

**DAVIDE CERIANI • ALEXANDRA MONCHICK  
BARBARA BOGANINI • ALOMA BARDI • GRETCHEN PETERS**

**WINONA, “ALL-INDIAN OPERA”  
BY FLORENTINE-AMERICAN COMPOSER ALBERTO BIMBONI  
(1882-1960)  
AND THE ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDIANIST MOVEMENT  
IN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE**

**ESSAYS FROM “INTERSECTIONS/INTERSEZIONI” • ICAMUS SESSION • FLORENCE, 1 JUNE 2017  
EDITED BY ALOMA BARDI**



**ICAMUS 2018**



# **Winona, “All-Indian Opera”**

## **by Florentine-American Composer Alberto Bimboni (1882-1960)**

### **and the Italian Contribution to the Indianist Movement**

#### **in American Music and Culture**

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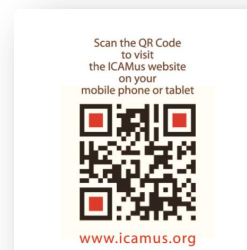
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\* Illustration on Cover Page: Soprano Minna Pelz as Winona, during rehearsals for the opera premiere in Portland, OR, Nov. 1926. Newspaper clip in Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.



## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



At the intersection of Italian Opera and Native-American motifs and music, *Winona* is an unpublished opera in three acts (c. 1915-1918) by Florentine-American composer and conductor, Alberto Bimboni (Florence 1882 - New York 1960) to a libretto by Perry S. Williams.

*Winona* was performed in the US in 1926 and 1928 to great success and critical acclaim. Since the 1700s, the prominent Bimboni musical family had played an important role both in Italy and in the US, as inventors, composers, conductors, and teachers.

A copy of the manuscript score of *Winona* and the unique *Winona*-related Scrap Book were donated to the ICAMus Archive in 2014 by a friend of the Bimboni family, Ms. Julia Jacobs (1922-2014).

*Winona* tells the story, from a Sioux legend, of a Dakota Indian princess and her relationship to the laws of her people. The locations of Lake Pepin (Minnesota and Wisconsin) and Maiden Rock still resonate with the Winona legend. In this opera, Native American traditional chants, Chippewa and Sioux songs, Moccasin, war and hunting songs are woven into the story and the score.

Committed to “authenticity”, and in order to respect the Indian musical traditions, Bimboni composed the choral scenes in unison, avoiding part-singing. All the opera characters are American Indians, and so were some performers of the two US stage productions in the 1920s.

This volume features the revised content of the ICAMus Session on *Winona*, presented at the international “Intersections/Intersezioni” Conference, directed by Profs. Fulvio Santo Orsitto and Simona Wright, held in Florence, Italy, on June 1st, 2017. It explores the significant Italian contribution to the controversial Indianist movement that flourished in American music and culture from the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the early 1900s.

The ICAMus conference session was followed by the live performance of a selection from *Winona*, in collaboration with Conservatorio di Musica “Luigi Cherubini” di Firenze. The performance, which took place in the Sala del Buonomore of the Music Conservatory, was based on the unpublished manuscript of the opera, housed in the ICAMus Archive, Ann Arbor, MI, USA.

Our warmest thanks to “Intersections” and to the conference directors, Profs. Fulvio Santo Orsitto and Simona Wright, for inviting ICAMus for the third time, and for the wonderful opportunity of an international conversation among scholars.

ICAMus is thankful to the conference presenters and to Dr. Alexandra Monchick for sharing their research and discoveries.

The most special thanks to Julia Jacobs, for donating the unique Bimboni Collection to the ICAMus Archive. This publication is dedicated to her memory.

We acknowledge the valuable help, expertise, and collaboration of Estelle Gilson; Roberta Prada and the late Jack Lee; Judith Lungen and Richard Lener; Anna Maria Gasparri Rossotto; the Amedeo Bassi Archive - Biblioteca Comunale “Balducci” and the Museo Amedeo Bassi in Montespertoli (Firenze), and the Archive of the Teatro Regio of Turin.

It is our hope that the ICAMus research will inspire more scholars and performers to study the beautiful, distinctive score of *Winona*.

*Aloma Bardi, Montespertoli (Florence, Italy), May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018*





Palazzo Vettori, Florence, Italy; Kent State University - Florence Program, hosting the yearly “Intersections/Intersezioni” Conference.



ICAMus Director, Aloma Bardi, introducing the ICAMus Session on Alberto Bimboni’s unpublished opera, *Winona*, at the “Intersections/Intersezioni” Conference, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.



**ORESTE AND ALBERTO BIMBONI, FLORENTINE MUSICIANS IN AMERICA:  
THEIR INTERNATIONAL CAREER  
AND HOW THEY INFLUENCED THE AMERICAN MUSICAL SCENE \***

**DAVIDE CERIANI**  
(ROWAN UNIVERSITY)  
AND  
**ALEXANDRA MONCHICK**  
(CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE)

While Oreste and Alberto Bimboni have long been neglected in musicological scholarship, their contribution to opera and operatic education in the United States should not be discounted. The two Bimbonis were part of a long legacy of Florentine musicians. The previous generations included Giovanni Sr., Giovanni Jr., and Gioacchino. Giovanni Sr. was a luthier born in the late

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\* This article was presented in form of talk at the conference *Intersections/Intersezioni 2017* hosted by Kent State University, Florence Program, Palazzo Vettori, on June 1, 2017. Davide Ceriani wrote the first part of this article, which introduces the Bimboni family and discusses Oreste Bimboni's life and career; Alexandra Monchick wrote the second part, which focuses on Alberto Bimboni. All webpages were consulted on June 10, 2017, unless otherwise indicated.

eighteenth century; his children, Giovanni Jr. and his brother Gioacchino, occasionally toured abroad, but remained in Tuscany for most of their lives. Gioacchino obtained international recognition as a trombone virtuoso and as the inventor of a music instrument that he named the *bimbonifono*.<sup>1</sup>



Bimbonifono (<http://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/browse-our-collections/object/12673>)

Giovanni Sr. became a clarinet virtuoso and professor at the Royal Music Institute (*Regio Istituto Musicale*) of Florence, which later became the Conservatory of Florence.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Giovanni Jr.'s son, Oreste, and Oreste's nephew Alberto spent a substantial amount of time abroad and particularly in the United States. In the early 1900s, Oreste became a professor at the New

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<sup>1</sup> Jarro (pen name of Giulio Piccini), *Attori, cantanti, concertisti, acrobati. Ritratti, macchiette, aneddoti. Memorie umoristiche* (Florence: Bemporad, 1897), 59-80. See also Raoul Meloncelli, “Bimboni, Gioacchino” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 10 (1968), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gioacchino-bimboni\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gioacchino-bimboni_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29). For images of the *bimbonifono*, see <http://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/browse-our-collections/object/12673>.

<sup>2</sup> For more details about the history of today's *Conservatorio di Musica* of Florence, see <http://www.conservatorio.firenze.it/it/conservatorio/storia-dell-istituto>.

England Conservatory where he taught for three years. In 1911 Alberto, possibly encouraged by Oreste’s experience, moved to North America and remained there until his death in 1960. Oreste was born in Florence in 1846 and received a comprehensive music education at the local Royal Music Institute. Beginning in the late 1860s, he embarked upon a very successful international career as a conductor. One of the highlights of his career was the very popular concert series that he organized in Hamburg in 1895, which he named the *Bimboni Konzerte*. The same year Oreste conducted his most successful opera, the verismo-influenced *Santuzza*, at the opera house of Palermo.<sup>3</sup> He also worked with some of the most important singers of his time, including Adelina Patti and Emma Calvé.

Oreste’s first documented arrival in the United States through Ellis Island dates to 1896.<sup>4</sup> The likely purpose for his visit was to discuss the publication of an *Ave Maria* with representatives of the Oliver Ditson Company, a major music publishing company at the time,<sup>5</sup> and to conduct the New York-based Imperial Opera Company.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1898, Oreste moved to California where he conducted several opera performances, which included the famous soprano Nellie Melba.<sup>7</sup> He was well regarded by both audiences and critics alike as a conductor. In October 1898, a journalist for *The New York Times* wrote that Bimboni’s “admirable conducting of opera in this country is still fresh in the memory of most of us.”<sup>8</sup> After the performances in California, he returned to Florence.<sup>9</sup> Oreste’s excellent reputation was likely one of the reasons that helped him to win a position at the New England Conservatory (henceforth NEC). In his entry in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, musicologist Raoul Meloncelli states:

In 1902 [Oreste] Bimboni moved to the United States, where he became a voice professor at NEC, and where he taught until 1903. When he returned, he was appointed as director of the vocal performance department at the Conservatory of Florence. He died there on August 4, 1905.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Meloncelli, “Bimboni, Oreste” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 10 (1968), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/oreste-bimboni\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/oreste-bimboni_(Dizionario-Biografico)).

<sup>4</sup> Search “Bimboni” in <http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger-result>.

<sup>5</sup> “Musical Notes,” *The Washington Post*, March 28, 1897.

<sup>6</sup> Armand Fortin, “A Tribute,” *The Neume* (1906), 73.

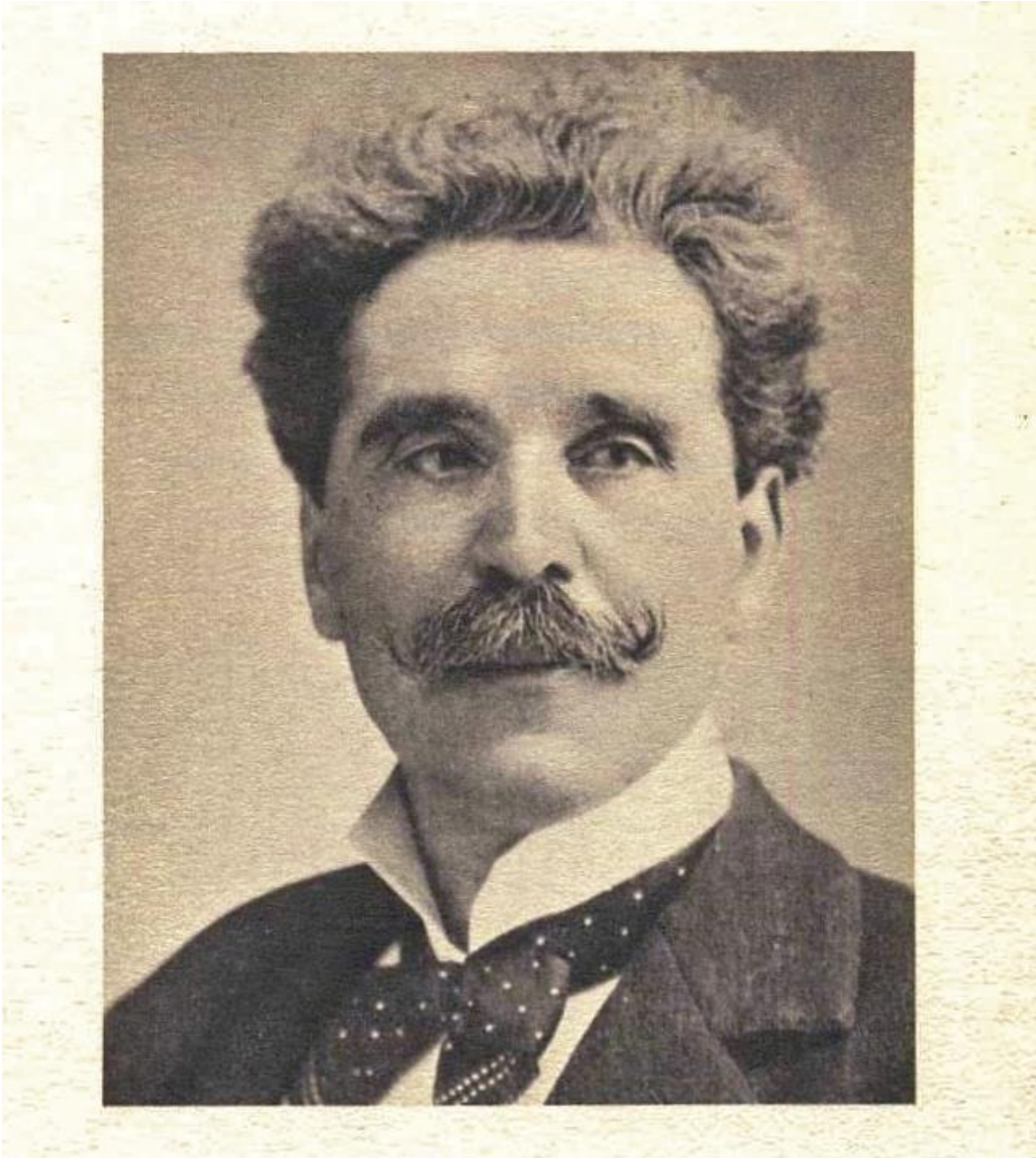
<sup>7</sup> “Queen of Song and Master of Music,” *San Francisco Call*, April 11, 1898.

<sup>8</sup> “In the World of Music,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1898.

<sup>9</sup> Fortin, “A Tribute,” 73.

<sup>10</sup> Meloncelli, “Bimboni, Oreste,” [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/oreste-bimboni\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/oreste-bimboni_(Dizionario-Biografico)). “Nel 1902 il B. si recò negli Stati Uniti e divenne professore di canto al New England Conservatory of Music di Boston, ove insegnò fino al 1903. Al ritorno in patria, gli venne affidata la direzione del Centro lirico del conservatorio di Firenze. Morì a Firenze il 4 agosto 1905.”





Oreste Bimboni as a teacher at the New England Conservatory. In Bruce McPherson and James Klein (eds.), *Measure by Measure: A History of New England Conservatory from 1867* (Boston: NEC, 1995), 60.

## QUEEN OF SONG AND MASTER OF MUSIC.

Two World-Famous Artists Who for Three Nights Will Make the California Ring With Sweetest Melody.



### MELBA AND SIGNOR BIMBONI.

From a Photograph by Falk.

Oreste Bimboni, who will direct the performances of Mme. Melba, has had a career this is rich in achievement, both in composition and in the direction of grand opera.

He was born at Florence, Italy, September 11, 1847, of a family of musicians. His father was a bandmaster, a trumpet virtuoso, and the inventor of the "Bimbonifonia." Every attention was given to the education of Oresto. He studied the piano under Dechamps, and harmony and counterpoint under Professor Mabellini, at the Conservatory of Florence. When he was 18 he enlisted as a soldier under the banner of Garibaldi. After his return from the campaign he finished his studies at Berlin under Taubert.

His career as a conductor began at Bastia, Corsica. He then went to Milan,

where he was engaged for the Victoria Theater at Berlin, by the impresario Pollini, who is now in Hamburg. He then served in like capacity at the Imperial opera of Moscow. Few are the European cities in which he has not shown his power. Thus, he was conductor at the Vienna Imperial Opera House in 1883 and 1884; he has led in the opera houses of Barcelona, Lisbon, Bucharest, Venice, Naples, London, with companies of the highest grade, with such singers as Patti, Gerster, Calve, etc.

In connection with the announcement of the grand operatic performance in this city by Melba, Signor Giuseppe Campanari will sustain the role of Figaro, the mischief-making intermediary between Rosina and her lover, the Duke Almaviva, in the performance of the "Barber of

Seville."

Signor Giuseppe Campanari is one of the foremost barytones upon the Italian stage of to-day. Born in Veneto he showed a disposition toward music at an early age. The cello was his favorite instrument, and he was for some time a member of the orchestra of La Scala, Milan. There he discovered that he had a voice, and after earnest study he appeared in opera houses of Italy and Spain.

Melba will open at the California Theater on Tuesday night, April 19, and will give only three performances, at which the following prices will prevail: Boxes, \$40; single seats, down stairs, \$7 and \$6; balcony, first three rows, \$5; next four rows, \$4, and last seven rows, \$3; reserved seats in the gallery will be \$2, and \$1 will be the price asked for admission.

Article on Oreste ("Oresto") Bimboni, *The San Francisco Call*, Monday, April 11, 1898, 20.



Oreste Bimboni, Photographic portrait by William McKenzie Morrison, Chicago, c. 1902. Harvard Theatre Collection- Bimboni TCS 1.2500. Harvard University. The Bimboni here portrayed has been mistakenly identified as Alberto in *Wikipedia*.

Newly-discovered evidence, however, seems to suggest a slightly different picture. Bimboni began his appointment in October 1901 at NEC, where his main duties consisted of conducting operatic performances rather than teaching voice.<sup>11</sup> It was George W. Chadwick, then director of NEC, who offered Oreste this position. Chadwick, who became director in 1897, modeled NEC after European conservatories. He initiated a series of courses and activities including a student repertory orchestra and opera workshops; Bimboni was asked to focus on the latter.<sup>12</sup> Even though he never conducted an entire opera, Bimboni organized concerts of operatic numbers, which were still very useful in training singers. On May 23, 1902, for example, he directed a series of performances at the Opera School of NEC at the Boston Theatre. The program consisted of a series of duets, trios, and ensembles from a variety of operas, including Verdi's *Aida* and *Traviata*, Gounod's *Faust*, Donizetti's *La Favorite*, and Wagner's *Lohengrin*.<sup>13</sup> Other public recitals followed in March and June of 1903. The *New England Conservatory Magazine* conveyed that the March performance was a “distinct advance[ment]” compared to the one of the previous May.<sup>14</sup> Other newspapers credited Oreste Bimboni as the one who was responsible for such an improvement. A reviewer for the *Boston Transcript*, for example, writes that “Mr. Bimboni can heartily congratulate himself on his success in fitting young people to appear on the stage.” A reviewer for the *Boston Journal* goes even further, claiming that:

These performances give students the opportunity to show of what stuff they are made of ... They will educate audiences as well as aspirants especially when Mr. Bimboni leads. They may be the forerunner of an established opera with an ample repertory and at reasonable price.<sup>15</sup>

Praise continued after the June performance. The press claimed that soon Bimboni's opera *La modella* would have been performed in its entirety by NEC students, but that performance never materialized.<sup>16</sup> A last performance took place on March 10, 1904.<sup>17</sup> In addition to his activities at NEC, Oreste Bimboni participated on a regular basis at gatherings of the *Sinfonia of America Society*.<sup>18</sup>

Records of Ellis Island indicate that he only entered the United States in 1896 and in 1904, but it is possible that Bimboni went back and forth more than once through the Boston seaport. He died in summer 1905 in Florence as a result of complications from a cancer-related operation.<sup>19</sup> Even though the Boston press spoke favorably of Oreste Bimboni, the Opera School that he established did not survive after his death.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce McPherson and James Klein (eds.), *Measure by Measure: A History of New England Conservatory from 1867* (Boston: NEC, 1995), 60.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://necmusic.edu/archives/george-w-chadwick>.

