions of letting the Maestro go and, with incessant applause and standing ovations, forced him to reappear on stage for the umpteenth time. Finally the piano was closed, but even this was not of much use. So they switched off a few lights in the hall. But the audience remained in their seats, deeply moved by an artist whose interpretive art was so wonderful and by the wealth of emotions displayed. An incarnation of my artistic ideal!

It was after that competition that I began to dream of being able to study under the guidance of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. When I found out that he held summer piano courses, I decided to take part in them. But making my dream come true was not such an easy task. In order to gain admission, I planned to prepare myself for the competition in Naples, because, at that time, it was the only way I could have obtained a passport. At the end of the competition, after lengthy investigations carried out all over Italy, or almost, I finally tracked down the Maestro in Bolzano. In a brief, but for me unforgettable conversation, I obtained his promise to invite me to the summer course. It was April of 1958 and the course was scheduled to start in July. So I had worked real miracles in order that my deepest wishes could come true. This was probably the reason why the Maestro once called me “sorceress”. This was how the contacts between the pupil and the Maestro began.

During the subsequent six international specialisation and piano interpretation Courses in Arezzo, during the period from 1958 to 63, I had the opportunity not only of developing my skills as a pianist, but also of staying in contact with this gifted artist, especially when, together with a small group of colleagues, I was a guest in the villa



placed at his disposal for the duration of the courses.

Over the following years I once again had repeated occasions to meet Michelangeli at the musical festivals in Prague and Vienna, at the concert in Munich in 1992, and also privately during my concert tours or on the occasion of visits to his home near Lugano. Observing Michelangeli in different situations and engrossed in various activities, I was able to convince myself of the incredible confidence that he displayed at all times, both in his musical interpretation and in everyday occupations. His capacity for sublimation and his outstanding sensitivity enabled him always to find himself wherever he was led by his sense of protection towards his pupils, who were very often from far-off countries and not always acquainted with the current customs or habits in Italy. From the psychic standpoint this sensitivity led him to discern even the slightest trace of insincerity. Michelangeli detested all forms of flattery and undue emphasis, while he was attracted to modesty, sincerity and spontaneity in behaviour. Very few people were familiar with his qualities as a skilful narrator, endowed with exceptional imitative abilities. He once read us several short stories in the Tuscan dialect with so much expression and skill as an actor, that despite the fact that we were an audience of foreigners, with a far from perfect knowledge of Italian, we understood everything.

None of those who took part in the courses in Arezzo will ever be able to forget the long evenings spent listening to records of the finest performances of instrumental, opera, symphonic or chamber music. Other moments which will remain unforgettable are the long conversations on music and all sorts of subjects, held around the table, in the open air in summer, or the warm evenings with collective entertainment of which the Maestro was the life and soul.

The life of that improvised family was concentrated mainly on music and on its outstanding representative in the person of Michelangeli, who amazed us all with the universality and profundity of his knowledge in everything that concerned art, science and life. This is why in a brief essay I defined him as a "Maestro of the Renaissance".

For Michelangeli love of music was an absolutely essential condition for achieving good results in studying the piano; only on the strength of this love was it possible to overcome obstacles, great difficulties and even stage-fright before the concert.

In Michelangeli's opinion, the artist should be a synthesis of everything that exists in the world, but under no circumstances a cover up for evil. The performer is merely a reader of music, but must know how to read it well, because in music everything is already written. A performance is based on applying the inflexible rules of music. Failure to understand music reveals the lack of a solid theoretical basis, or a lack of musi-



cality.

Michelangeli attached great importance to sincerity in art. Without sincerity it is still possible to be a skilful artist, but one who is empty, because he is devoid of the principles of truth. Michelangeli's artistic aesthetics on this point are closely linked with ethics.

Michelangeli had a profoundly religious character. He appreciated the need to accept God, also and above all for an artist. All his life – as he once confided to me – he had felt a sort of irresistible yearning for the ideal, which is not fully attainable here on earth – a yearning for another world. His awareness of the Divine Being, over and above mankind, beyond this world, obliged him to aim constantly at this ideal also in art.

The conception of his piano-playing as a vocation, as a mission, did not change even in the light of his enormous successes and celebrity. His interior imperative to keep watch over the profound level of his expressive ability prevented Michelangeli from neglecting any detail, because neglect could have led to a lowering of artistic truth.

