

PRESS RELEASE

Bertelsmann Loans Ricordi Archive Pieces to V&A for Spectacular Opera Exhibition in London

- **Distinguished Victoria and Albert Museum presents 400 years of opera history in “Opera: Passion, Power and Politics”**
- **Sheets from original score, libretto and contract documents for Giuseppe Verdi's “Nabucco” on first-time loan to Great Britain**
- **New Prestel book gives insights into history and development of Archivio Storico Ricordi**

Milan/London, September 27, 2017 – The international media, services and education company Bertelsmann is supporting the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London with loans from the Ricordi Archive. From September 30, 2017 to February 25, 2018, the V&A will present 400 years of opera history in a comprehensive exhibition entitled “Opera: Passion, Power and Politics.” Among the operas featured in the show is Giuseppe Verdi's “Nabucco” from 1842, which is particularly well documented in the Ricordi Archive. Items on loan from the Milan-based archive, which is operated by Bertelsmann, include the recently restored original score to the world-famous “Va, pensiero” (Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves), pages from the historical libretto of “Nabucco,” contract documents, and a letter written by Verdi to his publisher Tito Ricordi. A total of eight 19th-century exhibits will travel from Italy to Great Britain for the first time, and will be on display in the “Nabucco” section of the London exhibition for the next few months.

For many years, Bertelsmann has been engaged in a variety of cultural initiatives both in Germany and internationally. The Group's “Culture@Bertelsmann” activities comprise exhibitions, readings and concerts, the “Blue Sofa” literary format, as well as a commitment to preserving Europe's cultural heritage. Besides its efforts in connection with the Ricordi Archive, Bertelsmann, as a company with a long history in filmmaking, also supports and sponsors the restoration, digitization and screening of major silent films.

Bertelsmann Chairman & CEO Thomas Rabe said: “Bertelsmann is closely connected to European opera history through the Ricordi Archive. So it made perfect sense for us to support this exceptional, wide-ranging exhibition at one of the world's most renowned art museums. Beyond the exhibit loans, we are also participating in the V&A exhibition as a sponsor.” He emphasized that as a creative company whose history dates back 182 years, Bertelsmann feels it is very important to honor the cultural achievements of previous generations. This is particularly true of Archivio Storico Ricordi, which houses thousands of unique documents of Italian opera history and has been part of the group since 1994.

The exhibition “Opera: Passion, Power and Politics” takes visitors on a monumental journey through the cultural history of the opera, from the beginnings of musical theater to the present day.

It will immerse visitors in 400 years of European history by focusing on seven operatic premieres in seven cities: from the first known opera, Claudio Monteverdi's "L'incoronazione di Poppea" (Venice, 1642), to George Frideric Handel's "Rinaldo" (London, 1711) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro" (Vienna, 1786), to Giuseppe Verdi's Nabucco (Milan, 1842), Richard Wagner's "Tannhäuser" (Paris, 1861) and Richard Strauss's "Salomé" (Dresden, 1905), and finally Dimitri Shostakovich's avant-garde work "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" (St. Petersburg, 1934). Hundreds of original documents and historical rarities, paintings, music recordings and film clips demonstrate the charisma and continuing relevance of opera as an art form. The exhibition is the first to be shown in the contemporary architecture of the Victoria and Albert Museum's recently completed Sainsbury Gallery.

Besides an exhibition catalog, the book "A Cathedral of Music – The Archivio Storico Ricordi" will also be on sale at the V&A museum shop. Published by the Bertelsmann imprint Prestel, its 224 pages provide a richly illustrated insight into the history and holdings of one of the most important musical archives worldwide.

Bertelsmann had acquired the iconic Italian music-publishing company Casa Ricordi in 1994, but later divested itself of the music company and the Ricordi music rights as part of its withdrawal from the traditional music business. However, the associated Archivio Storico Ricordi and the rights to the Ricordi brand remained within the Group. The archive inventory 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, and the company's complete business correspondence from 1888 to 1962, which provides far-reaching insights into how the cultural industry thought and worked at that time. The original scores of many 19th- and early 20th-century operas stored here, along with those of many other compositions, are highlights of European music history.

Bertelsmann is working with the Ricordi team in Milan to safeguard the archive's stocks for posterity through continual restoration and digitization. The idea is to develop the Archivio Storico Ricordi into an international best-practice case in the field of communicating cultural and historical archive materials in the digital era, and to make its resources accessible both to the academic community and to a wider audience.

In December 2016, the entire iconographic collection was put online in a Collezione Digitale (<http://digital.archivioricordi.com>). Bertelsmann will gradually make all important collections of the archive available digitally free.

"Opera: Passion, Power and Politics"

In collaboration with the Royal Opera House

The Sainsbury Gallery

Exhibition Road

30 September 2017 – 25 February 2018

vam.ac.uk/opera | [#Operapassion](https://twitter.com/Operapassion)

For more information about Bertelsmann and the Archivio Storico Ricordi, please visit <https://www.bertelsmann.de/news-und-media/specials/archivio-storico-ricordi/#st-1> or www.archivioricordi.com

Bertelsmann (editor)
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A Cathedral of Music
The Archivio Storico Ricordi

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About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 116,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.0 billion in the 2016 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world.

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