<sup>13</sup> “The First Public Operatic Performance,” *New England Conservatory Magazine*, 5/VIII (July 1902), 114.

<sup>14</sup> “The Public Opera Performance,” *New England Conservatory Magazine*, 4/IX (May 1903), 160-161.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> “The Third Public Opera Recital,” *New England Conservatory Magazine*, 5/IX (July 1903), 209-210.

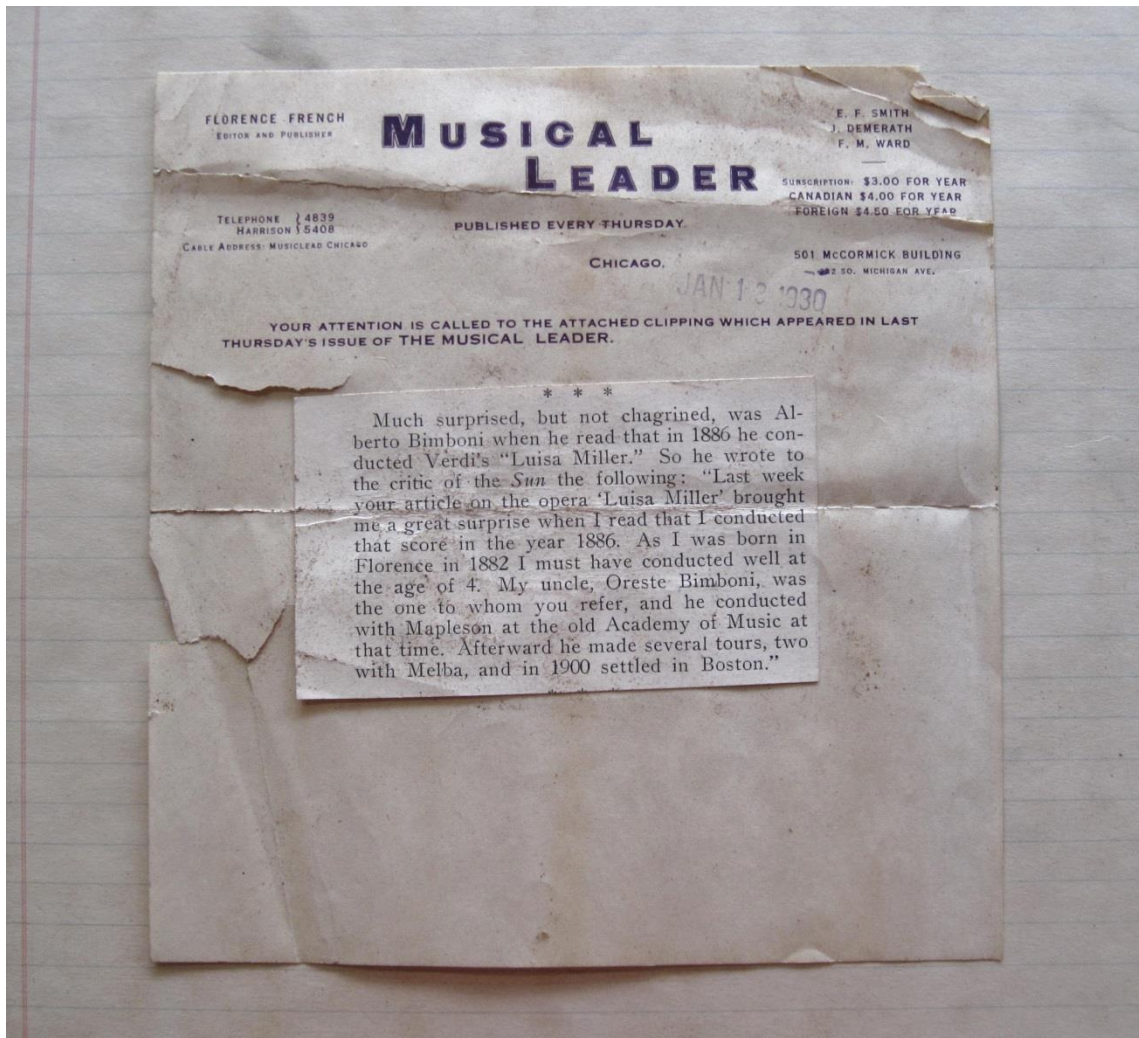
<sup>17</sup> “The Fourth Public Opera Performance,” *New England Conservatory Magazine*, 4/X (May 1904), 178-180.

<sup>18</sup> “Convention of the Sinfonia,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 17, 1903.

<sup>19</sup> “Death of Oreste Bimboni: Italian Composer Once Conductor of New York Opera Company,” *Washington Post*, August 20, 1905, and (untitled), *New York Times*, August 20, 1905.

<sup>20</sup> McPherson and Klein, *Measure by Measure*, 61.

Oreste’s work at NEC likely inspired Alberto to visit the United States. His entry records at Ellis Island show that the conductor, a twenty-nine-year old single resident of Florence, disembarked on June 30, 1911 from the *Mauretania*.<sup>21</sup> In the United States, Bimboni conducted the Savage Opera Company (1911-12) and the Century Opera Company (1913-14) among others. After having taught at both the Curtis Institute and Julliard School in the 1930s and early 1940s, Alberto moved to Canton, Ohio to direct a local opera company. He later returned to New York City, where he resided until his death.

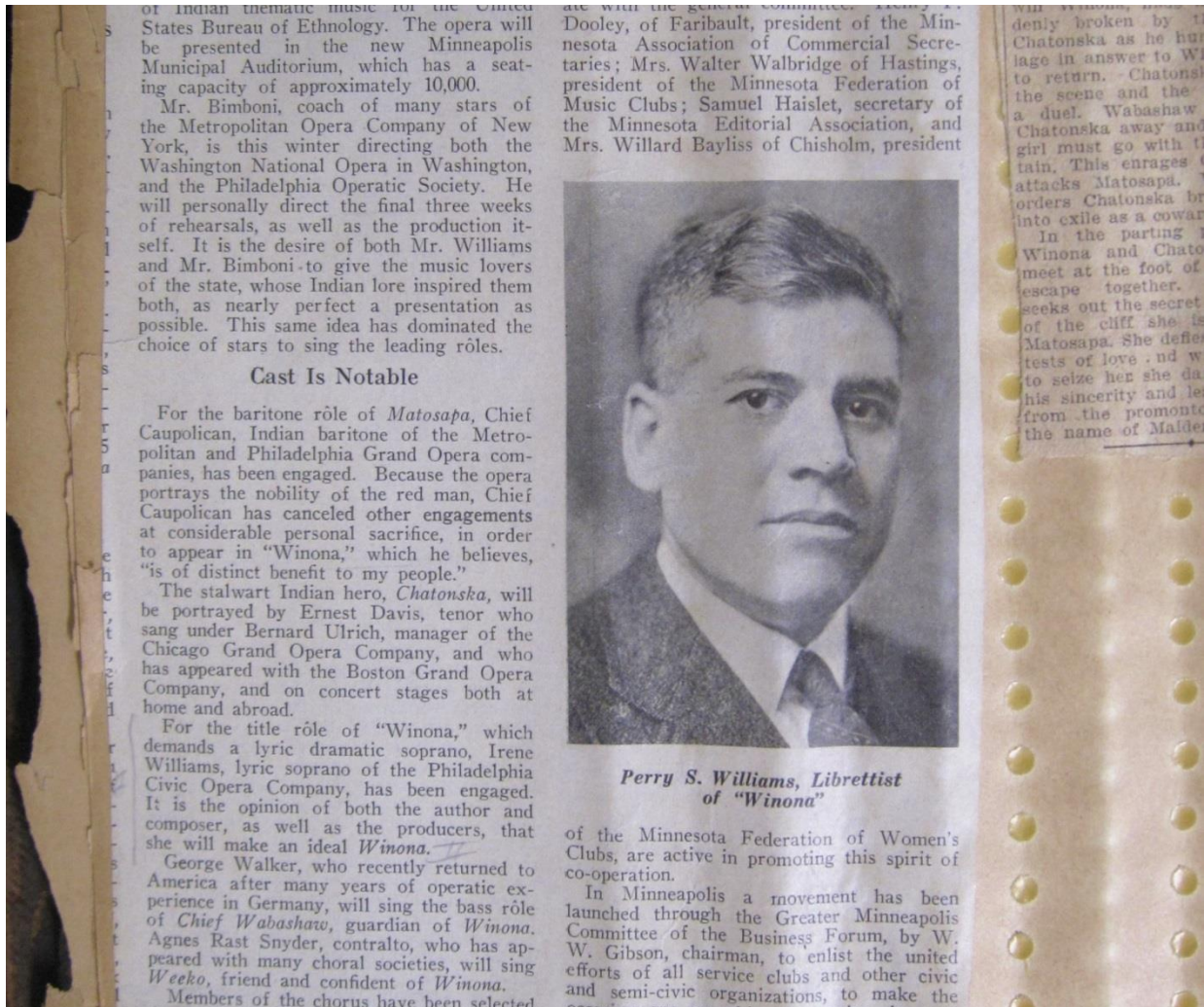


Alberto Bimboni on his uncle, Oreste Bimboni, and himself, in a January 1930 article of *The Musical Leader*. Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, loose paper, The ICAMus Archive.

Alberto was mostly known as a conductor. He was not an especially prolific composer, though he still wrote four operas: *Winona* (premiered in 1926 in Portland, OR), *Karina* (Minneapolis, 1928), *Il cancelletto d’oro* (New York City, 1936) and *In the Name of Culture* (Rochester, NY, 1949). *Winona* was the work that put Bimboni on the map as a serious composer. In 1915 he began writing this opera in collaboration with the Minneapolis newspaper critic Perry Williams.

<sup>21</sup> Search “Bimboni” in <http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger-result>.

Likely inspired by Giacomo Puccini’s *La fanciulla del West*, which Bimboni conducted in the United States in 1912, *Winona* was based on a Native-American folk legend, and blended authentic melodies with Italian lyricism. The opera immediately raised questions in the press concerning nationalism and exoticism with regard to the future of American opera.



Perry S. Williams, Librettist of *Winona*. Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Perry Williams clearly remembers how he first came into contact with Bimboni. After meeting the famous tenor, Riccardo Martin, on Broadway in the mid 1910s, the singer suggested that Bimboni write to Williams. As Williams recounts:

Out of a clear sky came this letter from Signor Bimboni asking permission to compose an opera about my libretto. Mr. Bimboni had asked Mr. Martin if he knew of a libretto, in the English language, suitable for an opera. Mr. Martin immediately referred him to me. This is how *Winona* was composed.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Minnesota Indian Legends Give Rise to Opera *Winona*,” *The Oregonian*, November 2, 1926.



Alberto Bimboni and librettist Perry S. Williams, at the time of the Portland production of *Winona*, 1926. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Bimboni began working on the opera in 1915, but Williams’s libretto was conceived well in advance. Williams had been interested in Native-American folklore since his high school days.

The Sioux legend of *Winona* inspired him so much that he set it into a poem. Williams was quoted as saying:

I therefore undertook ... to arrange [the events of the legend] in such a way that strung together they would make a complete story, with a given plot, a given setting, and everything, in short, essential to the composition of a poem.<sup>23</sup>

Williams turned the poem into a libretto a few years later. As Bimboni recounts:

[Martin] told me he had just mailed back the libretto for an American Indian opera to Perry Williams of Minneapolis and that it was a lovely manuscript with many opportunities for a composer. So I wrote Mr. Williams and he sent the libretto and I composed the opera. So it was done. It took much patience to choose the Indian melodies. I had five books on Indian music by Miss Frances Densmore of the Smithsonian Institution, and I studied them long—long!<sup>24</sup>

While Williams thoughtfully adapted the Native-American legend, Bimboni perused the collection of Densmore, an ethnomusicologist specializing in Native-American music. The composer took great care to preserve the original melodies of the Minnesotan Native Americans. It was not only the melodies of Densmore’s transcriptions that Bimboni used in his opera, but also the monophonic and antiphonal textures suggestive of Native-American music. While Bimboni preserved many of the original melodies, his music possessed an inherent Italianate lyricism, which reminded critics of Verdi. In a volume published in 1927 and titled *American Opera and Its Composers*, one early scholar of American music, Edward E. Hipsher, focused on these qualities of the score:

The score, though modern in treatment, follows in the wake of Verdi, in that it is an opera for voices rather than for the orchestra. The rhythms are masterful, compelling, at times, electric; the work breathes of the theater.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike typical operatic arias, however, the Native-American melodies were narrow in range and with limited wide leaps. The melodies included war songs, Moccasin songs, a Chippewa lullaby, Chippewa and Sioux serenades, in addition to Native-American flute calls.<sup>26</sup> A critic of *The Oregonian* newspaper would praise the composer for his synthesis of Native-American and Italian styles:

Far from proving that the Italian style was blatantly unfit for an Indian opera, last night’s performance demonstrated beyond all doubt that none was more fit than the Italian. The maestro’s musical patterns, ostensibly Italian in their flavor and tint, enhanced the

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hipsher, *American Opera and Its Composer* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1927), 69.

<sup>26</sup> Hipsher, *American Opera*, 68.



characteristic Indian rhythms and melodic patterns to a degree [that] indicated the free play of genius.<sup>27</sup>



Alberto Bimboni and librettist Perry S. Williams collaborating on *Winona*. The same 1926 article, together with other newspaper clips, glued to another folio of Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

The use of “tint” (*tinta* in the original Italian) clearly refers to the carefully chosen orchestral coloring of Verdi. These repeated references to Verdi and his techniques were likely the result of Bimboni’s ethnic origins. Nonetheless, *Winona* contained quintessentially Native-American idioms, which resonated with the local press. Hipsher, for example, remarks:

America is a heterodox country, and it has often been said that it will never express itself in art until it succeeds in emphasizing the anomaly of traits, which make up the American character. This is the best theoretical reason why *Winona* should be accepted as a goodly stride toward the expression of American life.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “Minnesota Indian ...,” *The Oregonian*, November 2, 1926.

<sup>28</sup> Hipsher, *American Opera*, 69.

In today’s musicological climate, situating the opera within the context of nationalism and exoticism is a complicated issue. Other essays contained in this collection will further elaborate on this matter.

Despite Alberto’s “ostensibly Italian” musical language, as reported by the critic of *The Oregonian*, he maintained a reputation as a composer of American opera. A music critic of the same newspaper writes:

*Winona* is an American opera. It was composed to a libretto in the English language and adapted to the taste of the American people. It expresses the anomaly of the American nation, the heterodoxy of American life.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1910s and 1920s, Italian opera composers such as Verdi, Puccini, and Mascagni, among others, were the most performed in the United States. All of them, however, were based in Italy. Bimboni, on the other hand, moved to the United States permanently, fusing his musical language and traditions with those of his adoptive home.

In conclusion, it was a Florentine who wrote one of the most representative American operas of the 1920s. As Edward Hipsher writes one year after *Winona*’s premiere:

Till such a plane in our musical art is reached, let us welcome, among our own, the musical art creator, from whatever race or clime, so long as he comes willing to fuse his identity with our national life. Let him bring his art, his education, his traditions, and then let him cast these and his lot, whole-souled, with the rest of us, and grow into as a good American as he can.<sup>30</sup>

These lines perfectly match the spirit of Bimboni’s *Winona*. While the work is almost never performed today, this opera not only reflected the spirit of its time, but also showed the importance of transnational exchange on musical culture during the early twentieth century.



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<sup>29</sup> Untitled article in *The Oregonian*, October 24, 1926.

<sup>30</sup> Hipsher, *American Opera*, 17.



Davide Ceriani presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.



## **GIACOMO PUCCINI, AMEDEO BASSI, ALBERTO BIMBONI: TUSCAN CONNECTIONS IN AMERICAN MUSIC**

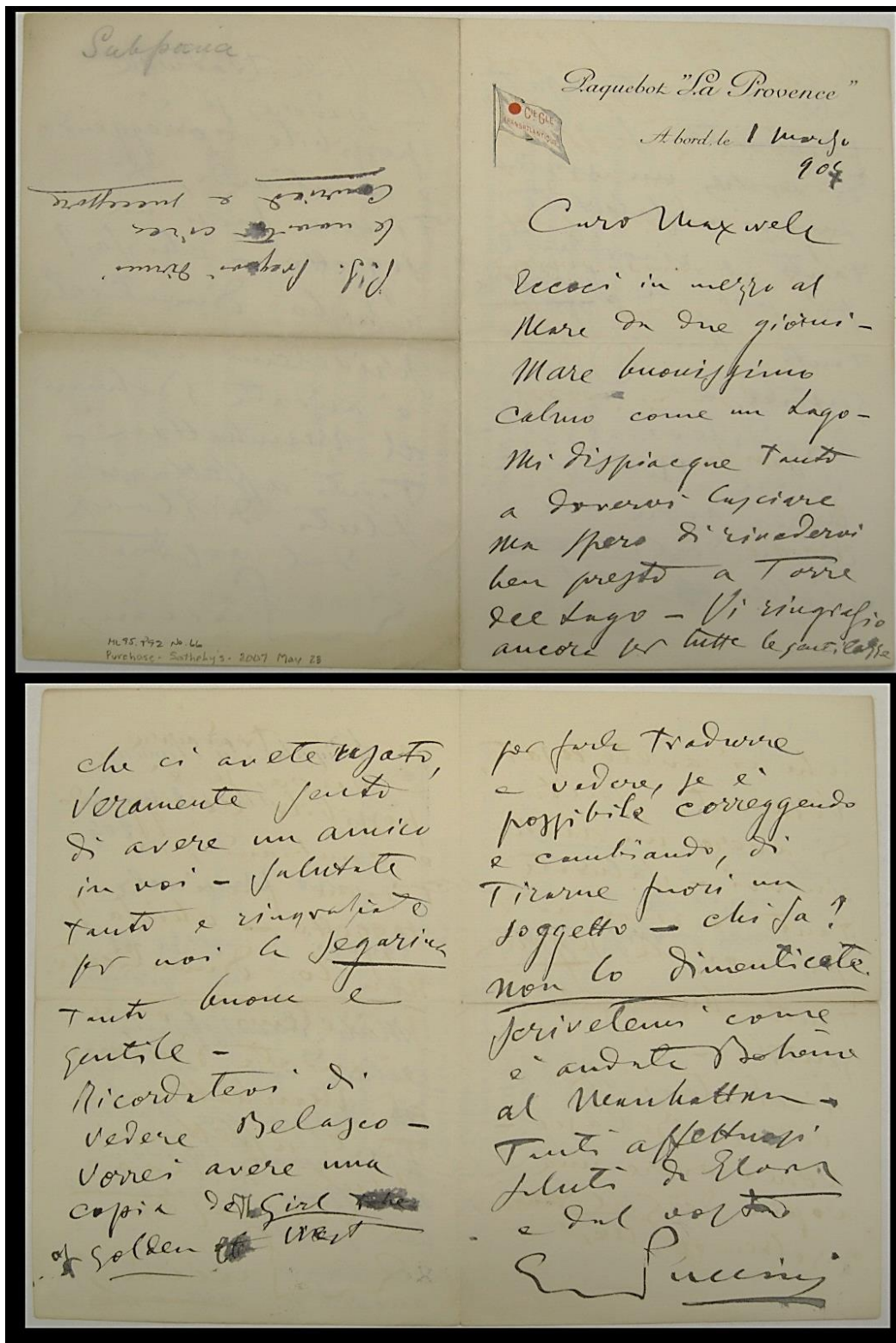
**BARBARA BOGANINI**  
(CAMERATA STRUMENTALE «CITTÀ DI PRATO»  
AND ICAMUS - THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC)

As already stressed by Davide Ceriani, when dealing with the influence of Italian composers and performers in the US in the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the highlight always appears to be Giacomo Puccini, in particular his “American Opera,” *La Fanciulla del West*, which was in 1910 the first Italian opera based on an entirely and authentically American subject. The drama, drawn from the play by David Belasco (San Francisco 1853 - New York 1931), *The Girl of the Golden West*, defines the entrance of the Far West and gold-seekers in the operatic literature.