Arturo Benedetti
Michelangeli poses with
the group of girls of
one of the specialisation
courses in Arezzo. In
the front row, with the
white handbag, is Lidia
Kozubek who attended
the lessons in Arezzo
from 1958 to 1963.

He lived, in fact, only for art. He loathed all forms of exhibitionism and theatricality in art, as well as in life, and so he refrained from drawing attention to his success. He girded himself with reserve and silence out of love for perfection. He sought perfection in everything he did, even in everyday household chores.

His positively ascetical conception of absolute devotion to art needed ideal conditions for each concert, as well as the utmost psychic and physical commitment on the part of the artist. If these conditions were not met or if the artist did not feel spiritually ready to fulfil this task, then he cancelled the concert, very often paying high compensations.

For most onlookers the very little importance he attached to fame, homage and triumph was wholly incomprehensible.

This behaviour also derived from his deep conviction that the hubbub of the world is not conducive to the work of the artist, founded as it is on concentration, the only means whereby the fruits of this great art can reach maturity.

He detested the flattery of his fans, because it gave him the impression of being widespread hypocrisy, falseness and incompetence. He knew perfectly well what level of preparation and how much sensitivity it took to appreciate his art properly. For this reason he preferred the sincere affection and admiration of his students.

For his ideas he paid a considerable price in terms of suffering, bitterness and disappointment, due to his refusal to accept compromises in the field of art.

His concert activity truly embraced all four corners of the world. It would be difficult to mention here all of Michelangeli's artistic tours. His career as a pianist began very early in life, especially after the competitions in Brussels and Geneva in 1938 and 39. From that moment on his fame grew despite the war years (with regard to which he said: "I lost six excellent years"), and in spite of his illnesses and his behaviour, which certainly did not help to increase his popularity. The audiences at Michelangeli's concerts lived through an extraordinary experience. Not only were they enraptured and radiant with joy, but also deeply moved and transformed by his interpretations. I presume that their psychic condition was what gave



origin to the myths and legends which, as the years went by, sprang up around this great artist. Every concert given by Michelangeli was distinguished by an extraordinary atmosphere, a true celebration of spiritual pleasure, for which he was always eagerly awaited, and in the reviews he was paid the highest tributes.

Michelangeli transmitted all the richness and beauty of music with remarkable structural cohesion and with formal equilibrium of the composition, in the absolute harmony of all the interpretative elements. He moved with utmost freedom within the limits of the strictest and fundamental musical rules and principles.

His style cannot be pigeonholed in any classificatory schema according to given "schools", periods, methods, fashions because it encompasses heterogeneous characteristics and elements. It represents a synthesis of the best that piano studies have discovered and produced. Years of intense study on the art of piano playing led Michelangeli to discoveries which cannot be fully assessed and, even less so, conveyed by verbal language. His executive art as a synthesis of masterly skills was a reflection of his personality which, through his art, had an enormous influence on the listener. Michelangeli not only gave his audiences exalted, sublime aesthetic experiences, but he also moved, inspired, edified and ennobled the human mind.

As a pupil of this great artist, I had the opportunity of entering into close contact

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Lidia Kozubek in a photograph taken at the hermitage of La Verna in 1962. The Maestro loved the peace and tranquillity of this Franciscan place, where he often retired to whenever his teaching and concert activities would allow.

with his pedagogical art at the summer specialisation and piano interpretation Courses in Arezzo, which I took part in six times.

If I were to attempt to define Michelangeli's method by a comparison with any famous "piano school", I would have to say that it did not belong to any of them, even though it had many qualities in common with the best ones and contained them all within itself. In his method we can find rules of the so-called "old schools", but this does not mean that Michelangeli was one of their representatives; he simply did not refute previously discovered truths if their bases were in keeping with the laws which govern music. In Michelangeli the attention paid to the pleasant tone, the cantabile touch, the variety of articulations and the accent placed on the effort of "creative passion" during the pianist's studies, reminds us of Chopin. Michelangeli's teaching method, if that is how we want to define it, therefore differed from the others as regards depth of introspection in the musical contents, a factor which consequently determined the choice of the form suitable for conveying the music. The artist did not divide the art of piano playing into technique and interpretation, since it formed an indissoluble oneness. Those means which were conducive to the purpose and which served to achieve musical expression held good.

