

PRESS RELEASE



## Original Documents and AI Animation: Bertelsmann Presents Unique Puccini Exhibition

- **“Opera Meets New Media” features original documents from the Archivio Storico Ricordi and an artist’s AI animation**
- **Thomas Rabe: “The exhibition contributes to the ongoing discourse about new media and their disruptive influence on business, culture and society.”**
- **The exhibition can be seen daily from April 18 to May 16 at Bertelsmann Unter den Linden in Berlin**

Gütersloh, April 11, 2024 – For over a century, the works of Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) have been among the most frequently performed operas in the world. The composer celebrated his greatest successes with *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot* at a time of monumental technological innovation: the development of new entertainment media meant a revolution for society as well as for the musical culture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and fundamentally challenged the traditional business model of musical theater. To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Giacomo Puccini’s death, Bertelsmann presents “Opera Meets New Media – Puccini, Ricordi, and the Rise of the Modern Entertainment Industry,” a multimedia exhibition on the interplay between opera and the media at the time.

Bertelsmann Chairman & CEO Thomas Rabe says: “‘Opera Meets New Media’ sheds new light on the ‘Puccini era’. Ricordi’s publishers played a key role in the industrialization and internationalization of music theater in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By taking this thematic approach, the exhibition contributes to the ongoing discourse about new media and their disruptive influence on business, culture, and society. I am delighted that we are able to showcase some of the unique holdings from the Archivio Storico Ricordi, which is part of Bertelsmann, in this contemporary interpretation.”

The exhibition “Opera Meets New Media” was put together by an international team of curators comprised of Gabriele Dotto (principal curator), Christy Thomas Adams, and Ellen Lockhart. It tells the story of the extraordinary symbiosis of commercial activity and artistic creation already practiced by Puccini and his publisher, Casa Ricordi, in the last century. It traces the rapid rise of sound recordings and film as competitors for opera theaters and the traditional business of music publishers. Other topics include the new, modern, and efficient marketing strategies developed by Casa Ricordi to market its opera repertoire, the “branding” of the publishing house’s most successful composer and its globally expanding business.

Exhibits and installations also tell of the challenges of the then new media for existing copyright law and the exploitation of performing rights. “Opera Meets New Media” was made possible by the extensive holdings of the Archivio Storico Ricordi, which belongs to Bertelsmann, with artifacts relating to Puccini’s operas published by Ricordi, supplemented by letters, business documents, composition registers, publications and many other contemporary testimonies.

### **From sketch to living art**

Designer and art director Sascha Geddert, who has made a name for himself with his work on films such as “The Batman” and series such as “Babylon Berlin,” brought historical stage designs to life especially for “Opera Meets New Media.” Using state-of-the-art technology, he created exclusive, AI-generated works for the exhibition based on historical stage designs of the five scenes of Turandot from the Archivio Storico Ricordi, which had been meticulously digitized. Two advanced AI technologies were then used to analyze the sets and generate suggestions on how to enrich them with realistic details, textures, and colors that match the artist’s original intentions. Subtle movements lend the scenes a vibrant atmosphere and allow the five works of art to come alive in a new light.

Karin Schlautmann, who is responsible for the Archivio Storico Ricordi in her role as Executive Vice President Corporate Communications at Bertelsmann, says: “This innovative approach using the latest technology means that Puccini’s artistic vision is, for the first time, presented in a way that goes far beyond the static boundaries of paper drawings and reflects the up-to-dateness of his work. This transfer to the present is the aim of our exhibition. The Archivio Storico Ricordi has been part of Bertelsmann since 1994. In order to preserve this valuable cultural asset – it is considered one of the most important music collections in the world – we are indexing the archive holdings according to the latest standards and making them accessible to the general public – as with this exhibition.” Even the design of the exhibition’s communications plays with the possibilities of the new technologies: A digital 3D model by Iranian digital artist Hadi Karimi shows a lifelike figure of Puccini at the age of 42.

### **“OPERA MEETS NEW MEDIA – Puccini, Ricordi and the Rise of the Modern Entertainment Industry”**

April 18 – May 16, 2024, daily 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Bertelsmann Unter den Linden in Berlin  
Unter den Linden 1  
10117 Berlin  
Admission is free.

Prestel (Penguin Random House) is publishing a richly illustrated publication to accompany the exhibition under the editorship of Gabriele Dotto.

Further information about the exhibition can be found at [www.puccini2024.com](http://www.puccini2024.com).

Archivio Storico Ricordi is regarded as one of the most important music collections in the world. Today, its holdings contain a wealth of unique testimonies from 200 years of Italian opera history, including 7,800 handwritten scores, more than 31,000 letters, 6,000 photographs, magazines, 10,000 libretti and many other documents. Bertelsmann is aware of the responsibility that comes with owning these valuable cultural assets. The company

conserves and digitizes the archive holdings according to the latest standards and makes thousands of documents, stage and costume designs, libretti and business correspondence available online.

Further information can be found at [www.archivioricordi.com](http://www.archivioricordi.com).

### **About Bertelsmann**

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company with more than 80,000 employees that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the entertainment group RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato Group, Bertelsmann Marketing Services, the Bertelsmann Education Group, and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company generated revenues of €20.2 billion in the 2023 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.

[www.bertelsmann.com](http://www.bertelsmann.com)

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