Puccini first saw Belasco’s play during his stay in New York between January 9 and February 28, 1907, and his interest in the subject was immediate, as evident from the letter addressed to George Maxwell (Ricordi’s New York representative) written on board of the Paquebot “La Provence,” while returning to Europe on March 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Barbara Boganini, *Puccini, the U.S. and the Years of “La Fanciulla.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition - Illustrated*, ICAMus 2012; <http://www.icamus.org/en/archive/puccini-us-and-years-la-fanciulla-unpublished-correspondence-tra/> See Appendix A, p. 38.



Giacomo Puccini, Letter to George Maxwell, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1907. The Library of Congress Music Division, Washington, DC.  
 In Barbara Boganini, *Puccini, the U.S. and the Years of "La Fanciulla."* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition - Illustrated, ICAMus 2012;  
<http://www.icamus.org/en/archive/puccini-us-and-years-la-fanciulla-unpublished-correspondence-tra/>

At the time of the genesis of *La Fanciulla del West*, exoticism was a fundamental ingredient in theater. Puccini, pursuing a modernization of musical and theatrical language, showed interest in American music traditions and was a pioneer in choosing a dramatic subject that had not yet found its way into Italian opera. Within a context of increasing popularity of the early American Western silent film, the novelty of Belasco’s drama deeply struck the composer.<sup>32</sup>

*La Fanciulla* shows many interesting features; among them, the contact between the Italian composer and the American world, which occurred mainly through the subject, as we said. The influence and inspiration of American folk music and popular music on Puccini and his “American Opera”, *La Fanciulla del West*, has developed into a major line of research,<sup>33</sup> still offering the opportunity for new discoveries and insights. It is a fascinating exploration, from which many elements emerge revealing the intense relationships, at the beginning of the twentieth century, between Italy and the United States,<sup>34</sup> and specifically between Tuscany and the United States.

After the final choice of the subject for his new opera, which would premiere at the Metropolitan of New York on December 10, 1910, Puccini studied numerous American music publications, both of folk music and popular music. By the term “folk music,” we refer here to traditional Native American music, in the style of the transcriptions and arrangements that became largely popular at the time, adapted for educational and amateur purposes. This type of music was published at the beginning of the twentieth century by Wa-Wan Press, an American publishing company founded in 1901 by composer Arthur George Farwell,<sup>35</sup> on the wave of the rising interest for ethnomusicological research. I will here consider in particular a notable collection published by Wa-Wan Press, *The Traditional Songs of the Zuñis*.

Puccini’s source of one of the opera principal musical theme is a melody of the Zuñi Indians, *The Festive Sun-dance*, in this arrangement by Carlos Troyer.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Helen Greenwald, “Realism on the Opera Stage: Belasco, Puccini, and the California Sunset,” in *Opera in Context: Essays in Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini*, Ed. Mark A. Radice (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1998): 279–96. See also Roger A. Hall, *Performing the American Frontier, 1870–1906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Annie J. Randall and Rosalind Gray Davis, *Puccini and the Girl: History and Reception of “The Girl of the Golden West”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Allan W. Atlas, “Belasco and Puccini: ‘Old Dog Tray’ and the Zuñi Indians,” *The Musical Quarterly* 75, No. 3 (1991): 362-98; Linda B. Fairtile, “‘Real Americans Mean Much More’: Race, Ethnicity, and Authenticity in Belasco’s *Girl of the Golden West* and Puccini’s *La fanciulla del West*,” *Studi pucciniani* 4 (2010): 89–101.

<sup>34</sup> Davide Ceriani, “Opera as Social Agent: Fostering Italian Identity at the Metropolitan Opera House during the Early Years of Giulio Gatti-Casazza’s Management, 1908–1910,” in *Music, Longing, and Belonging: Articulations of the Self and the Other in the Musical Realm*, ed. Magdalena Walingóska (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 114–34.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur George Farwell (1872-1952). Gilbert Chase and Neely Bruce, *Farwell, Arthur*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, Eds. (London: MacMillan; New York: Groves Dictionaries of Music, 1986). Richard Crawford, *America’s Musical Life: A History* (New York and London: Norton, 2001), 438-39; Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 228-29.

<sup>36</sup> *Traditional Songs of the Zuñis*, Second Series: Transcribed and Harmonized by Carlos Troyer (Newton Center, Mass.: The Wa-Wan Press, 1904). Barbara Boganini, *Un caso di assimilazione: gli Indiani Zuñi, Troyer e Puccini. Analisi della citazione creativa di “The Festive Sun-dance” nella “Fanciulla del West”*, ICAMus 2011.



*Traditional Songs of the Zuñis, Second Series: Transcribed and Harmonized by Carlos Troyer (Newton Center, Mass.: The Wa-Wan Press, 1904); illustrated Cover Page.*

By the term “popular music”, we refer to original music by American composers, both from the time of *La Fanciulla*’s action (mid-19th century) and from the time of the performance of Belasco’s play and Puccini’s opera. Such body of music dates from the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century; those pieces were composed and published for entertainment purposes, both for private and social occasions, and both for professional and amateur users.

Puccini’s score is a kaleidoscope of musical exoticisms which recall and are inspired by American music through the songs by major authors like Stephen Collins Foster, George M. Cohan,<sup>37</sup> and even by the musical heritage of Native Americans although it is the Native music filtered from a late-romantic perspective that was accessible to the Italian composer. However, Puccini’s style did not directly originate from ethnomusicological interests, since he was not interested in reproducing a background *tout-court* for his opera, or even in representing an identity. Rather, the combination of diverse cultural elements and musical sources, and their re-creation in an assimilatory process show the international stature of the Tuscan composer, who evidently shared certain compositional orientations inspired by the investigations about the American musical past. The expectations for an “American” opera by Puccini, fomented by the publicity machine in full swing, contributed to the debate over the identity of American music, as evidenced by the many chronicles and reviews of the time, whether they adhere to Puccini’s intentions or not.<sup>38</sup>

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West" thus sets the composer an impossible psychological task, of frequently expressing the unexpressible in music. This leads to a frequent severing of the connection between music and drama, which detracts, through the shattering of the interest in this aspect of the work, from the value of those moments of psychological verity to which the composer does so signally attain at times.

**Employment of the Leit-Motif**

In this continuous music the leit-motif is freely employed, it is often psychologically ineffective, however, for the reason just given. The musical web throughout, except for wholly independent sections here and there, is produced not so much by thematic development as by thematic variation and adaptation. It is not a weighty fabric. The scheme is simple, and there is no polyphonic complexity. Puccini's music is always fluent, and has always a certain salubry of conception, as music, which gives it a greater weight with those who do not insist on dramatic and psychological truth than with those who do.

For a composer to fall psychologically, where success is impossible, by reason of the nature of the text, is nothing against him, except in his willingness to accept such a text. It is more serious, however, to fall short of dramatic musical effectiveness when success is in sight. This happens at the entrance of *Kamerez* the robber

such as that assigned to *Rance* in his narrative in the first act. The following fragment (ex. 1.) is the basis of this passage:

and which is sung by Johnson at "I'll never give you up" ("Io non ti lascio piu"), the critic of the New York Sun writes:

III, molded on a broader plan, sweeps through with considerable power.

The orchestration is always spicy and appetizing, and often serves to cover up what must be regarded as the thinness of much of the music.

Little or nothing of the influence of Wagner and Strauss is felt in "The Girl of the Golden West." It is strongly un-Lutonic, and essentially Latin. It seems to mark a transition for Puccini. He has apparently been studiously and laudably receptive to outside influences since his last operatic essay. It is thus that one broadens and grows. But it is likely he will make a more authentic and unified use of the new material in his next opera than he has succeeded in doing in this. It is certain, after he shall tire of corraling wild western musical ideas, that the world will remain grateful to him in proportion as he remains true to the genius of his race.

**What the Critics Said About It**

AN idea of how the critics of the New York dailies received the new Puccini opera may be gained from the following excerpts:

He (Puccini) has shown himself to be also a consummate master of stagecraft. He may properly be called the Balzac of opera. No other operatic master of any period has known better than Mr. Puccini what will successfully cross the chasm between the footlights and the audience. Together with this skill he has an exquisite apprecia-

Puccini has a positive genius for keeping to the middle ground of modernity. He finds and puts in the particular dissonant note which bites, but does not bark. He taxes the ear with just enough modernism to keep it guessing, but without enough to annoy it. He resolves his dissonances just in the nick of time for the semi-trained modern ear. No one will damn him for repeating the sins of Strauss.

**Not Really American**

In regard to the American character which Puccini feels himself to have achieved in "The Girl of the Golden West," it must be emphatically affirmed that it does not exist. This may be said without derogation to the art of Puccini. American character and spirit in music, various

He has hit upon a strain which recalls some of the American music of Debak, and which will therefore give pain to Boston, because in this case it will be difficult to prove that it is Bohemian instead of imitation dandy.

The melody in question is an adaptation, in a rhythmic metamorphosis, of an Indian song, "The Chattering Squaw," used by Harvey Worthington Loomis in his composition of that name in Book II of his "Lyrics of the Red Man."

**Indian Themes Not Known to Americans**

The interesting and curious phenomenon in connection with Puccini's use of Indian themes is that these melodies are not yet familiar to Americans, and that such of his music as is based upon them is foredoomed to fall upon deaf ears, so far as American sympathies are concerned.

Section of Arthur Farwell’s article on *La Fanciulla del West*, in *Musical America* 13, No. 6, December 17, 1910, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Collins Foster (1826-1864); George Michael Cohan (1878-1942). Charles Hamm, *Yesterday. Popular song in America* (New York-London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 201-27, 311-17; Gilbert Chase, *American’s Music* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955), 628-29.

<sup>38</sup> “Writes American Music himself, but Puccini does not know MacDowell”, *Musical America* 13, No. 3, November 26, 1910; “True Americanism in Puccini Score?”, *Musical America* 13, No. 5, December 10, 1910; “The Music of Puccini’s Opera – Arthur Farwell Discusses Results of Composer’s Efforts to Create a Score Which Truly Reflects Western Life in America”, *Musical America* 13, No. 6, December 17, 1910, 4-5. Farwell’s extensive, detailed comments were part of a major coverage (5 full pages) featured in the December 17, 1910 issue of *Musical America*.





**WRITES AMERICAN MUSIC HIMSELF, BUT PUCCINI DOES NOT KNOW MACDOWELL**

**"Coon Songs" Occur First to Mind of Italian Composer When American Music Is Mentioned—Here for Production of "The Girl of the Golden West"**

IN the sitting room of the suite, occupied by Giacomo Puccini at the Hotel Knickerbocker, New York, stands a grand piano. The grand piano is never closed, and upon its music rack stands a score of the most recent emanation from the composer's mind. Now, if you are a Puccini enthusiast, and are consumed with burning curiosity as to whether the "Girl of the Golden West" is really more wonderful than report has made it, all you need do is, to find some reasonable excuse for calling upon the composer. With him you will find Tito Ricordi, of the Milan publishing house, a most obliging personage, who will be only too happy to seat himself at the instrument and give you a foretaste of some of the things you will hear at the Metropolitan on December 6—providing you can get in. Mr. Puccini will seat himself close by and occasionally help out the pianist by singing the vocal parts, meanwhile scanning the face of the listener to see what kind of an impression it all makes.

Matters are different when you come to question Mr. Puccini. Loquacity is not one of his strong points, and while he is willing to answer queries he seldom vouches for any information not absolutely required. Here again Mr. Ricordi saves the situation, so that one soon begins to turn instinctively to him for enlightenment on all things. He apparently knows as much about the opera and about the circumstances attending the creation of every bar of its music as does the composer himself. Moreover, he speaks an excellent English—a language with which his distinguished friend is still totally unfamiliar—and a far better French than the latter.

As is already known, the fashioning of the libretto of the "Girl," "Fanciulla," or whatever you choose to call it, took much longer than did that of the music, which required only eighteen months. The much-mooted question regarding the identity of its authors was settled definitely by Mr. Puccini on the occasion of an interview with a representative of Musical America.

"It is the work of Zangarini and Civini," he said. "There were only two authors, and not three as has so often been erroneously stated. And it is not true that Illica had a hand in it."

"The changes made by Signor Belasco's play have already been made public, but on the whole they do not alter the original to any great extent. When I first saw the piece played I decided in very short time that it was just the sort of thing I was looking for, even though, on account of



Giacomo Puccini, photographed on his arrival in America, and the theme of "homesickness" from his new opera, "The Girl of the Golden West." This theme was sketched especially by Mr. Puccini for Musical America. In the lower right hand corner is G. Viora's cartoon of Puccini's arrival reproduced from the New York "Morning Telegraph"

my unfamiliarity with English, I was unable to get the meaning of the text. The dramatic situations told me all I needed to know.

"For this drama I have composed music that, I feel sure, reflects the spirit of the American people and (particularly the strong, vigorous nature of the West. I have never been West, but I have read so much about it that I know it thoroughly, and have lived the feelings of my characters so intensely that I believe I have hit upon the correct musical portrayal of them.

With very few exceptions I have borrowed no themes. All practically are of my own invention. It is American music, though Puccini at the same time.

"Here is an illustration of its American character," said Mr. Ricordi, opening the score. And he played a theme that, while not exactly partaking of the vulgarity of ragtime, was plainly the outcome of a study of popular music of a pronounced syncopated rhythm. Mr. Ricordi explained that it occurred near the beginning of the opera upon the entrance of the children.

**Sure that Music in His New Opera Reflects Spirit of America, and Particularly of the West, Which He Has Never Visited—Has Invented Own Themes**

Then came further illustrations of the opera's "Americanisms." The composer lent his assistance by singing the voice parts in an animated and enthusiastic fashion. He sang a part of the *Minstrel's* entrance, the Postman's song, and one of *Minnie's* airs, after which Mr. Ricordi proceeded to illustrate the manner in which the rough vigor of the West was portrayed in a broad, square-cut theme of Indian character, harmonized with bold dissonances. In the *Minstrel* theme Puccini seems to have caught the genuine Stephen Foster flavor, though his harmonies have their own individual coloring. Of course, the unmistakable "Puccinisms" of the type that have won him so much favor are not found wanting, and once in a while an echo of Debussy makes itself heard in the accompaniments. The "theme of homesickness" which Mr. Puccini wrote down and which is herewith reproduced is a Zuni Indian tune and has been used by Carlos Troyer in his "Festive Sun Dance of the Zunis."

"The *Minstrel*, as is already well known, sings 'Old Folks at Home' in the first act. I have also used a certain Indian theme," declared the composer, "and find that the same one has been treated in one of the short piano pieces of Harvey Worthington Loomis. But, on the whole, I have written entirely original music. The more American it seems, the better."

All of which naturally led to the subject of such American music as has been written by others than Mr. Puccini.

"Are you familiar with the works of American composers?" he was asked.

"Do you mean coon songs?" came the answer.

Informed to the contrary, he looked doubtful. The name of MacDowell was mentioned, but, after three or four repetitions, Mr. Puccini evinced no sign of recognition.

"But do his works really reflect the spirit and character of the American people?" asked Mr. Puccini dubiously, after learning for the first time that an American composer called MacDowell had produced compositions on "American soil." And the expression on his face led one to infer that he considered such a thing more or less of an impossibility.

He did remember eventually that he had once "heard some *lieder*" that were the work of an American, though no names accompanied the information. Besides, he had just previously mentioned the name of Loomis and subsequently remembered that of Farwell.

But, however all these things may be, Giacomo Puccini is satisfied that he has written American music himself. *Gaudemus igitur!* H. F. P.

**TO START BRANCH OF MUSIC SOCIETY**

**Pittsburg Composers Organizing—Symphony Orchestra on Brief Tour**

PITTSBURG, Nov. 22.—A branch of the American Music Society is to be organized by prominent Pittsburg musicians. Steps to this end were taken at a recent meeting in the studio of Silas G. Pratt. All composers in the city will be brought into the organization, and the first gathering was exclusively of the city's composers.

The Pittsburg Symphony Orchestra played a number of out-of-town engagements last week and everywhere was well received. Large crowds welcomed the orchestra at Franklin, Warren and elsewhere. Christine Miller, Pittsburg's famous contralto, was the soloist at Warren and Franklin, and her appearance at both places won her new laurels.

Charles Heinrich, city organist at Carnegie Music Hall, yesterday played a popular program. His numbers included such offerings as Mendelssohn's "Midsummer

Night's Dream," Ralph L. Baldwin's soprano in C minor, "La Filleuse," by Raff; Toccata in C minor, by Daniel Fiesler, and others.

Master Anthony Jawelak, the blind boy pianist and a pupil of Casper P. Koeh, city organist of the North Side Carnegie Music Hall, made his debut in recital last week at Hamilton Hall. The boy's first number was Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C minor. After it had been given a very good interpretation, Mr. Koch announced that the boy was ready to transpose it to any key desired. Jawelak is only fourteen years old.