In his teaching work Michelangeli was aware of the importance of passing on his exceptional personality, so he chose those pupils who, due to their specific psychophysical constitution, he was certain would have been able to learn even those musical subtleties which defy verbal definition. We could refer to that element that Michelangeli attached great importance to in working with his pupils as "consonance". This is also the answer to the question of why he accepted only certain pupils and rejected others, who also included pianists who had already attained great success and even renown.

Preparation for the artistic profession did not only consist in acquiring the piano playing technique, but first and foremost in the psychic education of those who, aspiring to the art, were to carry out their "mission" in an exemplary way. Michelangeli was consequently also such a great educator as to exert an influence on the exterior and interi-

or attitude of his pupils towards art and life since, for him, the bond between the human and the artistic dimension was evident.

The lessons given by Michelangeli were individual. They were held only on the day and at the hour that he thought fit, and he did not give the pupils advance notice. Not knowing when the lesson would be held was also an incentive for them to prepare themselves and to study as hard as possible, as well as to be constantly alert. During the lessons Michelangeli stimulated the student's industriousness with his outstanding psychological activity. With his teaching he strove to obtain the very best results from the performers. The constant attention he paid to even the finest details of the work prevented their arid or automatic execution, for him the only real ingredient for raising the audience's taste and musical experience to the highest degree. Michelangeli was also exceptional for being a concert performer and teacher at such a high level.

Lastly, I should like to recall my visits to the Maestro's home in Pura, not very far from Lugano. I had already had contacts with this city for some time, since in the past I had recorded a number of Polish piano compositions for a radio broadcasting station there. Even then it had made a very pleasant impression on me. An enchanting, beautiful city nestling among the mountains. After all, mountains have always been very dear to me; precisely for this reason, as a child, I dreamed of going to Switzerland. I was overjoyed, even more so because the purpose of my next journey to that country was a meeting with my beloved Maestro.



Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in 1989 at the table. Beside him is Mira Arma, the doctor from Mendrisio, who with her husband Sergio was very close to him during the last years of his life.

The first time I was his guest from the 26th of May to 1st June 1975. The house where he lived and worked inspired calm and naturalness. The garden surrounding the house was truly an impeccable fragment of nature. There were trees and a lawn, without excessive intervention of man with his artificial “arrangements”. The house stood on a gentle slope, and so the windows of the Maestro’s study, situated on the ground floor, directly overlooked the garden.

There were three pianos in the study. The Maestro gave me permission to try them. One of them was particularly beautiful in its sonorous fullness. Never before, or after, have I had the opportunity of finding an instrument of this kind, or the pleasure of playing it; not even in the concert halls in numerous countries where I have performed.

In the Maestro’s music room, arranged on two levels, we could talk freely, whereas during the courses in Arezzo it was not possible to do so due to lack of time. Of course, we spoke about music, piano playing or about the students, and I was happy each time I noted that our opinions were identical. The Maestro also mentioned his concerts in my country, especially in Warsaw, and I had the impression that he would have been well-disposed to return to Poland. Unfortunately, this was not possible. We also talked about the piano courses in Arezzo and my colleagues. Michelangeli remarked: “We were like a family then”.

In Pura the Maestro was also a delightful host and tried to make my stay at his home as pleasant as possible. Great credit for this must be given to the Maestro’s housekeeper and secretary, Mrs. Marie-José Dubois.

The next time I went to visit the Maestro was after my return from Japan, where, earlier in 1983 and 1985, and then in 1988 and 1990, I had been visiting professor in one of the academies, the *Academia Musicae Musashino* in Tokyo.

My last stay in Lugano was related to the promotion of my book on Michelangeli, translated into Italian by Marco Bizzarini with discography by Stefano Biosa, two musicologists who direct the “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” Documentation Centre in Brescia. It was a very touching moment for me. My concert, dedicated to Chopin,

was held in the Church of St. Rocco, and was followed by a meeting with the audience. I experienced overwhelming emotions, because I was very close to the Maestro’s home.

The Maestro now rests in the nearby cemetery in Pura. During the presentation of my book I was able to visit his burial-place. I was deeply impressed by the sobriety and simplicity of his tomb, which reminded me once again that the greatest men are very often the most unpretentious.

