

Opera: Passion, Power and Politics

Archivio Storico Ricordi exhibits on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London



The Exhibition

This joint project between London's Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Opera House gives visitors from all over the world a better understanding of key moments in European opera history – from its roots in Renaissance Italy to its present form. Seven cities represent a political, social, artistic and economic melting pot; seven opera premieres illustrate the dynamic relationship between individual genius and the social mainstream, between economic and political influence and the requirements of a public-oriented cultural enterprise:

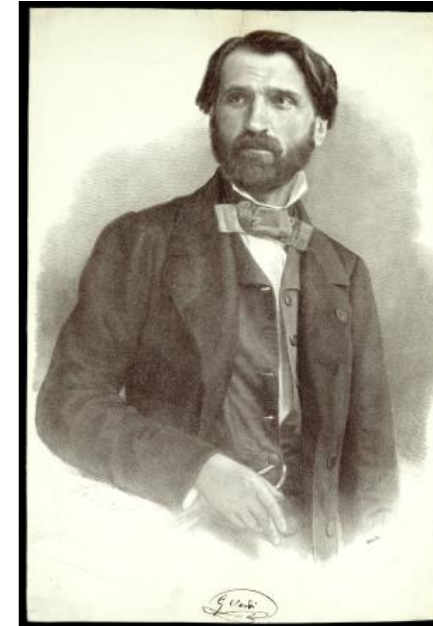
- Venice | Monteverdi – *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, 1642
- London | Handel – *Rinaldo*, 1711
- Vienna | Mozart – *Le nozze di Figaro*, 1786
- **Milan | Verdi – *Nabucco*, 1842**
- Paris | Wagner – *Tannhäuser*, 1861
- Dresden | Strauss – *Salome*, 1905
- St. Petersburg | Shostakovich – *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, 1934



The Opera *Nabucco* at the Archivio Storico Ricordi

- 23 of Verdi's 28 operas are documented in the Ricordi Archive.
- The archive's holdings on *Nabucco* include:
 - the hand-written score
 - The first edition of the [printed] singing score, and other printed editions of the score
 - Printing plates for the vocal score from the years 1843-1954, including one from the "Biblioteca Musicale Popolare" series from 1877
 - The contracts between Giuseppe Verdi, Bartolomeo Merelli, Francesco Lucca and Giovanni Ricordi
 - 23 libretti, from the world premiere to today
- The Ricordi publishing catalogs list 284 printed editions of *Nabucco* during a period of just 35 years (1842 to 1877).

Eight key documents will be exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum



Giuseppe Verdi, lithograph from 1842, the year *Nabucco* was created



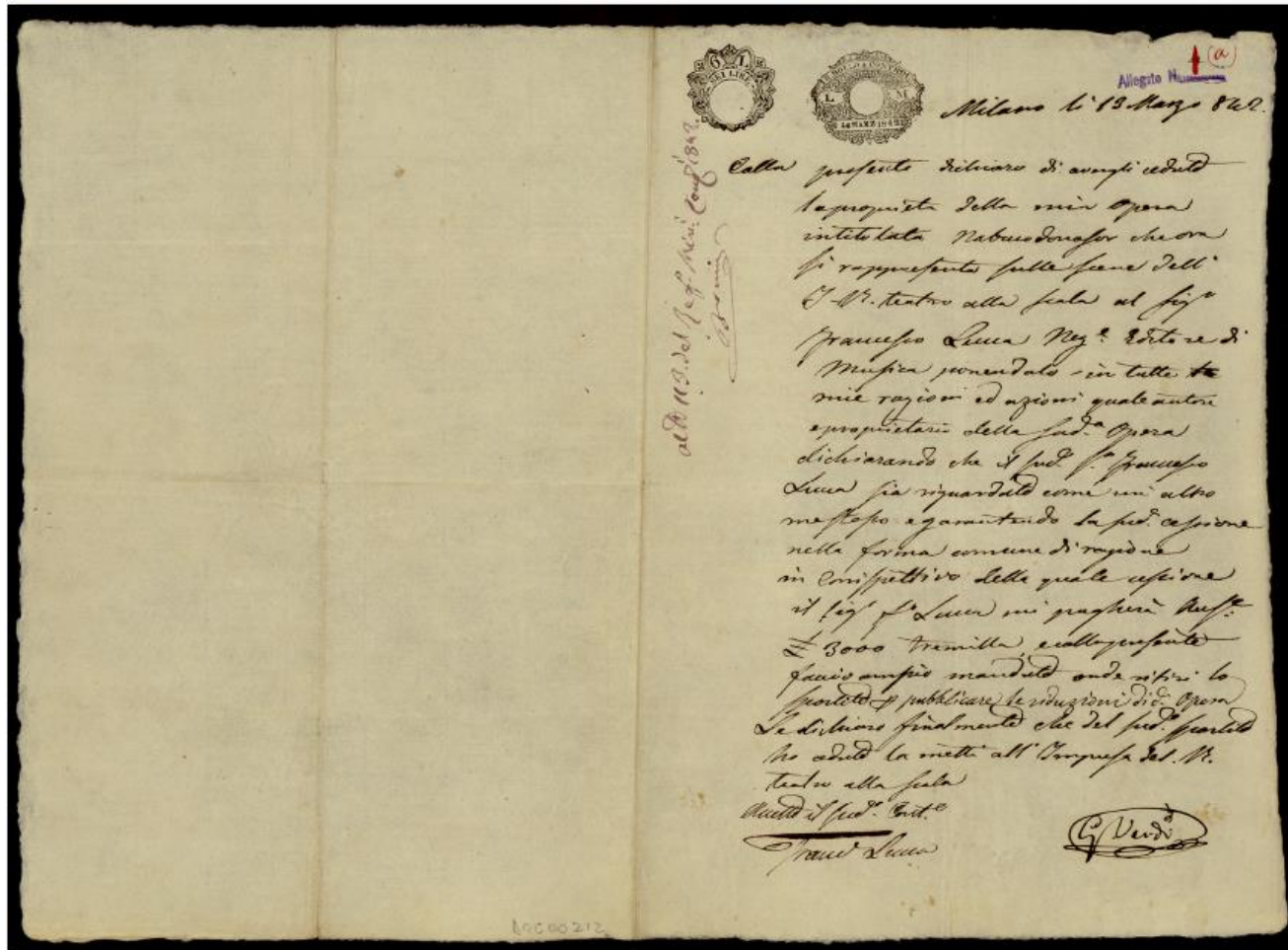
Giorgio Ronconi, the first *Nabucodonosor*. Lithograph by Johann Höfelich, Vienna

1. 'Va pensiero' as an original handwritten manuscript by Giuseppe Verdi



Giuseppe Verdi, *Nabucco*, premiered on 9 March 1842,
"Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves" *Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate*
Original handwritten score, Folios 189v-190r