Dallmeyer Russell gave the first of his series of historical recitals last Thursday night at his East End studio, being assisted by Ida Mae Heatley, contralto. The offerings consisted of numbers by Beethoven, Strauss, Bach and others.

The Pittsburg Male Chorus, James Stephen Martin, conductor, and Christine Miller, soloist, gave its first concert of the season tonight at Carnegie Music Hall.

Jean De Backer, formerly principal viola of the Pittsburg Orchestra, conducted the Canton Symphony Orchestra in its first concert last Tuesday night at Canton, and the organization was well received by the 2,000 persons present. E. C. S.

Raoul von Kozcalaki, the Polish pianist who makes a specialty of Chopin, has been compared to Pachmann for delicacy of touch on his recent appearances in Berlin.

**PIANIST FRIEDHEIM HERE FOR A TOUR**

**One of Liszt's Favorite Pupils Arrives for Concert Appearances in America**

Arthur Friedheim, who was one of Liszt's favorite pupils and a close personal friend of the great composer, will make a tour of America this season. Friedheim's first visit to this country was in 1904, when he gave a series of historical recitals in the principal cities with distinct success.

Mr. Friedheim, who is German, traveled extensively after finishing his work with Liszt and continued his studies in Rome and Weimar. On the death of Anton Seidl, Friedheim was invited to succeed him as conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, but his position as director of the Royal Musical Conservatory at Manchester, England, made it necessary to refuse the offer.

It was shortly after this invitation that Friedheim found it was possible to come to this country, where his recognition was immediate and gratifying. Those who re-

member him say that Friedheim was a remarkably well-balanced pianist, musically. He has technic, interpretative gifts of the highest order, and his performances are characterized by finish and a well-governed temperance.

Friedheim has won recognition as a composer. He has written among other compositions an opera entitled "The Dancing Girl," which was successfully performed in Cologne. He has also written a piano concerto which he hopes to play while in this country.

Mr. Friedheim comes primarily for a long tour in Canada, but which will extend into the United States. His first appearance here will be in a piano recital in Mendelssohn Hall on Saturday afternoon, December 17, under the management of the Quinlan International Musical Agency.

**TO BANISH HATS FROM BOSTON CONCERT**

BOSTON, Nov. 17.—War has been declared upon the custom of women in wearing hats at the Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts and rehearsals, which has been practiced since time immemorial by the feminine portion of Boston's ultra-fashionable set. The management of Symphony Hall has been informed that in the future they should see to it that the patrons of the symphony rehearsals and concerts observe the anti-hat wearing ordinance. The Mayor issues the license for Symphony Hall, and can revoke it any time that he discovers that the management is not enforcing the laws and ordinances.

Article on *La Fanciulla del West*, in *Musical America* 13, No. 3, November 26, 1910, 2.

# MUSICAL AMERICA

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## TRUE AMERICANISM IN PUCCINI SCORE?

**Albert Mildenberg, in Critical Review of New Opera, "The Girl of the Golden West," Finds Remarkable National Traits in Music—How the Composer Has Utilized Folk Music**

*By Albert Mildenberg, the American Composer and Pianist*

Two years ago, while living in Milan, I enjoyed the privilege of listening to the first motif of the music of the "Girl of the Golden West" that was put to paper, and now as the complete score lies before me I find this motif unchanged and in reality the basis of the most passionate outburst of the entire score and surrounded by wonder upon wonder of tonal beauty.

I fear that many of the reviewers of this masterpiece will resort to the usual technical terms to clothe their descriptions of the work or attempt to classify the composition in some way or another. If they do they will fail, for Puccini did not write this work like any thing that he has ever written before, nor because any other composer has written any other composition in any particular way or according to any set form.

To Belasco, the creator of this beautiful succession of pictures and the gripping story, it must be a double joy; to feel that like Boito when sitting at the right hand of Verdi, whose brain conceived those works by which we have judged all grand opera for over fifty years, Belasco now at the right hand of Puccini has created the epoch that marks the birth of grand opera on an American subject. A greater combination of talents can not be imagined and no more perfect realization of the result could be demanded by the most exacting of critics.

Art, knowing no country, clime nor race and having no creed but truth and the reflection of God and nature in man—whether his life was ushered in to the music of the crashing cataracts and the soft ozone of the mighty pines or the Sierras—or that he breathed first the perfumed winds from the olive depths, the nespoli, magnolia or fig trees of sunny Tuscany—to music perhaps not so fierce but to music.

Puccini has reached across from his shack nestled in the olive groves of the Tuscan hills, across the vast ocean and over the Rockies down into the valley of the Yuba river and in his flight has not missed the scream of the eagle, the trembling, crashing roar of the old river that cut a six-mile gorge through the granite backbone of the American continent, nor has the plaintive little song of the blue jay escaped him as she sits aloft on some rocking mast of a mighty pine of the Redwood, as it rises aloft digging jagged holes into the clouds.

Some will say that Puccini has blazed a new trail—not a new trail—for that trail is as old as the world. It is nature's trail—let us follow upon it, get the rhythms and march on and tune our ears and souls to the same note. It is as if Puccini had transferred to every page of this beautiful work the smell of the pine, and like the huge wild moose—forcing his head and shoulders through the thick underbrush—stands alert with twigs, leaves, damp moss and cobwebs hanging from his bristling fur and the sweet green smell of the wild wood steaming from his sinewy body.

Who will question Puccini's form of writing? We know he is a studied man—



**MME. LYDIA LIPKOWSKA**  
Russian Prima Donna Who Has Won a Popular Following as a Member of the Boston Opera Company. (See page 6)

## SCHARWENKA AGAIN PLAYS IN NEW YORK

**After Long Absence Noted German Pianist Shows Himself as Artist Rather than Virtuoso**

It is presumable that Xavier Scharwenka would like to be able to give a piano recital without playing his famous "Polish Dance," but it is equally probable that it is impossible for him to do so. At all events, when he played the first few chords of it near the end of his recital at Mendelssohn Hall, New York, on Saturday afternoon, December 3, the audience broke into an uproar and he into a broad smile simultaneously. The program of his recital was as follows:

Chopin, Fantasia, op. 49, F Minor; Liszt, a Ricordanza, b. Matthias Valse; Beethoven, Sonata, op. 57, F Minor (Appassionata); Xaver Scharwenka, a. Theme and Variation, op. 48, b. Nocturne, op. 22, c. Spanish Serenade, op. 63; Two Polish Dances, op. 75 and op. 3; Staccato Etude, op. 27.

Scharwenka is a pianist who has a big command of his resources, and these are, in the main, intellectual grasp and technique. Playing in the manner of the older German school, without the freely swung arm of the Leschetitzky epoch, he plays with a certain heaviness of manner, which, while it may take away something of the quality of elasticity, lends his playing an aspect of solidity and authority.

His playing is further re-enforced by a splendid rhythmic power. There is delicacy also in Scharwenka's playing, but a delicacy of a rather staid nature. Perhaps the most satisfactory thing about the playing of this artist is that it is nature; the listener may be absolutely confident that he will hear only a mature, balanced and reflective interpretation.

The Chopin "Fantasia" was played with dramatic perspective, but was somewhat lacking in poetry. The pianist lent distinction to both of the Liszt pieces—to the first in his management of the delicate harp effects, and to the second by a peculiarly velvety tone effect in the passage upon which it would seem that Wagner drew for his Paris version of the "Bacchanale" from "Tannhäuser."

The Beethoven sonata was Mr. Scharwenka's best work. Here the mature artistic vision of the pianist came to the front to compel admiration for his broad and forceful interpretation.

Of his own compositions, the "Theme and Variations" was the most ambitious. The theme, itself, is of rich quality, and the work throughout is structurally ingenious in a high degree. A light staccato movement is one of the most original and pleasing of the Variations, and the transition to the last variation is poetic. It is difficult to see the necessity for new sets of variations based on the old plan. Thematic development has advanced so much of late, and the color possibilities of music have so greatly advanced, also, that there seems little reason to-day for variations which do not reflect later musical development.

A spirited and Viennese-sounding "Noveltte," and a very charming "Spanish Serenade," which the pianist-composer was obliged to repeat, were both very pleasing. The pianist did not repeat his famous "Polish Dance" despite the deafening applause, but went right into the closing "Staccato Etude," a refreshing and brilliant work. A large bunch of chrysanthemums was presented to the somewhat embarrassed pianist.

Daily press comments:

Mr. Scharwenka's playing is essentially sincere, and has the high intelligence of a master of his instrument, who has taken thought and art. It does not often strike fire or kindle the imagination of his listeners; and yet it can be brilliant and daring, as it was in Liszt's diabolically clever Mendelssohnian waltz.—Times.

Mr. Scharwenka's piano compositions are almost invariably melodious, clear, and symmetrical in form, and perfectly adapted to the entrance of the instrument. They are furthermore most congenial to his own charmingly smooth and fluent style.—Boston Herald.

Mr. Scharwenka to-day is more artist than virtuoso, a pianist sympathetic rather than brilliant in the modern and technical way.—World.

Caroline White, Sammarco and Bassi For Chicago's "Girl of the Golden West"

CHICAGO, Dec. 6.—Rehearsals of the new Puccini opera, "The Girl of the Golden West," are well under way and it is probable that Puccini, the composer, will be present at the first local performance. Great interest centers in the selection of Caroline White, the young American soprano, for the rôle of *Minnie*. The rôle of *Jack Rance*, the sheriff, will be sung by Mario Sammarco, the Italian baritone. The part of *Dick Johnson* will be sung by Amadeo Bassi, the Italian tenor.

Humperdinck in New York to Conduct "King's Children"

Engelbert Humperdinck, composer of "The King's Children," arrived in New York Wednesday, December 7, to conduct the first production of that opera on any stage, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Before he left Berlin Kaiser Wilhelm lauded Humperdinck as "the most German composer," and expressed regret that New York and not Berlin was to hear the first performance of the new opera.

Announce Judges For Opera Contest

The judges for the Metropolitan Opera House contest for American composers were announced late this week as follows: George W. Chadwick, Boston; Charles Martin Loeffler, Medford, Mass.; Walter Damrosch and Alfred Hertz, of New York. They will meet Saturday.

Entered at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., as matter of the Second Class.

Article on *La Fanciulla del West*, in *Musical America* 13, No. 5, December 10, 1910, 1.

In any case, the reciprocal influences and inspirations arising from the widespread discussion on these issues should be recognized as an important cultural enrichment, not only at the historical and musicological level.

After the first performance of *La Fanciulla del West* at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on December 10, 1910, lead by Arturo Toscanini, with the famous singers Emmy Destinn as Minnie, Enrico Caruso in Dick Johnson’s role and Pasquale Amato as the Sheriff Jack Rance, the opera made its successful debut in other cities in North America.

This was possible thanks to important opera companies engaged in those years in a “virtuous” competition with the Metropolitan.

One of the most important was the Chicago Grand Opera Company, that was born following the example of the Manhattan Opera House, the competitor company of the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

The principal maker of the success of the Chicago Company was certainly the Italian conductor Cleofonte Campanini (1860-1919), who showed broad musical horizons and organizational skills, matured during his experience with the Manhattan Opera Company, which he himself had contributed to create.

In Chicago, in addition to outstanding artistic masses - orchestra and choir - Campanini assembled a talented cast, guaranteeing high-level opera performances.

From a chronicle of an overseas theatrical magazine, in this case an Italian periodical, *L’Arte Melodrammatica*, we read:

... The Chicago Grand Opera Company is not the usual team of a few brilliant singers with many mediocre artists ... But its greatest strength comes from the number of young artists with excellent qualities that put all the enthusiasm in their interpretations.”<sup>39</sup>

Among the prominent singers of the Chicago Opera Company was Amedeo Bassi.

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<sup>39</sup> *L’Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII - No. 133, Milano, 16 marzo 1911.



Amedeo Bassi in a photographic portrait by Mario Nunes Vais (1856-1932), 1912; print on canvas, Museo Amedeo Bassi, Montespertoli (Florence); original print at Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome.

The Italian tenor was born in Montespertoli (Florence) in 1872 from a humble family of farmers. He was exceptionally gifted, and thanks to intense commitment, he made his debut in the small Tuscan town of Castelfiorentino in 1897, and then in prestigious Florentine theaters, where in 1898 he obtained a personal success in the role of the Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto*.



Original poster of *Rigoletto*, Teatro Pagliano (currently Teatro Verdi), Florence, March 1898, featuring Bassi's Florence debut. Archivio Storico Teatro Regio, Turin; reproduced by permission.

Engagements with important Italian and international theaters quickly followed. In 1903, we find him in the summer-fall season of several South American theaters, and on December 19, 1906, he made his debut, conducted by Campanini, at the Manhattan Opera House in New York, the new theater built by Oscar Hammerstein (1847-1919). Amedeo Bassi's journey towards

celebrity, from the Tuscan countryside to the European, South American and North American theaters, was thrillingly impressive, and what strikes more is the artist's sensibility and awareness of the importance of his own art. Bassi's contribution to the Italian art of singing was considerable; his role was emphasized by many American reviews praising not only the beauty and effectiveness of his voice but also his skills as interpreter and actor. Traditionally such features were highly considered in the US; these combined elements would later become essential qualities in modern theatrical productions, such as the American musical comedy. In addition to the musical quality of his performances, also in this respect we can consider Bassi as a truly modern performer.<sup>40</sup>

10 MUSICAL AMERICA December 24, 1910

# AMADEO BASSI

ESTABLISHED AT ONCE AS A FAVORITE TENOR IN CHICAGO

SOME NEWSPAPER EXCERPTS IN EVIDENCE:

**"AIDA"**

If the Chicago Opera Company has many tenors whose art is as fine and whose voice is as sweet as that of M. Bassi it may, indeed, be counted among the lucky organizations of the earth. Good tenors are almost as extinct as the dodo. When Mr. Russell, of the Boston Opera, came with his company to Chicago last season he told a harrowing tale of the almost insuperable difficulty of discovering tenors for his troupe. Mr. Dippe has evidently been more fortunate. If Bassi is a sample of the vocalists whose voices have yet to be set forth.

Mr. Bassi is a tenor of the robust school. The morning irritation of such a singer as Mr. Bassi is not his to command, but his voice, big and thrilling, is on occasions colored with suffering. His first opportunity came, as it comes to all tenors who sing the colossal measure of "AIDA," in the "Celeste Aida" of the opening act. This number, the most difficult in the work, and one of the most difficult in all the range of opera, was executed to perfection. It would, perhaps, have been further improved by a larger instrumental force previously referred to, but Mr. Bassi did admirable things with the air, and brought out his high note at the end with the ringing sonority beloved of opera audiences.

In the scene at the gate before Thales the tenor presented a charming picture as he appeared in his pompous, a German son of furnished brass helmet his head and a scintillating coat of mail upon his breast.—*Record-Herald.*

The tenor Amadeo Bassi came as a delightful surprise. The boyish freshness of his voice gave little hint at first of the resources it developed as the evening progressed. It met each demand as others often cannot, was paced without effort, with his same youthful freshness unimpaired and his sympathy and warmth of tone unimpaired by any indication of effort. He is quite the most comfortable tenor who has recently interpreted this trying role and he seems in for a large share of the approval of the public.—*Chicago Tribune.*

But it remained for Amadeo Bassi to raise his audience to the realization that they were listening to a performer far above the ordinary. His "Celeste Aida" was voiced with beautiful tone; his style was simple and distinguished by good taste; his effective rendering of the great favorite created between the company and the audience a feeling of sympathy to replace the apprehension natural to such functions.—*Inter-Ocean.*

Amadeo Bassi has a surprisingly good voice, with plenty of youthful enthusiasm to back it and a smile that will never down, even in his sterner moments. He surprised and gratified as *Madama* and shared honors with his towering associate.—*Daily News.*

It would be an extremely accomplished artist who could have improved on Bassi's portrayal of the unhappy *Madama*. It would be difficult to find an artist who combined singing and acting in such a uniform degree of excellence. Moreover, and this is no small matter in making the role enjoyable, he looked the part. The great solo of the part "Celeste Aida" came early in the first act. There is no doubt, however, that Bassi in this



—Photo by *Nature*, Chicago

**AMADEO BASSI**

one song effectively dispelled any doubts as to his ability. It was very nobly sung, and the rest of the role was performed even better. Bassi has a very winning smile in acknowledging applause, so winning, in fact, that one member of the audience was heard to declare that it should have been given to a prima donna and not wasted on a mere man. He that as, it may, there was occasion for it to be such in evidence during the evening, and Bassi may be declared to have scored a real success.—*Chicago Journal.*

**"MADAME BUTTERFLY"**

In the role of Pinkerton Mr. Bassi made a further addition to his versatile efforts. He sang the music with some charm of voice, but in the love scene of the first act—and all his most important opportunities occur in this—he appeared to be suffering from an sympathy to the tender passion, which emotion, severely handicapped as it is, is not without its value to the interpreters of opera.—*Record-Herald.*

Amadeo Bassi appeared as Pinkerton, and to him goes the credit of thoughtful preparation. The new tenor proved himself to be a dependable member of the company. In the role of Suzuki was *Thoupinette*. Chances, who rendered worthy assistance to the other principals.—*Daily News.*

**"PAGLIACCI"**

Sharing the honors with *Stammoro* was Amadeo Bassi in the role of *Coste*. Here again was a great treat in singing. In fact, his performance of the "Lament" at the end of the first act was more than singing. It was an expression of the living, suffering man, in so far as operatic

**"LA BOHEME"**

Rodolfo gives a man a chance to sing if it be in him, which Mr. Bassi did in none of his other numbers. His "Lament" in the first act he did so well, with such beauty of tone, so much intensity, including the high C, that the audience tried to have him repeat it, and in the third act his voice was fine. There is an earnestness in what he does, he puts himself so completely into the part that he makes himself a sympathetic personality to his hearers.—*Evening Post.*

Amadeo Bassi's singing of the music of *Rodolfo* was one of the best things which we have had done. He possessed the belief that the tenor is of all Mr. Dippe's collection the most useful and the most versatile. It certainly brought much pleasure to the ear; for he is in possession of a voice of no little charm and he uses it with uncommon effectiveness. His recital in the first act brought rapturous applause.—*Record-Herald.*

"La Bohème" in which Miss. Morla elected to return to the character of her friends in this city, was interesting last evening mainly by reason of the duet and the work of Amadeo Bassi in the role of *Rodolfo*. The good opinion, reported of this singer earlier in the season, finds justification with almost every performance.—*Inter-Ocean.*

Last evening at *Rodolfo*, his real caliber could be gauged and he was more than equal to the role. He is young and has certain humorous vein in his depiction of the poet which appeals to us. He is naive and gentle and so far his singing of the music is in much more within the range of his voice. He gave the *Maria* in the first act with vocal charm and in the act it is the barrier he sang with feeling and warmth. He dresses the role in an unconventional manner and he makes a very good appearance in this new character of *Bohemian*.—*Examiner.*

The most important manifestation of the new disposition was voiced by Amadeo Bassi, the young tenor, who gave a new and valuable vocalization as well as surprising abandon in the part of *Rodolfo*, making it really the best role that has marked his surprising progress this season. He revealed his power in the final act of the first act and built upon this foundation with the last act and power that they have either concerning the distribution of the subject in this new character that was impressive.—*Daily News.*

**"TOSCA"**

The Cavardness of Amadeo Bassi was a good performance, although not at all the equal of his *Coste* in "Pagliacci." But his great, warm tenor voice charmed last evening whenever there was a chance for him to sing a little connected phrase; his acting, especially in the second act, was commendable.—*Inter-Ocean.*

There should be a special word about the stage setting of the second act, which was of great beauty—just such a room as we have seen in the *Furthest Palace* complete in all its appointments. Also the last act, where both Miss *Scrovetter* and Mr. Bassi reached the highest point in dramatic singing that they have either of them touched this season, and they have surely reached high.—*Chicago Examiner.*

Page on Amadeo ("Amadeo") Bassi, *Musical America* 12, No. 7, December 24, 1910, 10.