** Pianist, former professor at the “F. Chopin” Musical Academy in Warsaw and visiting professor at the Academia Musicae Musashino in Tokyo*

Essential discography and bibliography



Listed below are some of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's most significant recordings available on compact disc, DVD or video-cassette. The date between brackets refers to the year of performance. The abbreviations VHS and DVD indicate video recordings published respectively on magnetic or optical media. For the sake of brevity, only one label number has been indicated for those performances which appear several times in the catalogue of the same record company. For the complete record catalogue the reader is referred to the volumes quoted in the bibliography.

The main printed publications on Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli issued in Italy after the pianist's death are also given in chronological order. The essays of collected writings and the numerous articles which appeared in newspapers, reviews and specialised periodicals have been omitted for reasons of space.

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

Malagueña, op. 71 n. 6

- (1942) Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) -

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)

Concerto nach italiänisch Gusto (Italian Concerto) in F major BWV 971

- (1943) Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2
- Chaconne from the Suite for violin solo n. 2 BWV 1004*, revised for the piano by Ferruccio Busoni
- (1948) Emi CDH 7 64490 2
- (1973) Aura AUR 226-2

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Concerto n. 1 in C major for piano and orchestra, op. 15

- (1979) Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini, Deutsche Grammophon (DG) 419248-2

Concerto n. 3 in C minor for piano and orchestra, op. 37

- (1979) Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini, DG 423230-2

Concerto n. 5 in E flat major for piano and orchestra, op. 73 "Emperor"

- (1942) Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Genève, Ernest Ansermet, Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
- (1957) Symfonickým orchestrem hl. m. Prahy, Václav Smetáček, Praga Production PR 250 021
- (1966) New York Philharmonic Orchestra, William Steinberg, Memoires HR 4368/9
- (1974) Orchestre Radio Television Française, Sergiu Celibidache, Music & Arts CD-4296
- (1979) Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini, DG 419249-2

Sonata n. 3 in C major, op. 2 n. 3

- (1941) Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2

- (1952) Arkadia GI 903.1
- (1962) Ermitage ERM 123-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)
- (1970, Toronto) VAI 4213 (DVD)
- (1987) Aura AUR 136-2; Memoria 999.001

Sonata n. 4 in E flat major, op. 7

- (1971) DG 419248-2
- (1982) BBC Legends BBCL 4064-2
- Sonata n. 11 in B flat major, op. 22*
- (1981) EuroArts TDK 10 5231 9 (DVD)

Sonata n. 12 in A flat major, op. 26

- "Funeral March"
- (1981) EuroArts TDK 10 5231 9 (DVD)
- (1982) BBC Legends BBCL 4064-2
- Sonata n. 32 in C minor, op. 111*
- (1961, London, Studio) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2
- (1961, London, Royal Festival Hall) Memories HR 4368/69
- (1965) Decca 417772-2

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Four ballades, op. 10

- (1981, Hamburg) DG 400043-2
- (1981, Lugano) EuroArts TDK 10 5231 9 (DVD)
- Variations on a theme by Paganini in A minor, op. 35*
- (1948) Emi CDH 7 64490 2
- (1952) Arkadia GI 903.1
- (1973) Aura AUR 224-2

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Andante spianato in G major and Grand polonaise brillante in E flat major, op. 22 n. 58

- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)
- Ballade n. 1 in G minor, op. 23*
- (1957) Testament SBT 2088
- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra CDAR 2002; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)
- (1967) Aura AUR 208-2
- (1971) DG 413449-2

Berceuse in D flat major, op. 57

- (1942) Teldec 4509 93671-2
- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)

Fantasia in F minor, op. 49

- (1957) Testament SBT 2088
- (1962) Ermitage ERM 123-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2130

Mazurka n. 20 in D flat major, op. 30 n. 3

- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)

Mazurka n. 25 in B minor, op. 33 n. 4

- (1942) Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2
- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra CDAR 2002; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)

Mazurka n. 47 in A minor, op. 68 n. 2

- (1941) Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra CDAR 2002; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)

Ten mazurkas

- (1971) DG 413449-2

Prelude in C sharp minor, op. 45

- (1971) DG 413449-2

Scherzo n. 2 in B flat minor, op. 31

- (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2

- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Fonit Cetra CDAR 2002; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2131 (VHS)

- (1971) DG 413449-2

Sonata n. 2 in B flat minor, op. 35 "Funeral march"

- (1952) Arkadia GI 903.1
- (1959) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2
- (1960) Praga Productions PR 250 042
- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2130 (VHS)
- Valse brillante n. 2 in A flat major, op. 34 n. 1*
- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2130 (VHS)

Waltz n. 9 in A flat major, op. post. 69 n. 2

- (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2130 (VHS)

Waltz n. 17 in E flat major, op. post. n. 4

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in a portrait by Nani Tedeschi. The drawing was presented in Desenzano del Garda during the exhibition *Gaspard de la Nuit*. The pages of the musical score of the same name by Ravel, which had belonged to the Maestro and had been given by him to Isacco Rinaldi, were displayed during the exhibition.