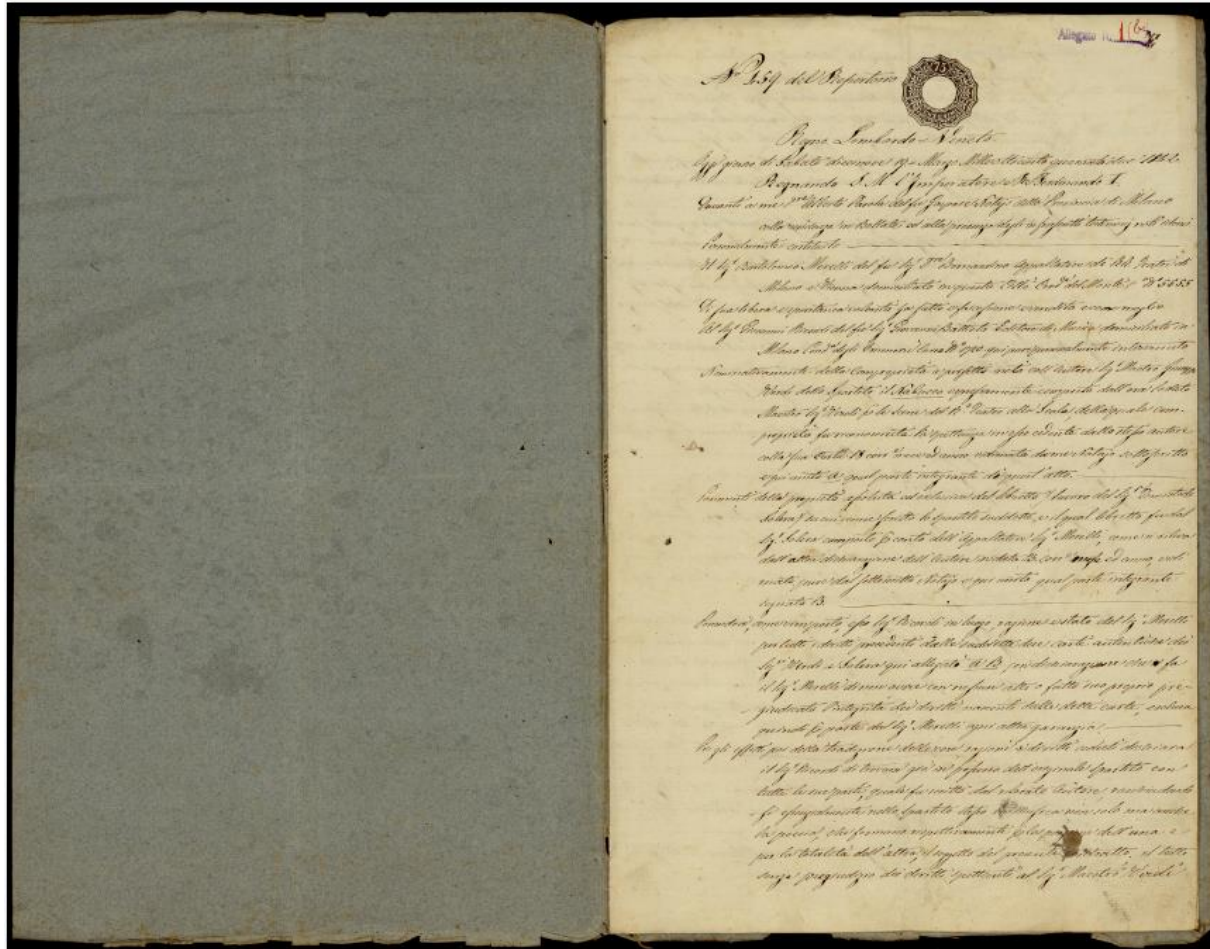
2. Three thousand lire for Verdi's first major opera success



Publishing contract, *Nabucco*, 13 March 1842

Contract between Giuseppe Verdi, Bartolomeo Merelli and Francesco Lucca dated 13 March 1842, in which Verdi transfers 50% of his rights to *Nabucco* to the publisher Lucca for 3,000 Austrian lire. The remaining 50% remains with the Teatro alla Scala, represented by Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario of the theater and a friend of Giovanni Ricordi.

3. Ricordi buys the rights to *Nabucco* from La Scala



Publishing contract, *Nabucco*, March 19, 1842

Contract dated March 19, 1842 between the Teatro alla Scala, represented by the impresario Bartolomeo Merelli, and Giovanni Ricordi, in which the Scala transfers its share of the rights to *Nabucco* to Ricordi for the price of 3,000 Austrian lire.

4. Nabucco at Ricordi | The beginning of a long, successful cooperation

Numero di Protocollo	DATA della scrittura	AUTORE	CEDENTE	TITOLO DELL'OPERA	CONDIZIONI	Esecuzione delle proprietà	Stipendio o quote al librettista	OSSESSAZIONI
1556 140	11.10.1838	Villanis	autore	Ciuditta di Kent	L. 1500 in contante, oltre il 20 p. per mesi, e al 10 p. nelle parti per cinque anni, prorogabili nel 1. mese che si farà.	Tutti i paesi	5 anni ogni volta che si farà.	Restare inerte.
157 140	19.10.1839	Verdi	autore	Oberto Conte di S. Bonifacio	Spuntato L. 2000. - Restare in già proporzioni con i vantaggi in forza del contratto coll'Impresa della Scala, 1839.	Tutti i paesi	---	---
158 140	20.10.1839	Verdi	librettista	Un giorno di regno fra il Conte Stanislao	Spuntato. - Restare in già proporzioni con i vantaggi in forza del contratto coll'Impresa della Scala, 1839.	Tutti i paesi	---	---
215 140	19.10.1842	Verdi	librettista	Nabucco	Nota Spuntato e libretto L. 1000. - L'altro tutto coll' Spuntato appartiene al libretto. Restare in già proporzioni con i vantaggi in forza del contratto coll'Impresa della Scala, 1842.	Tutti i paesi	Spuntato in tutto col libretto.	---
217 140	11.10.1842	Verdi	librettista	I Lombardi	Spuntato e libretto L. 1000. - Restare in già proporzioni con i vantaggi in forza del contratto coll'Impresa della Scala, 1842.	Tutti i paesi	---	---

Contract register, Ricordi publishing house

The contract register contains the most important information on all Casa Ricordi contracts. For (Verdi) research, it is an unmatched resource, as the gradual expansion and differentiation of the publishing rights/copyrights can be accurately traced. The entry for *Nabucco* is dated 19 May 1842.

