

## PRESS RELEASE

## Verdi Treasures from Milan's Ricordi Archive make U.S. debut

- **New York's Morgan Library & Museum and archive owner Bertelsmann combine their Verdi collections for a unique exhibition: "Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* – Highlights from the Ricordi Archive"**
- **Valuable original documents and artefacts provide deep insights into the creative process of one of the greatest opera composers**

New York/Milan, August 27, 2019 – Rare testimonies to the history of Italian opera from the Milan-based, Bertelsmann-owned Ricordi Archive will now be shown in the United States for the first time. Fans of classical music and literature can look forward to the exhibition "Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* – Highlights from the Ricordi Archive", which will be on view at the renowned Morgan Library & Museum in New York from September 6, 2019 to January 5, 2020.

The exhibition traces the genesis and realization of Verdi's last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, using original scores, libretti, selected correspondence, set and costume designs, and more. Giuseppe Verdi – alongside Giacomo Puccini, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gioachino Rossini – is one of the five great names of 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian opera whose works were published by Casa Ricordi and documented in its Archivio Storico Ricordi. The Ricordi Archive is regarded as one of the world's foremost privately owned music collections. The Morgan Library & Museum complements the exhibition with rarities from its own collection, including early editions of texts by William Shakespeare, whose dramaturgical material served as the basis for the operas *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

This combination of materials from the two great institutions under the guidance of curators Fran Barulich and Gabriele Dotto gives visitors a unique opportunity to gain first-hand insights into the European cultural scene of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The supporting program of the exhibition also includes a concert with Verdi arias, a screening of Franco Zeffirelli's *Otello*, and a lecture with experts from the Ricordi Archive.

Colin B. Bailey, Director of the Morgan Library & Museum, said: "We are delighted to present these highlights from the Ricordi Archive, showing how Italy's pre-eminent composer shaped what would become two of his crowning achievements, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. A collection of set designs, costumes from Milan's Teatro alla Scala, autograph manuscripts, contracts, publications, publicity, video excerpts from recent productions, as well as objects from the Morgan's collection enable visitors to experience the tremendous collaborative efforts behind an operatic production."

Thomas Rabe, Chairman & CEO of Bertelsmann, said: "The name Ricordi stands for 200 years of Italian opera and music history. As the owners of the Ricordi Archive, we are very aware of the importance of this European cultural asset and take responsibility for its sustained preservation, care and development. Exhibitions like the one in New York, in partnership with the Morgan Library, are a great opportunity to keep the creative work of earlier generations alive and to reach audiences beyond the musicological community."

## A formative influence on European cultural history

The richly textured exhibition “Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* - Highlights from the Ricordi Archive” describes the creative process of the two world-famous operas – from initial deliberations about commissioning the celebrated composer to the premieres of *Otello* in 1887 and *Falstaff* in 1893. The idea for *Otello* first arose in 1879, when Verdi was 65, but he did not begin to work on the project in earnest for several more years, when he was in his 70s. There was almost a 16-year hiatus between the 1887 premiere of *Otello* and the 1871 premiere of *Aida*. His Milanese publisher Giulio Ricordi teamed up with the librettist Arrigo Boito to develop a diplomatic strategy for luring “the old bear” out of retirement at his country home in Sant’Agata. Their plan worked, and applying his mature compositional skills to two brilliant libretti by Boito, Verdi created two of the greatest operas ever composed. Giulio Ricordi was ultimately responsible for marketing and managing the two large-scale productions. The exhibition thus provides a deep insight into the work of three geniuses who formed a kind of “business community.”

The partnership with the Morgan Library & Museum offers additional material that enriches the Ricordi exhibition: Shakespeare’s First and Second Folios, rare editions of scores and libretti, contemporary publicity material, an autograph letter from Verdi’s wife, and autograph sketches for *Otello*.

The New York exhibition represents a new milestone in the presentation of the Ricordi Archive to the public: In Verdi Year 2013 – the composer’s bicentennial – the archive’s treasures were first presented in Germany as the curtain-raiser to a traveling exhibition that toured Europe. At the time, the “Enterprise of Opera: Verdi. Boito. Ricordi” exhibition was shown in Berlin and Gütersloh and subsequently in Brussels, Milan and Vincenzo. It now forms the basis for the forthcoming exhibition in New York.

The Ricordi Archive houses a total of some 7,800 original scores from more than 600 operas and hundreds of other compositions; approximately 10,000 libretti; an extensive iconographic collection with precious original stage and costume designs; and a vast amount of historical business correspondence of Casa Ricordi. Founded in 1808 by Giovanni Ricordi in Milan, the Italian music publisher had a fundamental influence on the cultural history of Italy and Europe. Bertelsmann, the international media company which also includes the BMG music group and the New York-based trade publishing group Penguin Random House, bought Casa Ricordi in 1994, but sold the music company and Ricordi’s music rights in subsequent years. Only the associated Ricordi Archive remained within the group. Since then, Bertelsmann has had the archived items comprehensively indexed, digitized and, in many cases, restored. The company also organizes concerts and exhibitions to keep Casa Ricordi’s cultural heritage alive and make it accessible to as many people as possible.

## **“Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* – Highlights from the Ricordi Archive”**

September 6, 2019 to January 5, 2020  
The Morgan Library & Museum  
225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street  
New York, NY 10016

### **Programs:**

#### Gallery Talks

“Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* – Highlights from the Ricordi Archive”

Friday, September 13, 6pm

Friday, November 15, 1pm

#### Films

“*Otello*”

Friday, September 20, 7:00 pm

“*Tosca’s Kiss*”

Friday, October 18, 7:00 pm

#### Family Program

Curtain’s Up! Theatrical Design at the Morgan

Saturday, September 21, 11:00 am

Dance: Inspired by Verdi

Saturday, November 9, 2:00 pm

#### Concerts

George London Foundation Recitals

Sunday, October 20, 4:00 pm

#### Lectures and Discussions

“Verdi and the Ricordi Archive”: An Evening with Pierluigi Ledda and Gabrielle Dotto

Wednesday, October 2, 6:30 pm

“Le Conversazioni: Films of My Life”

Thursday December 5, 7:00 pm

For more information about the exhibition, hours, and admission, please visit  
[www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org).

For more information about the Ricordi Archive please visit  
<https://www.archivioricordi.com/en> or <https://www.bertelsmann.com>.

### **Organization and Sponsorship**

“Verdi: Creating *Otello* and *Falstaff* – Highlights from the Ricordi Archive” is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York in collaboration with the Bertelsmann/Ricordi Archive. Lead funding for this exhibition was generously provided by Marina Kellen French and the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

## **About The Morgan Library & Museum**

*The Morgan Library & Museum | 225 Madison Avenue | +1 212.685.0008 | [themorgan.org](http://themorgan.org)*

A museum and independent research library located in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the personal library of financier, collector, and cultural benefactor Pierpont Morgan. The Morgan offers visitors close encounters with great works of human accomplishment in a setting treasured for its intimate scale and historic significance. Its collection of manuscripts, rare books, music, drawings, and works of art comprises a unique and dynamic record of civilization, as well as an incomparable repository of ideas and of the creative process from 4000 BC to the present.

## **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 117,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.7 billion in the 2018 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 engages 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 jointly created with partners, as well as a commitment to preserving Europe's cultural heritage.

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