- (1957) Testament 2088
 - (1962) Aura AUR 135-2; Ermitage ERM 122-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2130 (VHS)
- Muzio Clementi (1752-1832)**
Sonata in B flat major, op. 12 n. 3
 (1959) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2
- Claude Debussy (1862-1918)**
Children's corner
 - (1962) Fonit Cetra CDAR 2005; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2132 (VHS)
 - (1968) Aura AUR 207-2; Memoires HR 4368/69
 - (1971) DG 415372-2
 - (1993) Memoria 999.101
Images I e II
 - (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2 (only *Reflets dans l'eau*)
 - (1957) Testament SBT 2088
 - (1962) Aura AUR 109-2; Ermitage ERM 123-2; Fonit Cetra CDAR 2005; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2132 (VHS)
 - (1971) DG 415372-2
 - (1982) BBC Legends BBCL 4064-2 (only *Hommage à Rameau*)
 - (1987) Aura AUR 136-2; Memoria 999.001
 - (1993) Memoria 999.101
Préludes Book I
 - (1977) Aura AUR 201-2; Memoria 999.001
 - (1978) DG 413450-2
 - (1982) BBC Legends BBCL 4043-2
 - (1993) Memoria 999.101
Préludes Book II
 - (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2132 (VHS)
 - (1988) DG 427391-2
- Baldassarre Galuppi (1706-1781)**
Sonata in B flat major. In quick tempo
 - (1941) Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
Sonata n. 5 in C major
 - (1962) Arkadia GI 904.1; Aura AUR 226-2; Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)
 - (1965) Decca 417772-2
- Enrique Granados (1867-1916)**
Andaluza (Spanish dance in E minor), op. 37 n. 5
 - (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2
- Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)**
Bådnål (At the cradle), op. 68 n. 5, book IX, from the Lyriske Smaastykker (Lyric pieces)
 - (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Ermitage ERM 103-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2
Concerto in A minor for piano and orchestra, op. 16
 - (1941) Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Genève, Ernest Ansermet, Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2
 - (1942) Orchestra of La Scala Theatre of Milan, Alceo Galliera, Aura AUR 215-2; Teldec 9031-76439-2
 - (1963) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Rome, Mario Rossi, Memoires HR 4368/69
 - (1965) New Philharmonic Orchestra, Raphael Frühbeck de Burgos, BBC Legends BBCL 4043-2
Erotik, op. 43 n. 5, book III, from the Lyriske Smaastykker (Lyric pieces)
 - (1943) Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2
Melankoli, op. 47 n. 5, book IV, from the Lyriske Smaastykker (Lyric pieces)
 - (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2
- Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)**
Concerto n. 4 in G major for piano and orchestra, Hob XVIII/4
 - (1975) Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Edmond de Stoutz, Emi CDC 7 49324 2
- Concerto n. 11 in D major for piano and orchestra, Hob XVIII/11*
 - (1968) "Gasparo da Salò" Chamber Orchestra, Agostino Orizio, Arkadia HP 560.1; Hunt CD 560
 - (1975) Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Edmond de Stoutz, Emi CDC 7 49324 2
- Franz Liszt (1811-1886)**
Concerto n. 1 in E flat major for piano and orchestra
 - (1939) Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Genève, Ernest Ansermet, Aura AUR 104-2; Ermitage ERM 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26901-2
 - (1953) "Maggio Musicale Fiorentino" Orchestra, Dimitri Mitropulos, Urania URN 22.256
 - (1961) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Turin, Rafael Kubelik, Arkadia HP 507.1
Totentanz (Danse macabre) for piano and orchestra (paraphrases on the theme of "Dies Irae")
 - (1961) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Turin, Rafael Kubelik, Arkadia HP 507.1
 - (1962) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Rome, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Aura AUR 249-2; Memoria 999.001
- André-François Marescotti (1902-1995)**
Fantasque
 - (1941) Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage 183-2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
- Federico Mompou (1893-1987)**
Canción y danza n. 1
 - (1942) Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**
Concerto n. 13 in C major for piano and orchestra K 415
 - (1953) "Alessandro Scarlatti" RAI Symphony Orchestra of Naples, Franco Caracciolo, Emi CDH 7 63819 2
 - (1968) "Gasparo da Salò" Chamber Orchestra, Agostino Orizio, Arkadia HP 560.1; Hunt CD 560
 - (1990) NDR-Sinfonieorchester, Cord Garben, DG 431097-2
Concerto n. 15 in B flat major for piano and orchestra K 450
 - (1951) Symphony Chamber Orchestra of the Organisation "Musical Afternoons in Milan", Ettore Gracis, Emi CDH 7 63819 2
 - (1956) RTSI Orchestra of Lugano, Hermann Scherchen, Aura AUR 238-2
 - (1974) Zürcher Kammerorchester, Edmond de Stoutz, Aura AUR 220-2
 - (1990) NDR-Sinfonieorchester, Cord Garben, DG 431097-2
Concerto n. 20 in D minor for piano and orchestra K 466
 - (1953) "Maggio Musicale Fiorentino" Orchestra, Dimitri Mitropulos, Urania URN 22.256
 - (1966) "Gasparo da Salò" Chamber Orchestra, Agostino Orizio, Arkadia HP 560.1; Hunt CD 560
 - (1989) NDR-Sinfonieorchester, Cord Garben, DG 429353-2
Concerto n. 23 in A major for piano and orchestra K 488
 - (1953) "Alessandro Scarlatti" RAI Symphony Orchestra of Naples, Franco Caracciolo, Emi CDH 7 63819 2
Concerto n. 25 in C major for piano and orchestra K 503
 - (1989) NDR-Sinfonieorchester, Cord Garben, DG 429353-2
- Sergej Rachmaninov (1873-1943)**
Concerto n. 4 in G minor for piano and orchestra, op. 40;
 - (1957) Philharmonia Orchestra, Ettore Gracis, Emi CDC 7 49326 2
- Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**
Concerto in G major for piano and orchestra
 - (1952) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Turin, Nino Sanzogno, Arkadia GI 904.1
 - (1957) Philharmonia Orchestra, Ettore Gracis, Emi CDC 7 49326 2
 - (1982) London Symphony Orchestra, Sergiu Celibidache, Arlechino ARL A79
 - (1992) Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, Sergiu Celibidache, Galileo GL 2; "O" "O" Classics TH 009 (unauthorised)