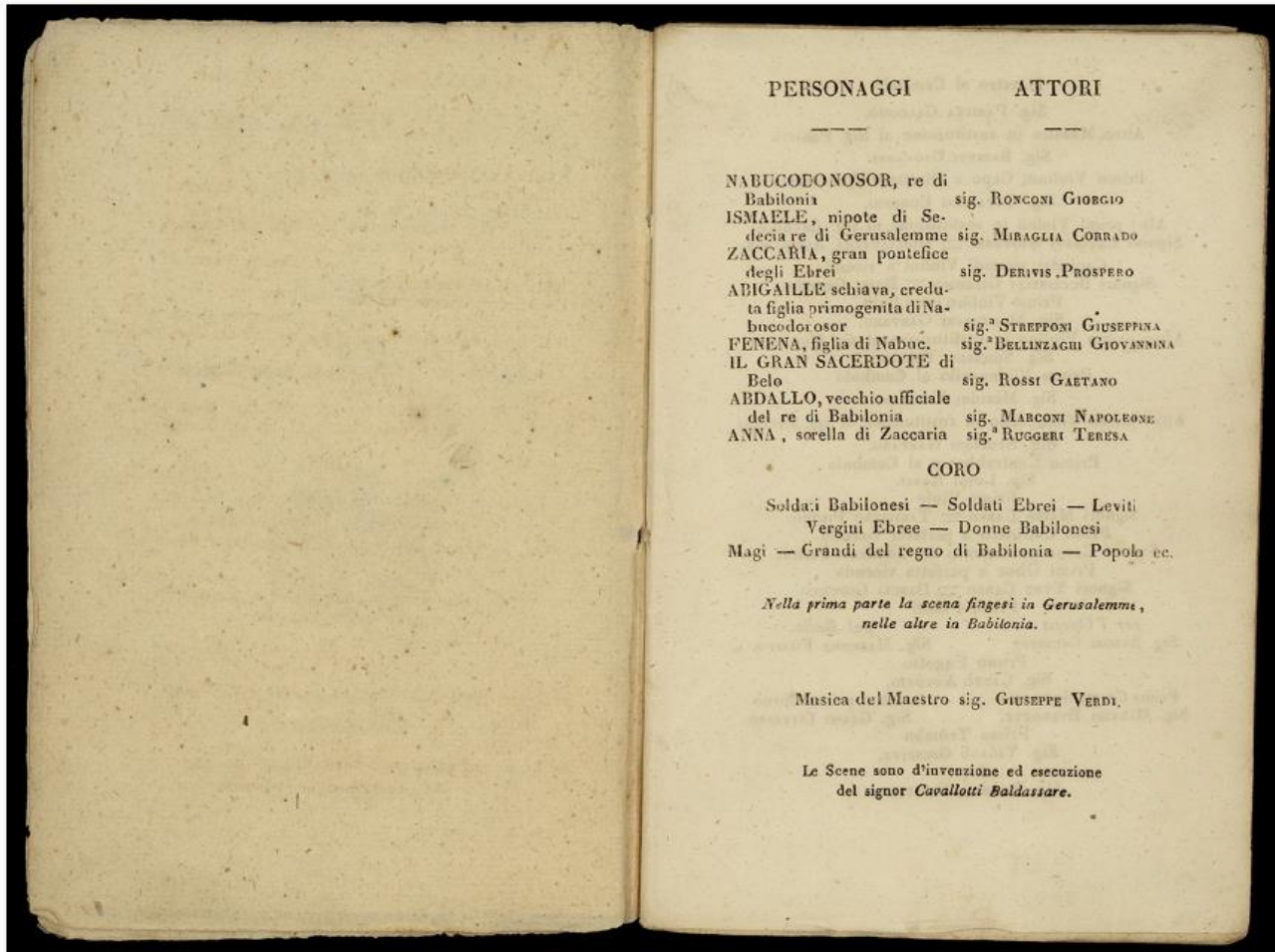
While the contract for Verdi's first opera *Oberto Conte di San Bonivacio* (1839) still comprises a simple transfer of rights from the composer to the publisher, later agreements also include arrangements for renting out the score to other theaters, and proceeds from the sale of musical scores.