<sup>40</sup> "Established at Once as Favorite Tenor in Chicago", *Musical America* 13, No. 7, December 24, 1910.

Among the highlights in Bassi’s career was Puccini’s music and, in particular, *The Girl of the Golden West*. After the New York premiere, *La Fanciulla* debuted in Chicago on December 27, 1910 with Bassi as Johnson, Carolina White as Minnie and Maurice Renaud as Sheriff Rance, conducted by Cleofonte Campanini. Tito Ricordi, Puccini’s music publisher, attended that production and was much impressed by Bassi’s performance. Puccini telegraphed the artist of Montespertoli the following words: “I warmly congratulate you, and thank you for the success of *Fanciulla del West*. Yours Sincerely. Puccini.”



**Amedeo Bassi as Dick Johnson. Photographic proofs of *La Fanciulla del West*, Chicago production, 1911. Archivio Storico Teatro Regio, Turin; reproduced by permission.**

After the *Fanciulla*’s tour with the Chicago Opera Company in numerous US cities, Amedeo Bassi succeeded Enrico Caruso at the Metropolitan Opera House on March 2, 1911, in the production conducted by Toscanini, making his debut in the most important New York theater. There were great expectations for his Dick Johnson performance, after the news of his successes in the West. Moreover, Bassi’s appointment was a challenge, since his only predecessor in the same role was the “Italian Divo”, Caruso, who was a star of the Metropolitan.

The chronicles of the main newspapers tell us that expectations were not disappointed and Bassi’s success much increased his popularity.<sup>41</sup>



**Amedeo Bassi as Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West*, from the 1911 Chicago production photographic proofs. Archivio Storico Teatro Regio, Turin; reproduced by permission.**

Interestingly, he is acknowledged not only as a performer but also as valuable “collaborator” of Puccini and Belasco for his musical performance and dramatic interpretation.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *L'Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII – No. 133, Milano 16 Marzo 1911 and No. 140, Milano, 1 Agosto 1911.

<sup>42</sup> *L'Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII – No. 145, Milano, 1 Novembre 1911.



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Conto corrente della Posta

# L'ARTE MELODRAMMATICA

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## In ogni tono

Il *Isabern* continua il suo giro trionfale nel Sud America. Dopo gli entusiasmi suscitati a Buenos Aires, (vedere la rubrica *Dalla scena*) dove se ne disciaro otto rappresentazioni in 19 giorni, anche a Rosario a Rio de Janeiro costantemente la nuova opera di Mascagni ha fatto delirare d'ammirazione sotto la direzione meravigliosa dell'illustre autore. L'opera stessa si darà prossimamente a Montevideo, Santiago e Valparaiso, e poi, dopo la magnifica tournée, verrà rappresentata in gennaio, al Costanzi di Roma — pure diretta da Mascagni — al London Opera House di Londra, al Monnaie di Bruxelles, al Real di Praga, a Hofburg, a Dresda, alla Città di Parigi, a Torino, al San Carlo di Napoli, al Verdi di Padova, al nostro Lirico ed in altri teatri.

A proposito dell'*Isabern* e degli entusiasmi successi che la nuova opera suscita dovunque, togliamo dal *Messaggero* il seguente telegramma da Rio Janeiro, in data 23 luglio: "Ieri sera al Municipale di Rio Janeiro, incredibilmente affollato di pubblico, ebbe luogo la prima rappresentazione della nuovissima opera del maestro Mascagni: *Isabern*. Il successo è stato trionfale, superando ogni possibile previsione. Fin dalle prime note l'assemblea nobilissima ebbe l'impressione esatta del grandissimo valore di questa opera, destinata, come *Cavalleria rusticana*, a conquistare trionfalmente il pubblico, consolidando il primato dell'arte lirica italiana. La *Filabta* strappò entusiastiche acclamazioni, che si rinnovarono con maggiore intensità alla romanza di *Isabern*. Questo mio canto, che la signorina Farneti cantò con grande arte e con straordinario sentimento. Della canzone del *Fato* si volle la replica. Il primo atto si chiuse con dodici chiamate al maestro, salutate da immense ovazioni. Al secondo atto il successo crebbe a dismisura. Si volle la replica fra grida deliranti dell'intermezzo della cavalcata. Alla fine dell'atto il maestro dovette presentarsi altre dodici volte al prosenio. Il successo trionfale continuò al terzo atto: dopo il mirabile duetto d'amore, il pubblico scorse in piedi come un solo uomo acclamando il maestro. Dai palchi lo signore sventolevano i fazzoletti. Anche il duetto dovette essere replicato. Al chiaro della tela il maestro Mascagni dovette presentarsi venti volte al prosenio, ad un certo punto fatto dal pubblico invece il palcoscenico facendo al maestro una indimenticabile ovazione. Tutti i giornali sono concordi nel rilevare il grande

successo e il grandissimo valore artistico di *Isabern*.

Il nostro egregio amico Cav. Virgilio Bellati, rinomato e valentissimo baritone, ha impallinato a Tagliano (Bergamo) l'evento e gentile signorina Ida Donadoni. Ai novelli sposi rallegramenti ed auguri.

Per quanto sicuri di fare la concorrenza ai famosi carabinieri di Offenbach, mettiamo in guardia i nostri lettori contro un non indentificato, farabutto che, assumendo la qualità del celebre tenore Cav. Aristodemo Giorgini, è riesolo ad imbroglione in una città del Veneto. Il farabutto, messo all'oggi nella casa di una signora, magro, berretto, dorati, non pagò nulla e se ne partì partendo via roba e denari. La signora metropolitana, ma non dubitiamo che l'opote le avesse anche dato false generalità, si mise sulle tracce del vero Giorgini, e si presentò a lui a Priocchia, dov'è in villeggiatura. Allora fu subito spiegato l'imbroglione e la povera signora, a cui l'ormai poco gradito ospite aveva anche data promessa di matrimonio, ritornò alla sua cittadina più sconosciuta che mai. Dell'imbroglione non si ha nessuna notizia. Il tenore Giorgini, spera che lo sconosciuto desista dal fare al suo nome una reclame tanto gratuita.

Si è costituito un Comitato per il risorgimento della grande musica italiana che dalla fine del settecento ad oggi ha seguito un periodo di decadenza e di affarismo. Così afferma il Comitato stesso, le di cui forze speriamo corrispondano agli intendimenti.

Nel corrente anno sono stati finora inaugurati — o sono d'imminente inaugurazione — ben dieotto teatri, mentre che nel 1910 furono 25. Quanti di questi avranno vita... di tenerezze, se non all'arte, al commercio teatrale?

La Regina Margherita ha fatto acquisto degli autografi e dei cimeli artistici di G. Martucci, donandoli al R. Conservatorio di S. Pietro a Maiella. La famiglia ha aggiunto al magnifico Erard del quale il Maestro si servi per quasi tutti i suoi concerti, il piccolo Schiedny compagno del suo diuturno lavoro e molti ricordi della carriera dell'insigne artista. Il tutto formerà un museo Martucciano che con religiosa cura sarà conservata in una sala speciale di S. Pietro a Maiella.

Parma si prepara a commemorare degnamente nel 1918 il centenario della nascita di Giuseppe Verdi, l'immortale suo figlio, già si stanno concretando programmi di festeggiamenti. Questi dovranno principalmente consistere in esecuzioni di opere del

Grande, dalle primissime all'*Atida*, via fino all'*Otello* ed al *Falstaff*; nel 1913 Parma sarà per Verdi quel che Bayreuth è per Wagner, e a Verdi Parma inaugurerà pure un monumento. Vi sarà la Mostra retrospettiva del teatro italiano che, con la grandiosa *Stagione Verdiana* e con le esecuzioni storico-musicali, formerà il ciclo dei festeggiamenti.

È bandito il concorso d'appalto dell'ex Teatro San Carlo di Lisbona (ora teatro lirico) per la durata di tre anni, e cioè fino al 1 agosto 1914, rinnovabile per uguale periodo di tempo. È obbligatoria una Stagione lirica di tre mesi ogni anno con 80 rappresentazioni. L'abbonamento ognuna ed un'altra, nuova che abbia precedenti di grandi successi. Deposito imposto ad ogni anno: L. 5.000; cauzione L. 25.000.

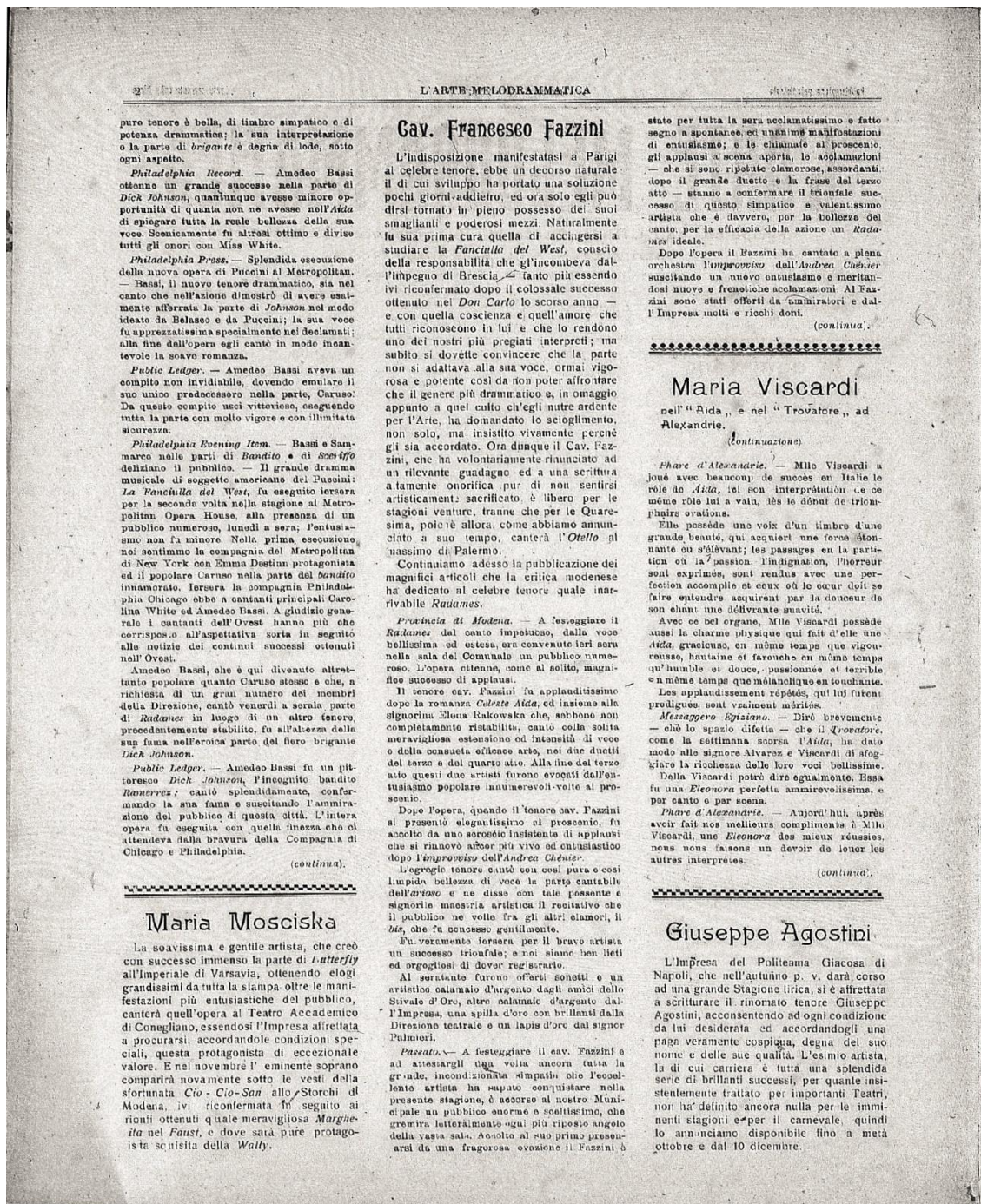
## Cav. Amedeo Bassi

Al ripresentarsi di Amedeo Bassi sulle scene del Covent Garden dopo il colossale trionfo ottenuto a Roma nella *Fanciulla del West*, il pubblico londinese ha voluto festeggiare particolarmente il *divo* acclamandolo vivamente fin dal suo apparire nell'ultima opera da lui cantata in quella Stagione: la *Bodème* di Puccini. E, cessati gli applausi vivissimi che avevano carattere di gentile omaggio al celebre artista, altre acclamazioni succedettero a questi, altre dimostrazioni d'ammirazione profonda e di scòfinato plauso. Amedeo Bassi apparve come sempre, di un abbagliante splendore rifulgendo meravigliosamente quale insuperabile *Rodolfo*, merco un'interpretazione magistrale ed un canto vibrante di passione e caldo di sentimento. L'illustre artista, fatto segno a specialissime ovazioni tutta la sera, dovette ripetere la *presentazione*, imponendosi superbanamente in tutti gli altri pezzi suoi.

Dalle centinaia di splendidissimi articoli che ci sono giunti dal Nord America a documentare solennemente i recenti clamorosi trionfi del *divo* colà, ne scegliamo ancora qualcuno che riguarda particolarmente la *Fanciulla del West* a Philadelphia e New York, dove l'inarrivabile *Johnson* ha fatto delirare d'entusiasmo.

*Evening Bulletin* — Bassi suonano nuovamente la parte di *Johnson*; la sua esecuzione rifisse ancora per quel grande calore e per quell'entusiasmo che caratterizza le sue interpretazioni e che è veramente notevole e contribuisce a far sì che questa parte rimulti veramente vissuta. La sua voce di

Article celebrating Amedeo Bassi, *L'Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII – No. 133, Milano, 16 Marzo 1911 and No. 140, Milano, 1 Agosto 1911 (Part 1).



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pure tenore è bella, di timbro simpatico e di potenza drammatica; la sua interpretazione o la parte di *brigante* è degna di lode, sotto ogni aspetto.

**Philadelphia Record.** — Amedeo Bassi ottiene un grande successo nella parte di *Dick Johnson*, quantunque avesse minore opportunità di quanta non ne avesse nell'*Aida* di spargere tutta la reale bellezza della sua voce. Sottanicamente fu altresì ottimo e divise tutti gli onori con Miss White.

**Philadelphia Press.** — Splendida esecuzione della nuova opera di Puccini al Metropolitan. — Bassi, il nuovo tenore drammatico, sia nel canto che nell'azione dimostrò di avere esattamente afferrata la parte di *Johnson* nel modo stesso da Belasco e da Puccini; la sua voce fu apprezzatissima specialmente nei declamati; alla fine dell'opera egli cantò in modo inaspettato la scena romanza.

**Public Ledger.** — Amedeo Bassi aveva un compito non invidiabile, dovendo emulare il suo unico predecessore nella parte, Caruso. Da questo compito uscì vittorioso, eseguendo tutta la parte con molto vigore e con illuminata sicurezza.

**Philadelphia Evening Item.** — Bassi e Sannarico nelle parti di *Bandito* e di *Scotto* deliziano il pubblico. — Il grande dramma musicale di soggetto americano del Puccini: *La Fanciulla del West*, fu eseguito ieri sera per la seconda volta nella stagione al Metropolitan Opera House, alla presenza di un pubblico numeroso, lunedì a sera; l'entusiasmo non fu minore. Nella prima esecuzione noi sentimmo la compagnia del Metropolitan di New York con Emma Destlin protagonista ed il popolare Caruso nella parte del *bandito* innamorato. Iersera la compagnia Philadelphia Chicago ebbe a cantanti principali Carolina White ed Amedeo Bassi. A giudizio generale i cantanti dell'Orest hanno più che corrisposto all'aspettativa sorta in seguito alle notizie dei continui successi ottenuti nell'Orest.

Amedeo Bassi, che è qui divenuto altrettanto popolare quanto Caruso stesso e che, a richiesta di un gran numero dei membri della Direzione, cantò venerdì a serata parte di *Rodriguez* in luogo di un altro tenore, precedentemente stabilito, fu all'altezza della sua fama nell'eroica parte del fiero *brigante Dick Johnson*.

**Public Ledger.** — Amedeo Bassi fu un pittoresco *Dick Johnson*, l'incognito *bandito Rodriguez*; cantò splendidamente, confermando la sua fama e suscitando l'ammirazione del pubblico di questa città. L'intera opera fu eseguita con quella finezza che ci attendeva dalla bravura della Compagnia di Chicago e Philadelphia.

(continua).

## Maria Mosciska

La soavissima e gentile artista, che credè con successo immenso la parte di *atterfly* all'Imperiale di Varsavia, ottenendo elogi grandissimi da tutta la stampa oltre le manifestazioni più entusiastiche del pubblico, canterà quell'opera al Teatro Accademico di Conegliano, essendosi l'Impresa affrettata a procurarsi, accordandole condizioni speciali, questa protagonista di eccezionale valore. E nel novembre l'eminente soprano comparirà nuovamente sotto le vesti della sformata *Cio-Cio-San* allo Storch di Modena. Ivi riconfermata fu seguito ai ritorni ottenuti quale meravigliosa *Margherita nel Faust*, e dove sarà pure protagonista scintillata della *Wally*.