*Gaspard de la nuit (Trois poèmes pour piano d'après
Aloysius Bertrand)*

- (1959) BBC Legends BBCL 4064-2
- (1968) Memories HR 4369/69
- (1969) Arkadia GI 904.1
- (1987) Aura AUR 204-2; Memoria 999.001

Valses nobles et sentimentales

- (1952) Arkadia GI 904.1

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

Sonata in D minor Kk 9 "Pastoral"

- (1942) Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2

Sonata in C minor Kk 11

- (1942) Emi CDH 7 64490 2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2
- (1961) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2
- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)
- (1965) Decca 417772-2

Sonata in B minor Kk 27

- (1943) Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2
- (1949 ca.) NVC Arts Warner Music Vision 3984 29199-2 (DVD), 3984 29199-4 (VHS)

- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)

Sonata in D major Kk 96 "The Hunt"

- (1943) Aura AUR 226-2; Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2

Sonata in C major Kk 159

- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)
- (1965) Decca 417772-2

Sonata in B flat major Kk 172

- (1961) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2

Sonata in A major Kk 322

- (1962) Fonit Cetra Videorai VRN 2129 (VHS)
- (1965) Decca 417772-2

Sonata in A major Kk 332

- (1961) BBC Legends BBCL 4128-2

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata in A major, posthumous op. 164, D 537

- (1981, Hamburg) DG 400043-2
- (1981, Lugano) EuroArts TDK 10 5231 9 (DVD)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

*Album für die Jugend (Album for youth), op. 68
(n. 37, 38, 39)*

- (1975) Emi CDC 7 49325 2
- Carnaval, op. 9. Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes*
- (1957) DG 423231-2; Testament SBT 2088
 - (1975) Emi CDC 7 49325 2

