

A CATHEDRAL OF MUSIC

THE ARCHIVIO STORICO RICORDI

BERTELSMANN

Contents

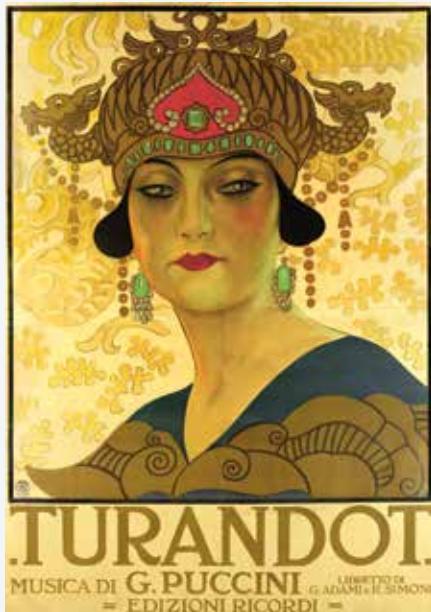
- 2 The Archivio Storico Ricordi –
A Bertelsmann Project
- 4 Collections:
- 4 The Manuscript Collection
- 6 Printed Scores
- 7 Libretti
- 7 Images

Title—Giuseppe Verdi, *Otello*,
handwritten score, 1887.

The Archivio Storico Ricordi – A Bertelsmann Project

In 1808, Giovanni Ricordi founded a music publisher in Milan that would significantly shape the cultural history of Italy and Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries: Casa Ricordi. It published the works of the “big five” composers of Italian opera—Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini. From the beginning, all of the company’s documents were meticulously archived. Now the former business archives of the Casa Ricordi publishing company, which was acquired by Bertelsmann in 1994, have become a historical archive: The Archivio Storico Ricordi, one of the world’s foremost privately held music collections, which is now housed in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan.

In 2006, Bertelsmann sold its former music rights business to Universal, but retained the rights to the Ricordi brand and the publisher’s famous archives, which have since operated as an independent legal entity under the name of “Ricordi & C.” based in Milan. All of the revenues generated by Ricordi & C. go to towards making the archive accessible and preserving it for posterity. The Archivio is under the special protection of the Italian



1

Ministry of Culture. As a national heritage, the Archivio Storico Ricordi must remain in Italy.

1—Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1926. Poster for the premiere by Leopoldo Metlicovic.



2

After having been an integral part of Casa Ricordi for decades and being used primarily for commercial purposes such as the publication of "critical editions," the archive has recently been undergoing an accelerated transformation into a historical research archive. Since February 2011, a project group at Bertelsmann has been developing a sustainable concept for indexing the archival material. Employees at Bertelsmann's Corporate History department in Gütersloh are working with the Ricordi team in Milan on the continuous restoration and digitization of the archive. The idea is to develop the Archivio Storico Ricordi into a best practice case in the field of communicating cultural and historical archive materials in the digital era, both natio-

nally and internationally, and making its unique resources accessible to a wider audience besides the academic community.

The archive's original scores of numerous operas from the 19th and early 20th century and many other compositions are among the highlights of European music history. Today the name Ricordi primarily stands for 200 years of Italian opera and music history. From Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* to Luigi Nono's *Prometeo*—the Ricordi archive is a true "cathedral of music" (Luciano Berio).

Bertelsmann is aware of the great responsibility that ownership of this unique cultural heritage entails, and continues to uphold the tradition associated with the Ricordi name.

2—Original covers of handwritten Verdi scores in the archive.

3—Gioachino Rossini, *L'italiana in Algeri*, aria of Elvira
Nella testa ho un campanello, manuscript, 1813.

The Collections

The archive now contains 7,800 original scores from more than 600 operas, including valuable original handwritten scores by Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini; 10,000 libretti; all business correspondence with composers and librettists; costume drawings; more than 10,000 stage designs and figurines; and close to 6,000 photographs, posters, drawings and prints. All in all, the Archivio Storico Ricordi comprises more than 100,000 archival items. The documents provide a unique way of understanding the entire genesis of Italian opera.

The Manuscript Collection

The heart of the archive, and certainly its most valuable component, is the extensive collection of over 7,000 handwritten scores—first and foremost by the “big five” (Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Puccini). 23 of the 28 operas by Verdi exist as handwritten manuscripts. Puccini’s career is inextricably linked to Ricordi, which published all his operas except *La Rondine*.