## Gav. Francesco Fazzini

L'indisposizione manifestatasi a Parigi al celebre tenore, ebbe un decorso naturale il di cui sviluppo ha portato una soluzione pochi giorni addietro, ed ora solo egli può dirsi tornato in pieno possesso dei suoi smaglianti e poderosi mezzi. Naturalmente fu sua prima cura quella di accingersi a studiare la *Fanciulla del West*, conscio della responsabilità che gli incombeva dall'impegno di Brescia, tanto più essendo ivi riconfermato dopo il colossale successo ottenuto nel *Don Carlo* lo scorso anno — e con quella coscienza e quell'amore che tutti riconoscono in lui e che lo rendono uno dei nostri più pregiati interpreti; ma subito si dovette convincere che la parte non si adattava alla sua voce, ormai vigorosa e potente così da non poter affrontare che il genere più drammatico e, in omaggio appunto a quel culto che egli nutre ardente per l'Arte, ha domandato lo scioglimento, non solo, ma insistito vivamente perché gli sia accordato. Ora dunque il Cav. Fazzini, che ha volontariamente rinunciato ad un rilevante guadagno, ed a una scrittura altamente onorifica pur di non sentirsi artisticamente sacrificato è libero per le stagioni venturose, tranne che per le Quaresime, poiché allora, come abbiamo annunciato a suo tempo, canterà l'*Otello* al Massimo di Palermo.

Continuiamo adesso la pubblicazione dei magnifici articoli che la critica modenese ha dedicato al celebre tenore quale inarrivabile *Rodriguez*.

**Provincia di Modena.** — A festeggiare il *Rodriguez* del canto impetuoso, dalla voce bellissima ed estesa, era convenute ieri sera nella sala del Comunale un pubblico numeroso. L'opera ottenne, come al solito, magnifico successo di applausi.

Il tenore cav. Fazzini fu applauditissimo dopo la romanza *Colate Aida*, ed insieme alla signorina Elena Rakowska che, sebbene non completamente ristabilita, cantò colla solita meravigliosa estensione ed intensità di voce e della consumata edile arte, nei due duetti del terzo e del quarto atto. Alla fine del terzo atto questi due artisti furono evocati dall'entusiasmo popolare inaspettato volte al proscenio.

Dopo l'opera, quando il tenore cav. Fazzini al presente elegantissimo al proscenio, fu accolto da un ardente insistero di applausi che si rianovò ancora più vivo ed entusiastico dopo l'improvviso dell'*Andrea Chénier*.

L'egregio tenore cantò con così pura e così limpida bellezza di voce la parte cantabile dell'*Andrea* e ne disse con tale possente e signorile maestria artistica il recitativo che il pubblico ne volle fra gli altri clamori, il *bis*, che fu generale e gentile.

Fu veramente forsara per il bravo artista un successo trionfale; e noi siamo ben lieti ed orgogliosi di dover registrarlo.

Al serbatoio furono offerti sonetti e un aristico olandese d'argento dagli amici dello Stivale d'Oro, altre valanne d'argento dall'Impresa, una spilla d'oro con brillanti dalla Direzione teatrale e un lapis d'oro dal signor Palmieri.

**Passato.** — A festeggiare il cav. Fazzini e ad attestargli una volta ancora tutta la grande, incondizionata simpatia che l'eccezionale artista ha saputo conquistare nella presente stagione, è accorso al nostro Municipale un pubblico enorme e scintillante, che gremiva l'interamente ogni più riposto angolo della vasta sala. Accolto al suo primo presentarsi da una fragorosa ovazione il Fazzini è

stato per tutta la sera acclamatissimo e fatto segno a spontanee ed unanimi manifestazioni di entusiasmo; e lo chiamò al proscenio, gli applausi a scena aperta, le acclamazioni — che si sono ripetute clamorose, assordanti, dopo il grande duetto e la fine del terzo atto — stanno a confermare il trionfo oncoso di questo simpatico e valentissimo artista che è davvero, per la bellezza del canto, per la efficacia della azione un *Rodriguez* ideale.

Dopo l'opera il Fazzini ha cantato a piena orchestra l'improvviso dell'*Andrea Chénier* suscitando un nuovo entusiasmo e meritate nuove e frenetiche acclamazioni. Al Fazzini sono stati offerti da ammiratori e dall'Impresa molti e ricchi doni.

(continua).

## Maria Viscardi

nell'*Aida*, e nel *Trovatore*, ad *Alexandrie*.

(continuazione)

**Phare d'Alexandrie.** — Mme Viscardi a joué avec beaucoup de succès en Italie le rôle de *Aida*, tel son interprétation de ce même rôle lui a valu, dès le début de triomphes ovations.

Elle possède une voix d'un timbre d'une grande beauté, qui acquiert une force étonnante ou s'élevant; les passages en la partition ou la passion, l'indignation, l'horreur sont exprimés, sont rendus avec une perfection accomplie et ceux où le cœur doit se faire entendre acquiescent par la douceur de son chant une délicate suavité.

Avec ce bel organe, Mme Viscardi possède aussi la charme physique qui fait d'elle une *Aida*, gracieuse, en même temps que vigoureuse, hautaine et farouche en même temps qu'humble et douce, passionnée et terrible, en même temps que mélancolique et touchante.

Les applaudissements répétés, qui lui furent prodigués, sont vraiment mérités.

**Messaggero Epiziano.** — Dirò brevemente — cioè lo spazio difetta — che il *Trovatore*, come la settimana scorsa l'*Aida*, ha dato modo alle signore Alvarez e Viscardi di sfoggiare la ricchezza delle loro voci bellissime.

Della Viscardi potrà dire egualmente. Essa fu una *Eleonora* perfetta ammirabilissima, e per canto e per scena.

**Phare d'Alexandrie.** — Aujourd'hui, après avoir fait nos meilleurs compliments à Mme Viscardi, une *Eleonora* des mieux réussies, nous nous faisons un devoir de louer les autres interprètes.

(continua).

## Giuseppe Agostini

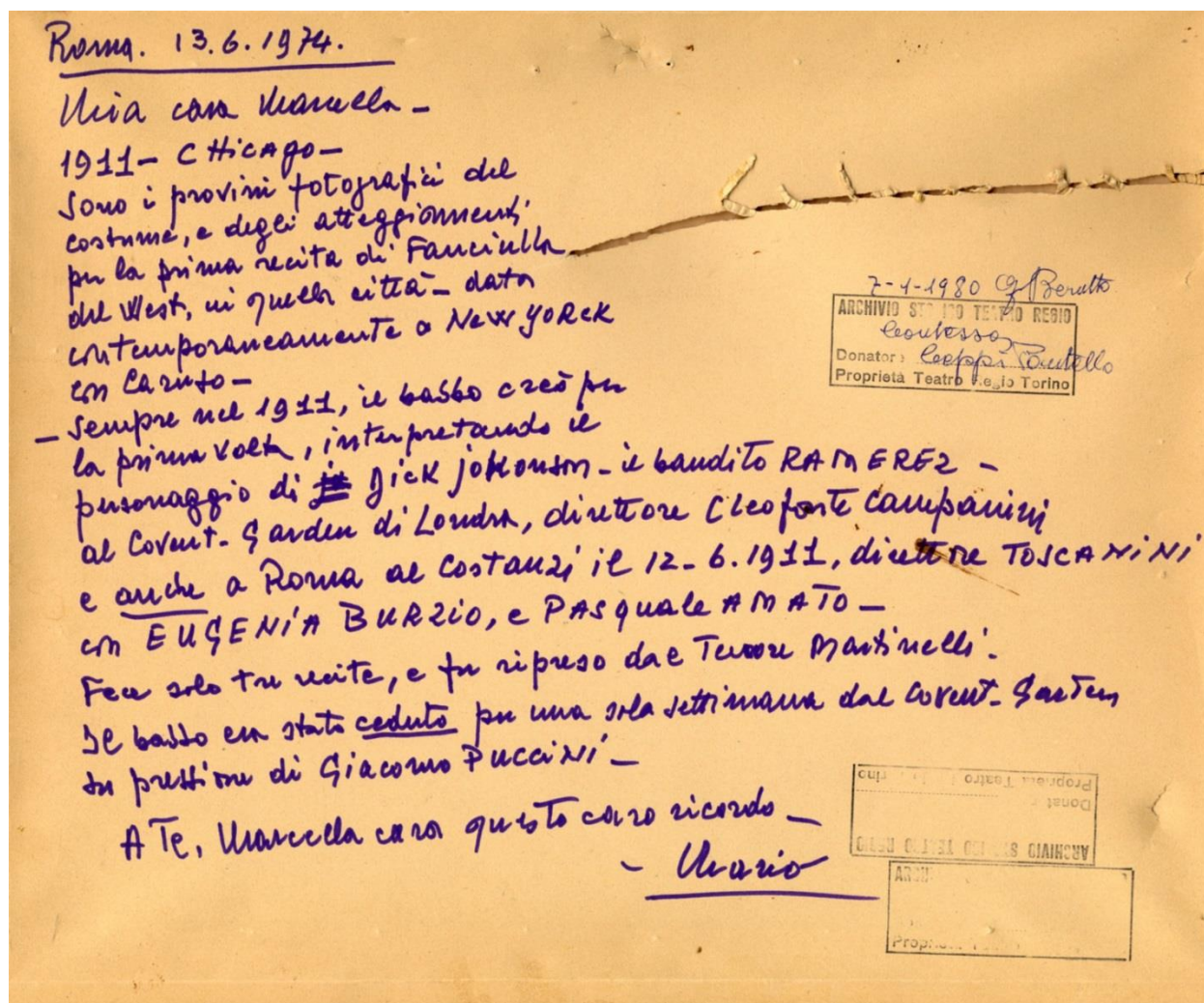
L'Impresa del Politeama Giacosa di Napoli, che nell'autunno p. v. darà corso ad una grande Stagione lirica, si è affrettata a scritturare il rinomato tenore Giuseppe Agostini, accontentando ad ogni condizione la lui desiderata ed accordandogli una paga veramente cospicua, degna del suo nome e delle sue qualità. L'esimo artista, la di cui carriera è tutta una splendida serie di brillanti successi, per quante insistentemente trattato per importanti Teatri, non ha definito ancora nulla per le imminenti stagioni e per il carnevale, quindi lo annunciamo disponibile fino a metà ottobre e dal 10 dicembre.

Article celebrating Amedeo Bassi, *L'Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII – No. 133, Milano, 16 Marzo 1911 and No. 140, Milano, 1 Agosto 1911 (Part 2).

Later, Puccini himself would qualify Bassi as "an ideal interpreter," and make efforts for having him to sing the role of Dick Johnson in European theaters.<sup>43</sup>

This happened on May 29, 1911 at the Covent Garden in London, where the first European performance of *La Fanciulla* took place, and later at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, that hosted the June 12, 1911 Italian premiere.

In this regard, it is of special interest to observe the inscription on the back of the Chicago photographic proofs. Mario Bassi, second-born son of the tenor, gave a brief report of the facts when dedicating this picture to his niece Marcella Ceppi Pontello (See Appendix B for a transcript and translation of this document).



Mario Bassi, Inscription (1974) on back of *La Fanciulla del West* photographic proofs, Chicago 1911. Archivio Storico Teatro Regio, Turin; reproduced by permission.

<sup>43</sup> *L'Arte melodrammatica*, Anno VII - No. 138, Milano, 16 Giugno 1911.

Giacomo Puccini was evidently a supporter and an admirer of Amedeo Bassi. Through his “American” Opera, the composer also promoted other Italian artists, so contributing to the rich network of Italian-American artistic connections.

On August 23, 1911, Puccini, together with the two librettists Carlo Zangarini and Guelfo Civinini, attended the production of *La Fanciulla* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia. On his arrival, he received an ovation from conductor Giorgio Polacco (1873-1960) and all the performers. The American press echoed the success.<sup>44</sup>

Interestingly, in the autumn of that same year, we find Giorgio Polacco conducting the Savage Opera Company, one of the last traveling English-language companies, in a long North American tour of Puccini’s *The Girl of the Golden West*. Young conductor, Alberto Bimboni (1888-1960), who had recently moved to the United States, also participated in that tour.

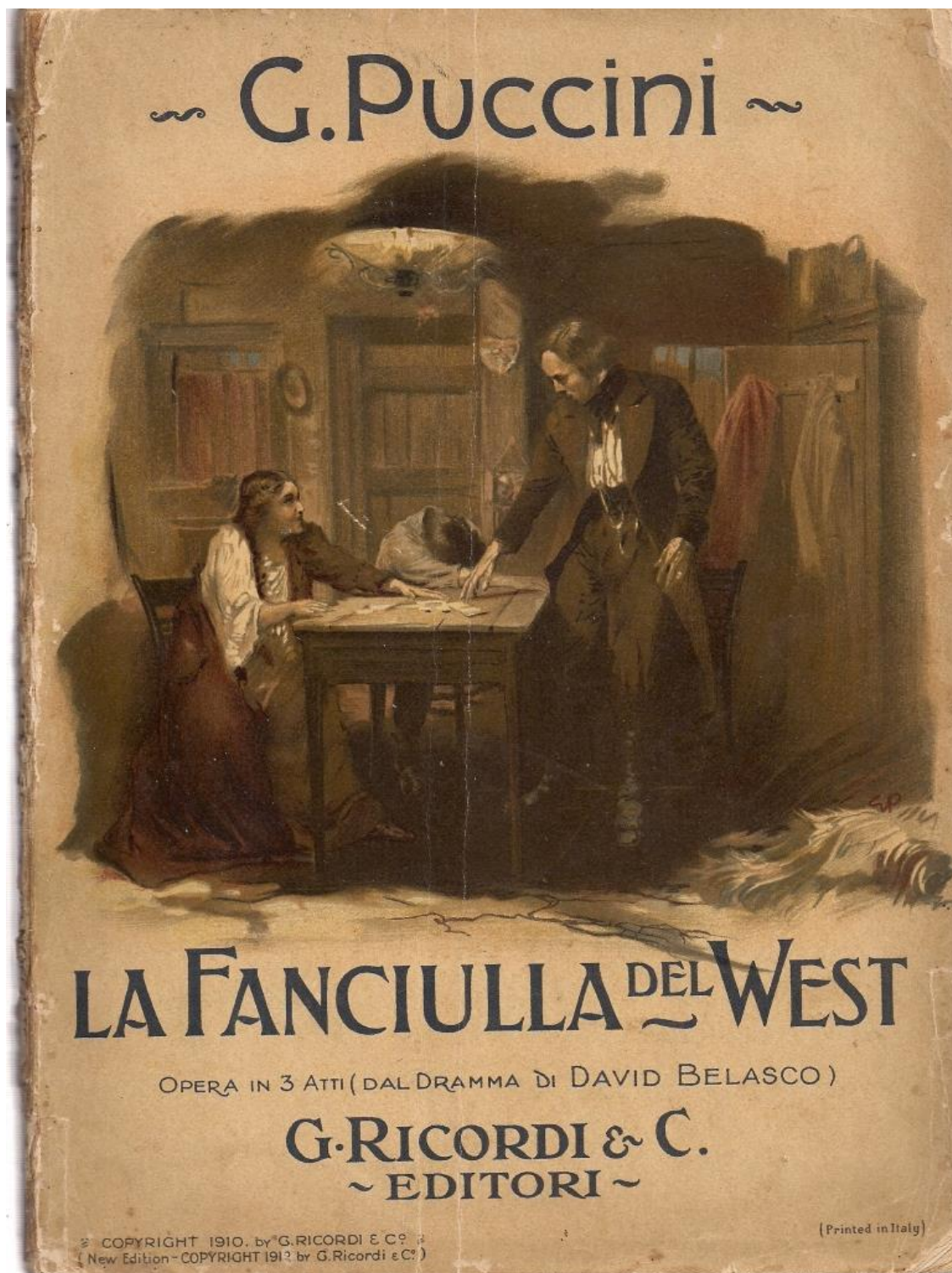
It is probable that Puccini’s experience with *La Fanciulla del West* and the widespread interest in the American musical heritage inspired young Bimboni to participate in the debate on the “Americanness” of the visual and sound imagery, and on the renewal of opera. These direct or indirect interconnections demonstrate the internationality of the Tuscan protagonists who participated in the American musical life at that time.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the acquisition of additional critical and investigative instruments matured in the field of American-music research, influences and mutual inspirations with Europe, can shed new light on other topics, as well as create sociological connections. All these perspectives can provide a significant contribution to the fascinating study of the cultural intersections between “Old and New World”.

I wish to thank ICAMus and Aloma Bardi. She provided research information by sending me from the US primary source material, such as several articles of *Musical America*. Many thanks are due to the Amedeo Bassi Archive - Biblioteca Comunale “Balducci” and the Museo Amedeo Bassi in Montespertoli (Firenze), as well as to the Archive of the Teatro Regio of Turin, for making various research materials available to me. Finally, I would like to thank Anna Maria Gasparri Rossotto, Amedeo Bassi’s biographer, for her knowledgeable and wise counsel in a beautiful morning spent in the Tuscan countryside of Montespertoli.

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<sup>44</sup> “Italians Pay Homage to Puccini”, *Musical America* 14, No. 18, September 9, 1911.



Libretto of *La Fanciulla del West*, First Edition (Milan: Ricordi, 1910); Cover Page.

## APPENDIX A

### Folder 66

#### 1. Lettera manoscritta penna nera

Carta intestata  
Paquebot “La Provence”

A bord, le 1 marzo 907

Caro Maxwell,<sup>1</sup>  
eccoci in mezzo al mare da due giorni - Mare buonissimo calmo come un lago -  
Mi dispiacque tanto a dovervi lasciare ma spero di rivedervi ben presto a Torre del Lago -  
Vi ringrazio ancora per tutte le gentilezze che ci avete usato, veramente sento di aver un amico in voi -  
Salutate tanto e ringraziate per noi la Segarich tanto buona e gentile -  
**Ricordatevi di vedere Belasco - Vorrei avere una copia de The Girl of Golden West per farla tradurre e vedere se è possibile correggendo e cambiando, di tirarne fuori un soggetto - Chi sa? Non lo dimenticate**  
Scrivetemi come è andata Bohème al Manhattan<sup>2</sup> -  
Tanti affettuosi saluti da Elvira e dal vostro  
Giacomo Puccini  
P.S. Pregovi dirmi le novità circa Conried<sup>3</sup> e successore.

