

PRESS RELEASE

Culture@Bertelsmann Goes Digital: Ricordi Archive in Milan Kicks Off Digital Summer of Culture

- Streams of rare Verdi and Puccini operas
- Reissue of first Ricordi record: “Medea” with Maria Callas
- Open source project: Music experts worldwide can participate in transcribing historical business letters

Milan/Berlin, June 22, 2020 – Bertelsmann’s Milan Ricordi Archive, which houses treasures from 200 years of Italian opera history, is launching the digital summer of culture under the brand Culture@Bertelsmann with six online events. Starting on June 23, 2020, among other things live recordings of rare operas will be streamed, an iconic music recording from the 1950s will be presented in a new edition, and an open source project for transcribing historical business correspondence will be launched. The schedule can be found on Bertelsmann’s culture website www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, on www.facebook.com/Bertelsmann and under the hashtag #BertelsmannCultureDigital.

On **June 23** at 9 p.m., the rarely performed opera “Edgar,” which Bertelsmann had presented with the Berliner Operngruppe under the artistic direction of Felix Krieger at the Konzerthaus Berlin in 2019, will be streamed. Giacomo Puccini’s early work already hints at the musical genius that he would later reveal to perfection in operas such as “La Bohème,” “Tosca,” “Madama Butterfly,” and “Turandot. The Ricordi archive contains numerous original documents on “Edgar” and other Puccini operas. The cast: Peter Auty (Edgar); Elena Rossi (Fidelia); Silvia Beltrami (Tigrana); Aris Argiris (Frank); David Oštrek (Gualtiero), and the Berliner Operngruppe e.V. choir and orchestra. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/Bertelsmann)

June 30 marks the start of a far-reaching cooperation between the Ricordi Archive and the Wikimedia Foundation Italy. This will involve creating detailed links between Ricordi content and Wikipedia entries and strengthening the archive’s ties to the Wikipedia community. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/archivioricordi)

On **July 1**, in cooperation with the Italian Embassy in Germany, there will be a video foretaste of a musical evening with pieces by Franz Liszt and Giuseppe Verdi as part of the Milan initiative Brera/Musica. The music project of the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Ricordi Archive was scheduled to take place in the Raphael anniversary year 2020, but has had to be postponed until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/Bertelsmann)

On **July 6**, the Archivio Storico Ricordi launches a transcription project in which music experts and music lovers from all over the world are invited to participate. The archive houses more than 30,000 items from the business correspondence between Casa Ricordi in Italy and artists and business partners from the years between 1808 and 1962.

They tell the story of one of the leading music publishers of that period, and shed light on important facets of Italian opera history. Since 2018, the letters have been freely accessible online as part of the archive's digitization. Now the task at hand is to gradually transcribe the correspondence, much of which is handwritten, to make it accessible for music research and a wider audience. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/archivioricordi)

July 15 sees the launch of a strictly limited-edition reprint of the first Ricordi record: Cherubini's opera "Medea" in the iconic recording by the orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala conducted Tullio Serafin, with Maria Callas in the title role. The 1958 recording is being re-released as a joint project between Bertelsmann, Archivio Storico Ricordi, and Sonopress, making it available to vinyl fans again in the future. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/archivioricordi)

On **July 22**, another musical rarity will be streamed: Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Stiffelio" in a performance close to the original score. Bertelsmann and the Berliner Operngruppe presented the piece in 2017; this live recording, too, will be available for free download for 24 hours. Verdi had already come into conflict with the censors at the premiere of his 16th opera in 1850, and had to revise his work several times. The Ricordi Archive was able to contribute important score fragments and original correspondence to reconstruct the original version of "Stiffelio," which was long believed lost. With: Peter Auty (Stiffelio); Maria Katarava (Lina); Alfredo Daza (Stankar) and Francesco Ellero d'Artegna (Jorg); artistic direction: Felix Krieger. (www.bertelsmann.com/culturedigital, www.facebook.com/Bertelsmann)

The Archivio Storico Ricordi is one of the world's most valuable privately owned music collections. It has been part of Bertelsmann since 1994. The archive's holdings comprise 7,800 original scores from more than 600 operas – including valuable original manuscripts by Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gioachino Rossini– and around 10,000 libretti, close to 6,000 historical photographs, numerous costume drawings, as well as the entire business correspondence of the Casa Ricordi publishing house from 1888 to 1962. Bertelsmann is having the archival documents comprehensively indexed, digitized and in many cases, restored. Thousands of documents can already be digitally viewed and researched on the Collezione Digitale online platform (<http://digital.archivioricordi.com>).

The Ricordi projects will be followed in August by the UFA Film Nights silent film festival, which this time will take place over three days exclusively online as part of "Culture@Bertelsmann goes digital." In autumn, parallel to the Frankfurt Book Fair, more than 50 authors will take a seat on the #DasBlaueSofaDigital to talk about their books. The discussions will be live-streamed from Bertelsmann Unter den Linden in Berlin to the Internet.

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 as in the case of the Archivio Storico Ricordi, for example, is part of Bertelsmann. As a company with a long history in filmmaking, Bertelsmann has also long supported and sponsored the restoration, digitization and screening of major silent films.

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 126,000 employees and generated revenues of €18.0 billion in the 2019 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. Bertelsmann aspires to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.

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