5. The libretto with the names of the premiere soloists

Libretto with handwritten instructions

A page from the libretto with the names of the principal singers, including Giuseppina Strepponi, Verdi's later wife, as Abigaille. Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 9 March 1842.

This copy of the libretto contains inserted pages with handwritten comments from the composer, such as stage directions and remarks on the positioning of the singers.



6. First printed edition of the piano score appeared as early as 1842



First edition of the vocal score

First printed edition of the *Nabucco* vocal score by Luigi Truzzi. Milan, 1842.

Ricordi used the prints of the vocal scores, piano scores or sheet music for smaller ensembles to serve the emerging *Hausmusik* (domestic music) market, which made opera an integral part of bourgeois life.

The scores were hand-engraved on lead or zinc plates and printed directly with the press. The edges of the printing plate are clearly visible on this copy of *Nabucco*.

7. The beginnings of an unprecedented popularization



NABUCODONOSOR
Dramma lirico in 4 parti di T. SOLERA
MUSICA DEL M.^o
GIUSEPPE VERDI
L'Opera completa per Canto con ac-
compagnamento di Pianoforte Fr. 50
Idem, per Pianoforte solo . . . » 18
Idem, per Pianoforte nello stile facile » 14
Idem, per Pianoforte a 4 mani . » 26
Idem, per Pianoforte e Violino . » 22
Idem, per Pianoforte e Flauto . » 22
Idem, per due Flauti . . . » 18
Idem, per Flauto solo . . . » 6
NB. Vendesi anche in pezzi separati.

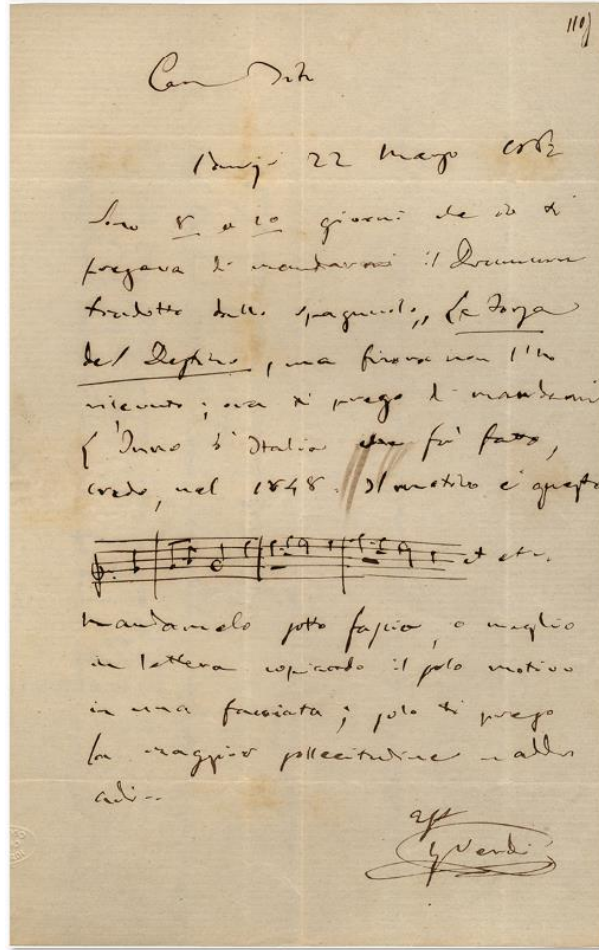
***Nabucco* arrangements**

An advertisement for arrangements for domestic use from the successful opera *Nabucodonosor*, as it was still called at that time, in the Ricordi magazine *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 1843.

The year of *Nabucco*'s premiere also marks the launch of Ricordi's famous *La Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* magazine, without which the popularization of the various contemporary operas would have been unthinkable. Numerous articles on *Nabucco* also appeared in the *Gazzetta*, and Ricordi advertised all his scores and libretto editions here.