---

Dear Maxwell,  
Here we are: in the middle of the sea for two days – Smooth sea, as calm as a lake -  
I was so sorry I had to leave you but hope to see you again soon at Torre del Lago -  
Thank you again for all your kindness, I do feel I have a friend in you -  
Please greet and thank for us good, kind Mrs. Segarich -  
**Remember to see Belasco - I would like to get a copy of The Girl of the Golden West to have it translated and see whether it's possible, with corrections and changes, to make it into a subject - Who knows? Don't forget**  
Write me how Bohème went in Manhattan -  
Many affectionate greetings from Elvira, and from your  
Giacomo Puccini  
P.S. Please share the news about Conried and successor.

---

1 George Maxwell (?-1931), agente di Ricordi a New York. Dal 1914 al 1924 fu il primo presidente della ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers). Nel 1931 lasciò la Casa Ricordi e fondò a New York la Galaxy Music Corporation, successivamente acquisita da E.C. Schirmer. Poco dopo morì a Parigi.

2 L'impresario teatrale Oscar Hammerstein (1847-1919) aveva costruito nel 1906 il Manhattan Opera House per creare un teatro d'opera concorrente al Metropolitan Opera House. *La Bohème* debuttava quella sera al Manhattan dopo lunghe vicissitudini legate al fatto che Ricordi non volle concedere in uso la copia della partitura di Puccini.

3 Heinrich Conried (1855-1909), manager del Metropolitan Opera House, predecessore di Gatti-Casazza alla direzione del teatro newyorkese.

## APPENDIX B

### Transcript of inscription on the back of *Fanciulla del West* Chicago photographic proofs.

Roma, 13.06, 1974

Mia Cara Marcella -

1911 - Chicago -

Sono i provini fotografici del costume, e degli atteggiamenti per la prima recita di *Fanciulla del West*, in quella città - data contemporaneamente a New York con Caruso -

- Sempre nel 1911, il babbo creò per la prima volta, interpretando il

personaggio di Dick Johnson – il bandito RAMERREZ -

al Covent Garden di Londra, direttore Cleofonte Campanini

e anche a Roma al Costanzi il 12.6.1911, direttore TOSCANINI

con EUGENIA BURZIO e PASQUALE AMATO -

Fece solo tre recite, e fu ripreso al tenore Martinelli.

**Il babbo era stato ceduto per una sola settimana dal Covent Garden su pressione di Giacomo PUCCINI -**

A te, Marcella cara questo caro ricordo.

Mario

Rome, 13.06.1974

My dear Marcella,

1911 - Chicago -

These are the photographic proofs

of the costumes and poses

for the premiere of *Fanciulla*

del West, in that city -

produced at the same time in New York

with Caruso -

- Still nel 1911, Dad

premiered

the character of Dick Johnson - the bandit RAMERREZ -

at the Covent Garden in London, Cleofonte Campanini conducting

and also in Rome at the Costanzi on June 12, 1911, TOSCANINI conducting

with EUGENIA BURZIO and PASQUALE AMATO -

He only gave three performances, and was replaced by tenor Martinelli.

**Dad was granted to sing only one week by arrangement with Covent Garden under Giacomo PUCCINI's pressure -**

To you, dear Marcella, this precious memory.

Mario

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mobile phone or tablet



[www.icamus.org](http://www.icamus.org)





**Barbara Boganini presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.**



**«HOW AN ITALIAN COMPOSER CAME TO CREATE THE FIRST ALL-INDIAN OPERA»:  
THE APPROACH TO NATIVE AMERICAN MOTIFS AND MUSICAL SOURCES  
IN *WINONA***

**ALOMA BARDI**

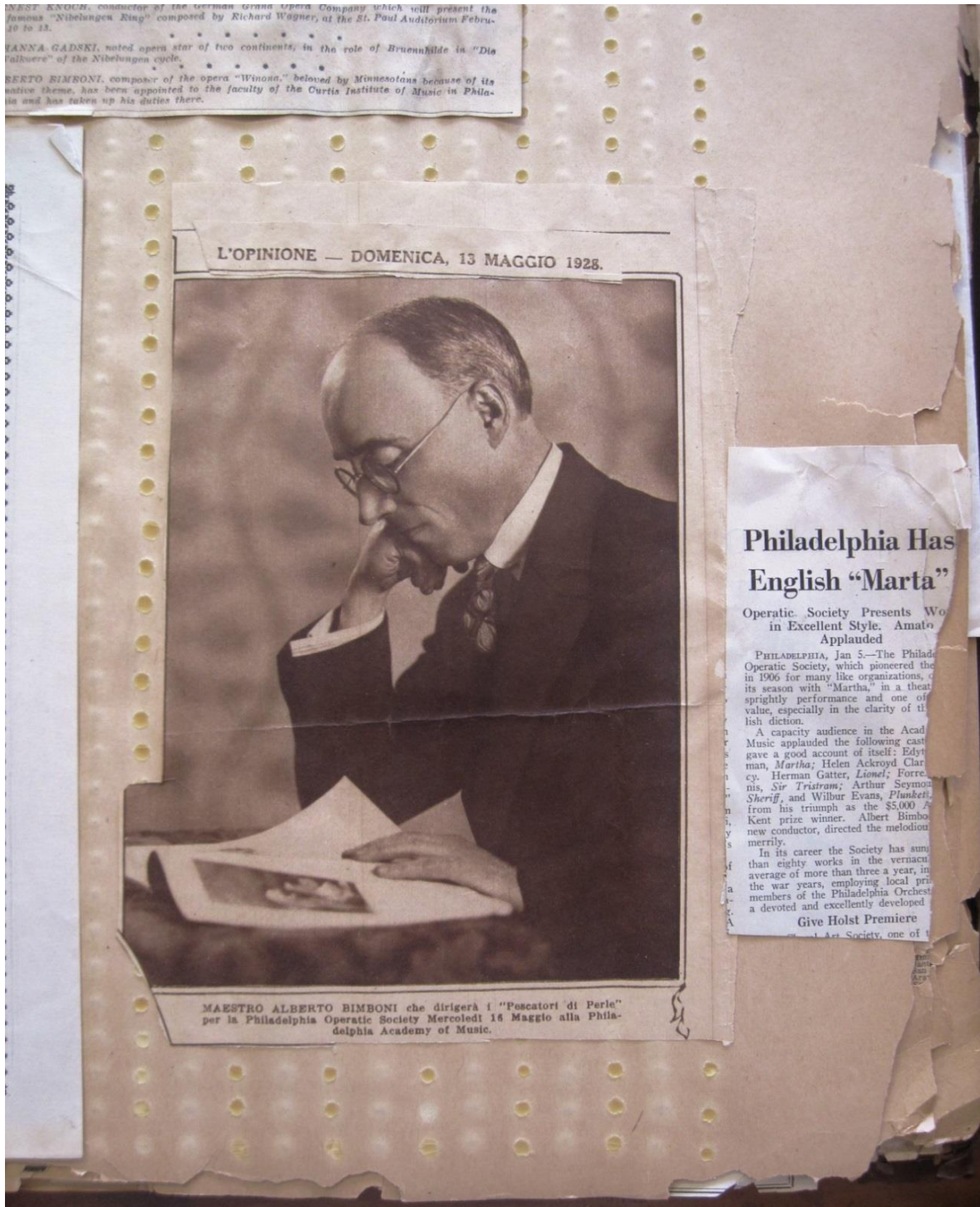
(ICAMUS - THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC)



*Musical America*, April 20, 1918. Article on *Winona*. In Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Matured from the international influence and resonance of Puccini’s “American Opera,” *La Fanciulla del West*; from the Indianist movement in American music, that produced operas as well as instrumental works; and from the complex interconnections explored by Davide Ceriani and Barbara Boganini, Alberto Bimboni’s “All-Indian Opera” in three acts, *Winona*, was composed from 1915 to 1918 to a libretto by Perry S. Williams narrating the story of a Dakota Indian “princess” as a Romantic heroine, and her relationship to the tribal traditions of her people; *Winona* dies to rebel against an arranged marriage.

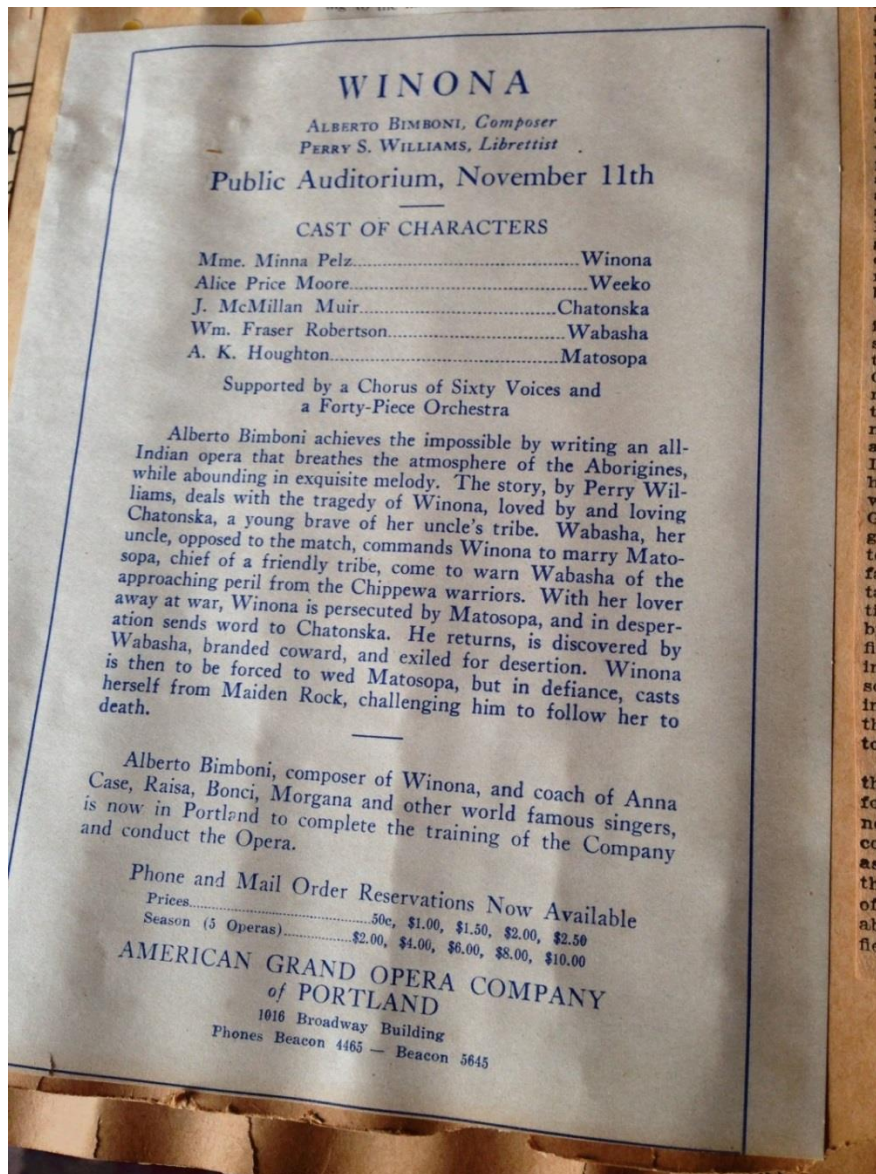
Here is a photographic portrait of Florence-born Alberto Bimboni. At the time of the composition of *Winona*, Bimboni’s reputation as composer, conductor, and coach was well-established in the United States. *Winona* was staged in 1926 in Portland and in 1928 in Minneapolis, to great success and critical acclaim.



Alberto Bimboni in a photographic portrait, *L'Opinione*, May 13, 1928.  
Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Let us read a concise synopsis of the opera directly from the original poster of the 1926 premiere production in Portland, OR, conducted by the composer:

The story, by Perry Williams, deals with the tragedy of Winona, loved by and loving Chatonska, a young brave of her uncle’s tribe. Wabasha, her uncle, opposed to the match, commands Winona to marry Matosapa, chief of a friendly tribe, come to warn Wabasha of the approaching peril from the Chippewa warriors. With her lover away at war, Winona is persecuted by Matosapa, and in desperation sends word to Chatonska. He returns, is discovered by Wabasha, branded coward, and exiled for desertion. Winona is then to be forced to wed Matosapa, but in defiance, casts herself from Maiden Rock, challenging him to follow her to death.



*Winona*, original poster of the 1926 premiere production in Portland, OR, conducted by the composer. Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

At the time of the opera’s second performance in Minneapolis, Bimboni—who had immigrated to the US 17 years earlier—was awarded the prestigious Bispham Memorial Medal for his work in promoting American opera.

The medal, presented by the American Opera Society of Chicago from 1921 onwards, was awarded to American composers for an opera on an American subject.

Five other operas on Native American subjects, or relations between European Americans and Native Americans, were awarded it: *Alglala*, by another Italian-American composer, Francesco Bartolomeo DeLeone; *Shanewis*, by Charles Wakefield Cadman; *Natoma*, by Victor Herbert; *Narcissa: Or, The Cost of Empire* by Mary Carr Moore (premiered in 1912), on the missionaries, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the attack on their mission in Walla Walla in 1847; and *Manabozo* (the name of a spirit in the Chippewa religious beliefs) by Thomas William Lester.

The American Opera Society encouraged American ethnic motifs, and the dramatic aspects of coexistence of diversities in North America.

### **Bispham Memorial Medal (1920s-1930s)**

#### **Native-American subject matter**

*Natoma* (1911) by Victor Herbert (1859-1924)

*Narcissa: Or, The Cost of Empire* (1912) by Mary Carr Moore (1873-1957)

*Shanewis: Or, The Robin Woman* (1918) by Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1946)

*Alglala* (1924) by Francesco Bartolomeo DeLeone (1887-1948)

*Manabozo* (1929) by Thomas William Lester (1889/1891-1956)

#### **African-American/Haitian subject matter**

*Ouanga!: A Haitian Opera in Three Acts* (1932) by Clarence Cameron White

*The Emperor Jones* (1933) by Louis Gruenberg (1884-1964)

*Porgy and Bess* (1935) by George Gershwin (1898-1937) - Awarded in April 1937

Here follows a select list of Indianist Operas by American composers. Regarded as controversial today, the Indianist movement—born from the ethnographic and ethnomusicological research, and from the technological advancement allowing the reproduction and transcription of sound and of an orally transmitted music culture—was also a part of the interest in the exotic at the time.

There were Exoticisms of diverse provenance: “Orientalisms” were popular, too. Composers became interested in the “exotic” scales and rhythms, advancing through Western music since the late 19th century.

### **Indianist Operas (Select List)**

*Poia* (1910) - Arthur Nevin (1871-1943)  
*Natoma* (Metropolitan Opera, Feb. 28, 1911; Cleofonte Campanini, conductor) - Victor Herbert (1859-1924)  
*Narcissa: Or, The Cost of Empire* (1912) - Mary Carr Moore (1873-1957)  
*Winona* (ca. 1915-1918) - Alberto Bimboni (1882-1960)  
*Shanewis: Or, The Robin Woman* (1918) - Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1946)  
*Alglala* (1924) - Francesco Bartolomeo DeLeone (1887-1948)  
*Manabozo* (An Opera in 3 Acts, Op. 80; 1929) – Thomas William Lester (1889/1891-1956; born in England; in the US since 1902)

In addition, here is an even shorter, however significant, list of Italian individuals (three composers and one outstanding photographer and ethnologist, Carlo Gentile) who gave an original contribution to, or were inspired by, the Indianist movement.

### **Italian original contribution to the American Indianist movement**

Carlo Gentile (1835-1893) - photographer & ethnologist, adoptive father of Native American civil rights activist, Carlos Montezuma (1866-1923)  
Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) - *La Fanciulla del West* (1910)  
Alberto Bimboni (1882-1960) - *Winona* (ca. 1915-1918)  
Francesco Bartolomeo DeLeone (1887-1948) - *Alglala* (1924)

On the biographical side, there was a major personal involvement of Bimboni in *Winona*. Ms. Winona Bimboni, the composer’s daughter, born in 1916 and a well-known dance teacher in New York City, was evidently conceived during his compositional fervor and affection for his main character. Ms. Bimboni played a central role in the preservation of her father’s work.



Featured in the Nov. 4th Periwinkle Production of “Beauty and the Beast” will be Winona Bimboni, choreographer and dance director, who will appear as the mean sister, Lucinda. Miss Bimboni has an extensive theatrical background. She has been soloist and choreographer for the Chautauqua Opera Association, the Cleveland Light Opera Theatre, the Russian Grand Opera Company, the Julliard Opera Association; and she was Premiere Danseuse for five seasons for Shubert Productions. The above pose was taken when she appeared professionally with Jose Limon two summers ago. Miss Bimboni's many ballet and modern dance students will undoubtedly delight in being on the other side of the footlights — watching their teacher perform on stage. “Beauty and the Beast” is Live Theatre presented by the Monticello Elementary P. T. A. on Nov. 4 at 2:40 and 4 p. m. at Monticello High School Auditorium.

**Winona Bimboni (1916-1982), Alberto Bimboni's daughter, ballet dancer and dance teacher. Julia Jacobs also appears in photo on the left. From the personal archive of Judith Lungen.**

A copy of the manuscript orchestral and piano-vocal scores of *Winona*, with manuscript revisions/additions in the librettist's hand and in the hand of the composer's daughter, as well as Bimboni's unique *Winona*-related Scrap Book were long preserved by Winona Bimboni, who died in 1982. She left her father's collection with her close friend, Julia Jacobs of Monticello, NY. When Ms. Jacobs expressed her intention to donate the Bimboni Collection to ICAMus, we arranged an expedition to her home in late August, 2014, and we made excerpts from the video of that interview accessible on You Tube.<sup>45</sup> Sadly, Julia passed away shortly thereafter, in November 2014, at age 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Julia Jacobs presents score of “Winona” by Alberto Bimboni*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRVkuOL9bNo> - Jack lee, Interviewer; Roberta Prada, Producer. Published September 4, 2014.



The Alberto Bimboni Collection, gift from Julia Jacobs, donated to ICAMus in August 2014:  
Copy of Piano-Vocal Score of *Winona*; copy of full score of *Winona*; *Winona*-related Scrap Book.  
The ICAMus Archive, Ann Arbor, MI.





The Alberto Bimboni Collection, gift from Julia Jacobs, donated to ICAMus in August 2014:  
Winona-related Scrap Book. The ICAMus Archive, Ann Arbor, MI.

*Winona* finds its sources in old legends and American national identity myths. Native Americans had been portrayed in American music since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>46</sup>, with remarkable early examples of a romantically sympathetic look at them.<sup>47</sup> Those legends also conveyed a sense and memory of places named after a young Indian “princess” who jumped to her death from a bluff, to escape from an arranged marriage.

<sup>46</sup> Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> John Bray (1782-1822), *The Indian Princess: Or, La Belle Sauvage. An Operatic Melo Drama in Three Acts* (Philadelphia: G.A. Blake, 1808). Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861), *Pocahontas: The Pride of the Wilderness* (New York: Davis & Horn, 1839).