VERDI E L'OTELLO

Numero Unico

PUBBLICATO
dalla

ILLUSTRAZIONE
ITALIANA

COMPILATO DA

Ugo Presi ed Ad. Ximenes

fratelli **TREVES** editori

Via Palermo 2

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alla
ILLUSTRAZIONE
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Prezzo del presente Numero 2



Other noteworthy representatives of 19th and early 20th century opera besides these two include Saverio Mercadante, Simone Mayr, Franco Faccio and Riccardo Zandonai. A large share of the manuscripts has been carefully restored. The restoration also made it possible to see deleted passages and amendments for the first time, for example on pasted-over pages that were not previously visible. The study of these manuscripts is essential for the reconstruction of critical editions and understanding how an opera is created.

Among the treasures of the manuscript collection is a large archive of letters, including of course the correspondence with Verdi and Puccini. Much of this has already been published, but the originals are very valuable as memorabilia and testimonies. The 15,000 letters include extensive correspondence with composers, writers, librettists, singers, conductors and other personalities from the theater business. The indexing and study of these insightful documents is one of the Archivio Storico Ricordi's most important tasks.

Printed scores

In addition to the manuscripts, the archive also has an impressive collection of printed scores. Although not every edition was preserved, the available material provides insights into the evolution of sheet music printing and matters of design, especially the covers or title pages, which were designed with loving care and attention to detail. Some editions also contain dedications and comments from users, such as conductors, which provide clues about their reception and interpretation.

4—Special issue of the magazine *Illustrazione Italiana* marking the premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*, 1887.

Libretti

The Archivio Storico Ricordi has an extensive collection of libretti. There are handwritten drafts, typed, and printed libretto editions. Most of the libretti are printed editions, with various different editions for some operas, from the premiere to modern-day editions, from Italy and abroad.

The archive's libretto collection documents Giovanni Ricordi's purchase of various other collections, such as that of the Teatro alla Scala; the impact of censorship; the evolution of the libretto in the 20th century, and much more.

Images

The archive's iconographic collection pertains to the 19th and 20th century. The archive has about 600 original stage designs, mostly from the premieres of the various works. The picture collection consists of thousands of individual pieces from a major collection of figurines, penned by famous costume designers.

Photographs form another series of iconographic documents in the archive. There are over 6,000 photographs from the late 19th and 20th centuries, including shots of scenes and exteriors as well as portraits of composers, librettists, actors, dancers and singers. The collection of pictures also includes posters (including advertising posters) from the time the turn of the century and the beginning of the 20th century, an important testimony to Ricordi's activity in the field of graphics. At that time, Casa Ricordi was one of the few publishers in the world that was able to print large posters, even receiving orders for posters from overseas.

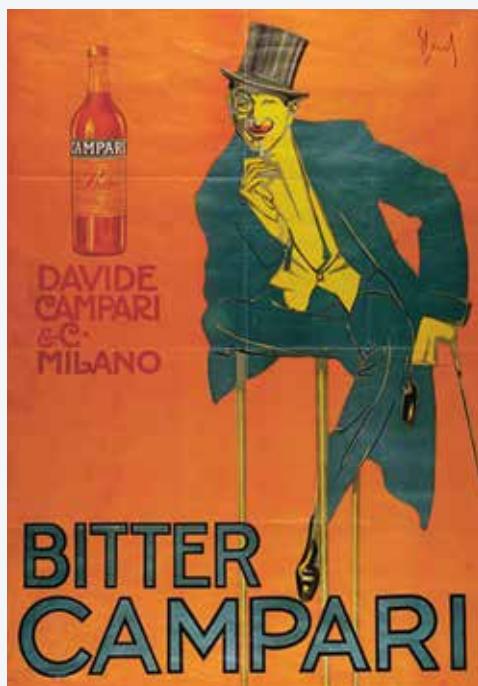




G. M. T. H.



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5—Giacomo Puccini, *Tosca*,
cover of the libretto
for the premiere, 1900.

6—Franco Alfano, *Sakuntala*,
Premiere, Bologna,
Teatro Comunale, 1921.
Sakuntala, Act II and III,
costume design by
Daniele Crespi.

7—Arrigo Boito, *Mefistofele*,
Milan, Teatro alla Scala,
1881. *Prologue in Heaven*,
Stage design by Carlo Ferrario.

8—Poster for Bitter Campari
by Enrico Sacchetti, 1921.

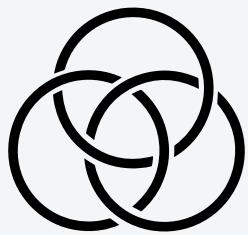
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We invite you to browse "A Cathedral of Music—The Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan," the richly illustrated 223-page catalog published in 2013 to mark the "Enterprise of Opera" Verdi exhibition, at: www.bertelsmann.com/media/the-archivio-storico-ricordi-milan-katalog-engl.pdf



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Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA
Corporate Communications
Carl-Bertelsmann-Straße 270
33311 Gütersloh
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