Concerto in A minor for piano and orchestra, op. 54

- (1942) Orchestra of La Scala Theatre of Milan, Antonino Pedrotti, Teldec 9031 76439-2
- (1956) RTSI Orchestra of Lugano, Hermann Scherchen, Aura AUR 238-2
- (1962) RAI Symphony Orchestra of Rome, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Aura AUR 249-2; Memoria 999.001
- (1992) Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, Sergiu Celibidache, Artist FED 027; "O" "O" "O" Classics TH 019 (unauthorised)

Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), op. 26

- (1957) DG 423231-2; Testament SBT 2088

Florindo Tomeoni (1755-1820)

Sonata in G major

- (1943) Teldec (Warner Special Marketing) 4509 93671-2

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) or

Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709)

Concert in B minor for piano and orchestra

- (1942) Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Genève, Ernest Ansermet, Aura AUR 183-2; Ermitage ERM 183.2; Warner Fonit 3984 26902-2



Printed publications

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Il Grembo del Suono,
by Antonio Sabatucci, Milan, Skira, 1996, 323 p., ill.,
28 cm + 1 cd

Giuliana BENEDETTI MICHELANGELI, *Vita con Ciro*, Bologna,
Edimedia, 1997, 95 p., ill., 24 cm

*Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in Bolzano. Immagini e
suoni*, Bolzano, Municipal Art Gallery, 21.8.-13.9.1997
= *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in Bozen. In Bild und Ton*,
Bozen, Städtische Kunstgalerie, [exhibition by Ettore
Frangipane and Vittorio Albani], [Bolzano, autonomous
Province, Council for Italian Education and Culture, 1997],
117 p., ill., 24 cm

Clara MARTINENGO VILLAGANA and Stefania MONTI, *Arturo
Benedetti Michelangeli. Genio e compostezza*, Bornato in
Franciacorta (BS), Fausto Sardini, printed 1998, 123 p., ill.,
25 cm

Sergio DELLA MURA, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli*, Empoli,
Ibiskos, [1998], 76 p., ill., 20 cm

Graziano BIANCHI, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. La magia
del suono*, Florence, Feeria, 1999, 60 p., 17 cm

Il suono ritrovato di Benedetti Michelangeli, Milan, Banca
Intesa, [1999], 147 p., ill., 29 cm + 2 cd

Lidia KOZUBEK, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Come l'ho
conosciuto*, It. ed. by Marco Bizzarrini, discography by
Stefano Bioss, Palermo, L'Epos, 2003, 234 p., ill., 21 cm

Cord GARBEN, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. In bilico con
un genio*, [It. ed. with discography revised by the "Arturo
Benedetti Michelangeli" Documentation Centre], Varese,
Zecchini, 2004, 222 p., ill., 24 cm + 1 cd

The Maestro with the
German orchestra
conductor and producer
Cord Garben, in Berlin
in 1975. Garben is the
author of *Arturo
Benedetti Michelangeli. In
bilico con un genio*, the
recent Italian edition
of which was edited by
the "Arturo Benedetti
Michelangeli"
Documentation Centre.

The “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” Documentation Centre



Immediately after the death of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, who passed away in Lugano on 12th June 1995 the initiatives to his memory multiplied throughout the world. However, this commemorative fervour, very often linked to concert events or discographic initiatives of high artistic value, was not followed by a systematic scientific project for safeguarding those historic testimonies capable of documenting the Maestro's biography, career and professional activity. Nothing comparable, therefore, to the massive attention and the impressive volumes of writings that were dedicated, for example, to another protagonist of the keyboard, the Canadian Glenn Gould, who was gratified by a truly extraordinary posthumous fortune. Consequently, if, from then, nothing were done in Italy and in Europe to arouse the renewed interest of scholars, musicians and enthusiasts, even a giant such as Benedetti Michelangeli could run the risk before very long of being neglected or underestimated by historiography and by musical critics.

For this reason, in the spring of 1999, the “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” Documentation Centre was set up in Brescia, and has now become an international point of reference for the collection of sources and authentic testimonies concerning the Maestro, and for publicising books, studies and essays on his art.