In the years of the Risorgimento, the magazine supported the Italian independence movement and was temporarily banned by the censors.

8. Giuseppe Verdi – Midwife for Italy’s national anthem



A letter with consequences

Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Tito I. Ricordi, Paris, 22 March 1862.

For his cantata *Inno delle Nazioni*, which he composed for Italy's participation in the World Exhibition in London in 1862, Verdi asks Ricordi to send him the score of Michele Novaro's *Canto degli Italiani* with Goffredo Mameli's text, and ends up incorporating his "Fratelli d'Italia" into his work as an Italian anthem. At the time, the new Italian state did not yet have a national anthem in the contemporary sense.

In his letter, to clarify his request, he jots down the beginning of the piece from memory.

Canto degli Italiani became Italy's provisional national anthem in 1946, and its official one in 2012.

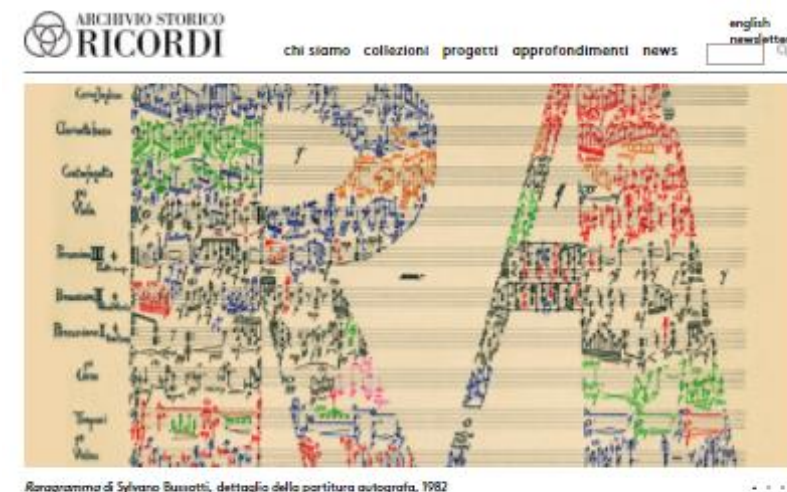
Further information on the Archivio Storico Ricordi

The Archivio Storico Ricordi and Bertelsmann

The **Archivio Storico Ricordi** contains documents and artefacts from 200 years of Italian operatic history and is regarded as one of the world's most valuable privately owned music collections. Bertelsmann acquired it in 1994.

The archive now contains 7,800 original scores of more than 600 operas – including valuable original manuscripts by Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini – as well as about 10,000 librettos, 6,000 historical photographs, numerous costume drawings and the Casa Ricordi publishing house's complete business correspondence from 1888 to 1962.

Bertelsmann is having the archived materials comprehensively indexed, digitized and, in many cases, restored. Today, thousands of documents can already be viewed and researched for free on the publicly accessible online platform Collezione Digitale (<http://digital.archivioricordi.com>).



Archivio Storico Ricordi

Ricordi è sinonimo di grande musica: l'opera lirica, la musica classica e la musica pop sono state profondamente segnate dagli artisti che Ricordi ha saputo promuovere nel corso di oltre due secoli di attività editoriale. Oggi è possibile ripercorrere questa storia affascinante attraverso i tesori del suo Archivio Storico, la più importante raccolta musicale privata del mondo.

[SCOPRI >](#)

IN PRIMO PIANO



COLLEZIONE DIGITALE

Naviga e consulta i documenti digitalizzati dell'Archivio grazie alla risorsa online dedicata.

[ENTRA >](#)

A Cathedral of Music

In summer of 2017, Bertelsmann published “A Cathedral of Music – The Archivio Storico Ricordi” through Prestel, a Verlagsgruppe Random House imprint. The richly illustrated 224-page volume traces the history and development of the Archive, including through its thousands of scores, letters, libretti, opera stage and costume designs, photographs and original posters from the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods, and gives insights into the history of the business of having music created, presenting it to the public, promoting it, distributing it, and preserving it for posterity.

A Cathedral of Music – The Archivio Storico Ricordi

Prestel

Hardcover, linen with jacket

ISBN-10: 3791356232

ISBN-13: 978-3791356235

£45.00 / \$59.95

Date of publication:

UK: 22 August 2017

US: 14 September 2017