The Centre is directed by the musicologists Stefano Biossa and Marco Bizzarini, and aims to collect, catalogue, and, wherever neces-

sary, translate into Italian or into foreign languages bibliographical material on the piano art of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, namely books, essays, articles (previews and reviews of concerts, interviews), degree theses. The structure also collects testimonies (anecdotes and souvenirs of musicians, friends, acquaintances) and acquires photographs, theatre-bills, concert programmes, and published and unpublished audio and video recordings of concerts and interviews. With the active participation of the “Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli” Centre two important monographs have recently been published in Italy:

- Lidia Kozubek, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Come l'ho conosciuto*, Italian translation and editing by Marco Bizzarini, discography by Stefano Biossa, Palermo, L'Epos, 2003;

- Cord Garben, *Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. In bilico con un genio (Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Poised with a Genius)*, Italian translation by Lore Seuss, textual revision by Stefano Biossa and Marco Bizzarini, Varese, Zecchini, 2004 (with attached CD containing the unpublished recording of the rehearsal of the Concert KV 466 by Mozart on two pianos and the verbal explanations of the Maestro).

On 15th November 2003 the Centre organised a one-day study on *The piano art of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli* in cooperation with Teche Rai, Province of Brescia and Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana; among the speakers invited were such well-known experts as Sergio Sablich and Luca Chierici. A rare film by the RAI (Italian Broadcasting Corporation) dating back to the late Fifties was shown during the event.

The promotional activities concerned two cities of great importance in the biography of Michelangeli: Bolzano, where for many years the Maestro held the chair of Pianoforte at the Conservatory, and Lugano, the city he moved to at the end of the Sixties.

In November 2003 at the Trevi Centre in Bolzano an Italian preview was given of the video recording of a celebrated concert in Lugano dating back to 1981.

In April 2004 the Polish pianist Lidia Kozubek, former pupil of the Maestro, held a commemorative concert in the Church of

St. Rocco in Lugano and, together with the editors of the Italian edition, illustrated the features of her monograph, all enhanced by the showing of rare and unpublished images.

Today, ten years after the death of the Maestro, it would already appear to be possible to focalise the historical importance of this genial artist. Undoubtedly, it is not an easy task, and above all requires considerable care; as Lidia Kozubek very rightly wrote, Benedetti Michelangeli's artistic personality eludes all attempts at an excessively strict classification.

Years ago it was written in an Italian newspaper that Michelangeli's pianism embodied the spirit of the twentieth century. This affirmation undoubtedly has a basis in truth; for example, the extremely skilful and meticulous attention that the pianist paid to his musical instruments (whereas they say that, between two pianos, Richter always chose the worst) is perhaps comparable to the relationship that a *Formula One* racing champion has with his fast car and therefore takes on the characteristics of a very twentieth century, very modern choice. But in Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, as in all great men, there are also elements which transcend time.

For this reason, while yesterday his equally documentable "anti-twentieth-centuryism", which was demonstrated moreover by his deliberate estrangement from certain avant-garde music and in his awareness of the risks of certain philology, may have created some ideological perturbation, tomorrow, in a changed scenario, it could be reinterpreted with much more serenity.

In other words, it is beyond question that the art and philosophy of Benedetti Michelangeli still have a great deal to teach the world of music in the new millennium, very often bewildered by an excess of centrifugal tendencies and consequently in need of steady points of reference.

We would like to thank in advance all those who may wish to inform us of any articles and reviews, published in Italy or abroad, on Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.

For information on how to become a member of the Centre, please contact:

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The biographical note which introduces the cultural insert was drawn up by Pier Carlo Della Ferrera, who also organised the research and selection of the quotations for the thematic images which accompany the Report for the financial year.

Acknowledgements

We should like to thank all the institutions and people who, in their various capacities, have provided documents, information and useful suggestions for the accomplishment of this book. Our special thanks go to Professor Lidia Kozubek, Dr. Mira Arma, Professor Marco Vitale, Maestro Isacco Rinaldi, Dr. Stefano Biosà and Dr. Marco Bizzarini of the "Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli" Documentaton Centre of Brescia, Dr. Rolando (Rolly) Marchi, Dr. Claudio Ambrosi of the SAT Mountain Library of Trent, Banca Intesa, the town councils of Pura, Riva San Vitale and Sagno, the archives of the RTSI (Italian Swiss Radio Television Broadcasting Station) and of *Corriere della Sera*, and the State Archives of Canton Ticino.

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DESIGN AND CO-ORDINATION
SDB, Chiasso

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Empoli, Ibiskos, 1998