# FAIR GERALDINE,

A favorite Song,

Sung by Mr. Charnock in the  
New Operatic Melo Drama of the

INDIAN PRINCESS

OR

La Belle Sauvage.

Composed by JOHN BRAY.

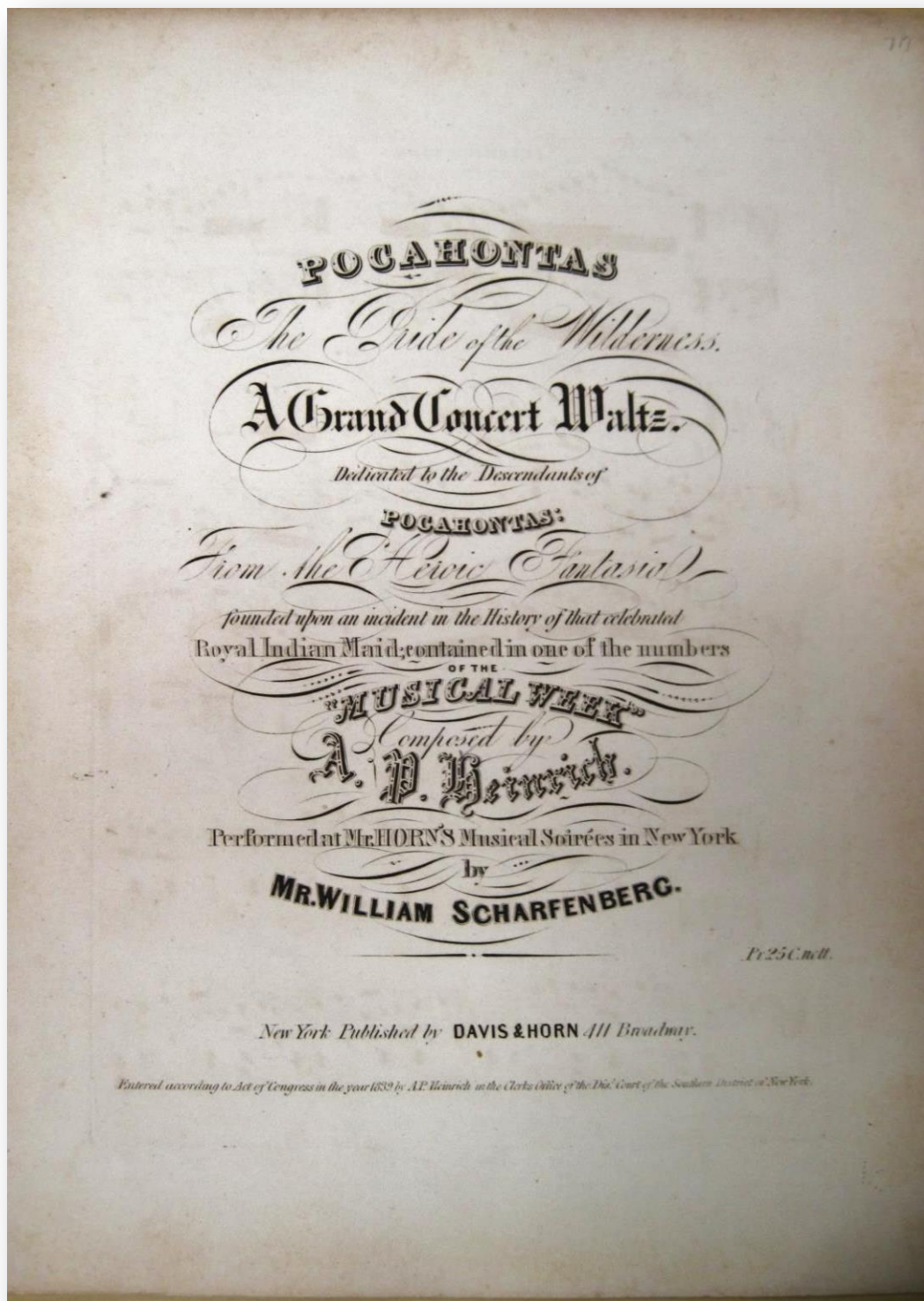
Copy Right Secured.

*ANDANTE  
AFFETUOSO.*

PERCY.  
Fair Ge-ral-dine each charm of spring possess'd, Her cheeks glow'd  
with the Rose and Lilly's strife, Her breath was per-fume, and each

The image shows a page of a musical score. It features a piano introduction with a treble and bass clef, followed by a vocal line for Percy. The lyrics are: "Fair Ge-ral-dine each charm of spring possess'd, Her cheeks glow'd with the Rose and Lilly's strife, Her breath was per-fume, and each". The score is written in a historical style with various musical notations and ornaments.

John Bray (1782-1822), A Song from *The Indian Princess: Or, La Belle Sauvage*.  
*An Operatic Melo Drama in Three Acts* (Philadelphia: G.A. Blake, 1808).



Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861), *Pocahontas: The Pride of the Wilderness* (New York: Davis & Horn, 1839). The Library of Congress Music Division, Heinrich Collection.

The legend of Winona – We-No-Nah, “First-born daughter” – dates back at the latest to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The locations of Lake Pepin (Minnesota & Wisconsin sides) and Maiden Rock resonate with this folk tale. Mary Eastman (1818-1880) wrote about it in 1849: *Dacotah: Or, Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling*. Margaret A. Persons, a local Wisconsin writer, wrote an epic poem on this subject: *Legend of Maiden Rock* (epic poem in 8 pages; published in Wisconsin, ca. early 20<sup>th</sup> century?).

Mark Twain, in his charming memoir and travel book, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883)<sup>48</sup> noted this legend’s power to evoke enduring images and emotions. Let’s read a brief excerpt:

And so we glide along: in due time encountering those majestic domes, the mighty Sugar Loaf, and the Maiden’s Rock—which latter, romantic superstition has invested with a voice; and oftentimes as the birch canoe glides near, at twilight, the dusky paddler fancies he hears the soft sweet music of the long-departed Winona, darling of Indian song and story.<sup>49</sup>

It appears, from this remarkable passage, that when Mark Twain wrote *Life on the Mississippi*, Winona had already long been associated with music, contributing to the magical renown of these places.

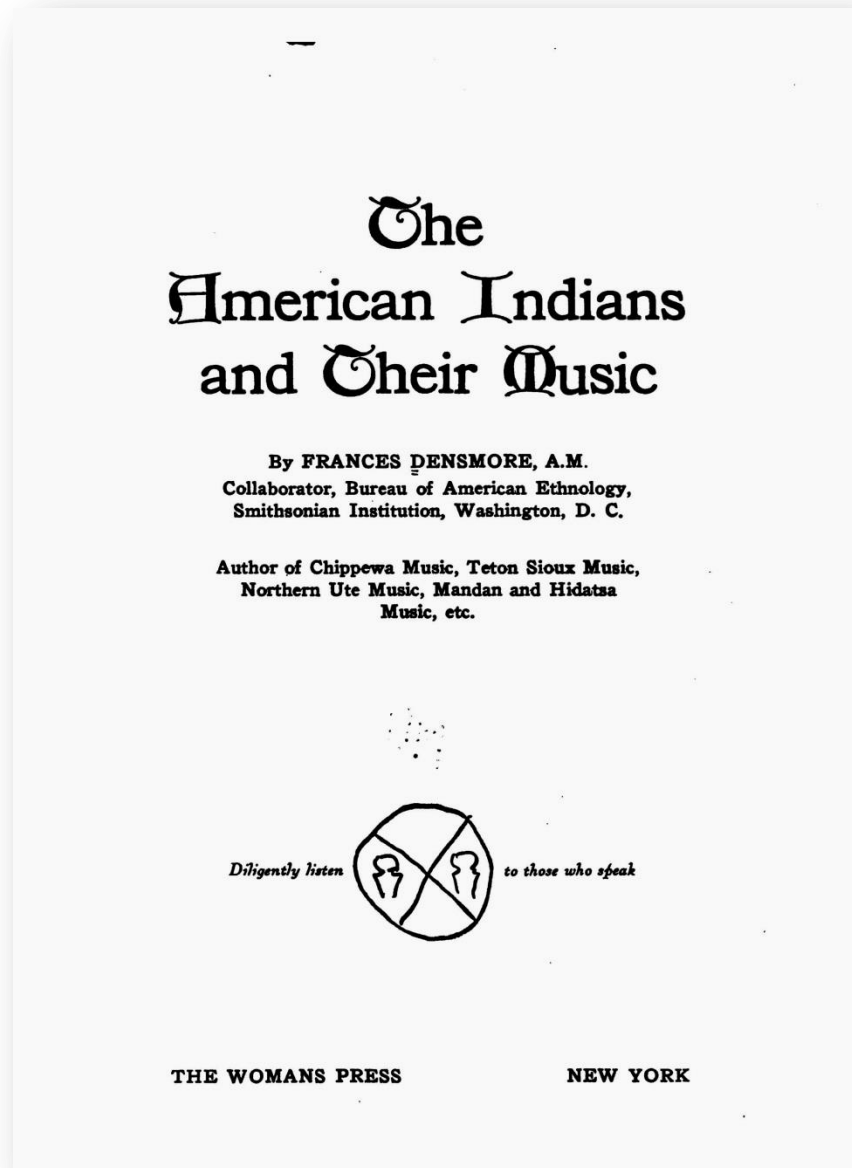


Alberto Bimboni’s *Winona*, a Native-American legend, and a sense of place. Illustrated article in *The Oregon Sunday Journal*, November 9, 1926. Alberto Bimboni’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*. “With more than 300 Illustrations” (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1883).

<sup>49</sup> Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 59, “Legends and Scenery,” 479-480.

If Puccini’s inspiration played a central role in the composition of *Winona*, even more crucial was Bimboni’s research of historical sound documents and sources. He researched Chippewa melodies from Native Americans in Minnesota and in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution, assembled by ethnographer and ethnomusicologist, Frances Densmore.<sup>50</sup>



Frances Densmore, *The American Indians and Their Music* (New York: The Womans Press, 1926), Title Page.

<sup>50</sup> Frances Densmore (1867-1957), *Chippewa Music* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1910); *Indian Action Songs* (Boston: C.C. Birchard & Co., 1921); *The American Indians and Their Music* (New York: The Womans Press, 1926); *Chippewa Customs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1929).

## Adaptations of Indian Music

THE first adaptations of Indian music were contained in Miss Fletcher's book *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, published in 1893. Prof. Fillmore harmonized the songs of the Omaha and neighboring tribes collected by Miss Fletcher and presented some in four-part harmony, similar to hymns, others with an accompaniment of simple chords, and others with octaves or chords in the bass marked with accents to represent the sound of the drum. Arpeggio chords and a tremolo of octaves or chords occurred in some of these harmonizations. The melody, with the Indian words, formed the upper or soprano part, and in some instances two signatures (or keys) are indicated in the same song. There are frequent changes of measure-lengths in accordance with the accenting of the melody by the Indian singer.

The first arrangements of Indian songs with typical piano accompaniment were the work of Carlos Troyer, who, as already stated, went to live among the Zuni in 1888. Troyer introduced Indian songs to the concert platform, paraphrasing the words of the Indian song or describing an Indian custom in simple verse and writing an accompaniment in the accepted form. His verse was usually in regular rhythm and as Indian songs are irregularly accented it appears probable that the Indian melodies were changed to fit the meter of the poem. The popularity of Troyer's work assisted greatly in arousing a general

[ 140 ]

Frances Densmore, *The American Indians and Their Music* (New York: The Womans Press, 1926), p. 140.

The perceptive 1918 *Musical America* article titled “How an Italian composer came to create the first all-Indian opera” stresses *Winona*'s Italian melody and style, and how Bimboni mitigated controversial issues through his Italian approach, both culturally and compositionally. A critical reading of *Winona*'s Scrap Book and the documentation it collects makes it possible to shed light on such topics.



**How an Italian Composer Came to Create the First "All-Indian" Opera**

Alberto Bimboni Discusses the Origin and Characteristics of His "Winona"—All Rôles Enacted by Aborigines—Made Exhaustive Study of Redman's Songs and Mingled with Indians to Get "Atmosphere"—Has Not Altered Original Themes in Incorporating Them in His Score—Singers the Dominant Factor

THE unexpected has happened once more: An Italian composer has written an American Indian opera. To be sure, this composer is not living in Milan or Rome, but right in New York. So, perhaps, it will not seem as strange as if he had done it across the Atlantic, without having made himself familiar with our country and the West, where there are still some Indians.

Alberto Bimboni is the composer and the opera is a three-act work called "Winona." For three years this gifted Italian musician—he is now an American citizen—has worked on the score, and now he is completing the final act. It is his second opera, the first being "The Fire-Worshippers," after Thomas Moore. Maestro Bimboni's ability to handle American Indian themes was revealed to the musical world last year when he published four Indian songs, one of which Helen Stanley introduced at her last New York recital. How the composer came upon the idea he related recently to a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA.

famous—was sung to me by an old Chippewa woman.

**Retains Original Rhythms**

"I think that I have done something different in my handling of the Indian themes. Never do I change in my settings a tune's original rhythm, nor do I



Alberto Bimboni, Composer, Coach and Conductor

"I was walking on Broadway one day," he said, "and met Riccardo Martin, the tenor. Mr. Martin told me that he had just received a libretto from Perry Williams, assistant secretary of the Civic and Commerce Association in Minneapolis. He showed it to me and then Mr. Williams sent me the book, together with Frances Penner's Chippewa book. I became deeply interested in the story of Winona, the Indian girl, who was sent from Maiden Rock at Lake Pepin in order to escape being married to a chieftain of another tribe. Sioux at her uncle's behest, I set to work and studied the songs of the Redman, their peculiarities, their points of adaptability, and I soon decided that I would undertake the writing of an all-Indian opera. By that I mean an opera in which all the characters are Indians; no white people appear in it at all. As far as I know it will be the first Indian opera done in America where this is the case.

**Libretto's Sources**

"Mr. Williams found all the material for his libretto in the Minnesota Historical Society's library at the capitol of that state. The bulletins of the Smithsonian Institute at Washington have been consulted in regard to the action and the various ceremonials, which, of course, have been treated from the dramatist's standpoint. And I have had the privilege of seeing the proofs of Miss Demore's book of Sioux melodies, prior to its publication. In July, 1916, I went out to Red Wing, Minn., to consult with Miss Demore and get 'atmosphere,' as they call it. I met Indians and observed such things as I felt would help me in my building up of the opera. There I heard the Indians sing their songs, and the melody of Winona as she leaped from the rock—a melody which has become

make a quick melody from one that is in its native form slow. Too many arrangers in the folksong field have done this and I am opposed to it strongly. I have used the themes as recorded, they are rhythmically unchanged. If you examine my score and compare an Indian theme in it with the theme as recorded in the Smithsonian reports you will find that even the division of the measures has been respected. My chorus sings in unison, not in parts; occasionally I treat it antiphonally, but never in the conventional four-part manner. It would be ridiculous to do so: *Indians don't sing in parts!* My orchestra will be of moderate size; I plan to use the brasses sparingly, for I think, after much thought on the subject, that strings and wood-winds can carry the feeling of this music better alone.

**"An Opera for Singers"**

"I want this to be an opera for singers rather than an opera for the orchestra, like so many modern operas. In the steps of Verdi I wish to follow, to write music for the heart, not the mind, of the audience. There must be a spontaneous appeal as there is in Verdi, otherwise we had better not try to write operas at all. And in working on this pure Indian material, I have found it possible to set it for the voices so that it is wonderfully effective. If it is anything at all it is, as I said, a work for the singers. There, I suppose, my Italian training stood me in good stead, in making me give the singer something to

sing. There will be the opening scene of an Indian tribe's camp at the foot of the background, then the second scene in Indian style, and the third scene is the same as the opening one and the fourth. There will be hunting songs, war songs, moose-an songs, a Chippewa lullaby, calls played on an Indian flute, and Chippewa and Sioux serenades.

It was an Italian, known to us as Lully—he was originally Lullì—who is credited with a national musical expression for France. Another Italian, and thus can Indian opera, all-Indian opera, thus the expression of the America that was before the landing of the Mayflower, the America that is still cherished by us.

**HEIFETZ AND McCORMACK THRILL PROVIDENCE, R. I.**

**Violinist Creates Sensation in Recital—Tenor's Appearance Becomes Patriotic Demonstration**

PROVIDENCE, R. I., April 11.—Jascha Heifetz, the violinist, gave a concert here April 2 and created a decided sensation. A no less exciting concert was given at a concert in this city since Faderewski, at the height of his powers, first visited us many years ago. His enthusiasm grew as the recital progressed, until at the with mingled hand-clapping and cheers fairly forced the youthful genius to add several extra numbers. In his program, largely composed of virtuosic pieces, Heifetz displayed an amazing technique and, in the few opportunities offered, showed a depth of musicianship that entranced his hearers.

Another notable concert was that given by John McCormack, April 7, in the Majestic theater. There was a tremendous crowd and the recital became a patriotic demonstration as well as a tribute to the singer's art. In an address Mayor Gainer urged the purchase of Liberty Bonds and Mr. McCormack aroused tremendous enthusiasm after singing "God Be With Our Boys To Fight." Responding to a tumult of applause, he said: "If the sentiment of the song finds an echo in your hearts, please buy Liberty Bonds and show that it is more than echo."

Seldom in his many appearances here has Mr. McCormack drawn himself with such fervor into the expression of those songs which demand the outpouring of the strongest emotions of the heart.

A small audience heard the tenor, Guido Ciccolini, and assisting artists in the same theater in the evening. Musical clubs by the Chopin and Chamaine Clubs and several benefit concerts for war purposes have made the past fortnight a season of unusual musical activity.

**Emma Gilbert Wins Recital Honors in Home City**

SCHENECTADY, N. Y., April 8.—Emma Gilbert, contralto and pupil of Herbert Witherspoon, recently made her initial concert appearance in this her home city. The orchestra arrangement of her program and beauty of her voice were heartily acclaimed. She was heard to advantage in "Ombra ma fu," Handel, the contrasting numbers, "Voei di donna," Ponchielli, and "Chi vuol la Zingarella," Paisiello. Her singing gave evidence of excellent training. Three groups of songs—German, English and French—brought forth a demand for many encores. Edith W. Griffing, coach from the Witherspoon studios in New York, acted as accompanist.

**American Criterion Society Hears Gifted Artists**

At the meeting of the American Criterion Society at the Hotel Plaza, New York, on April 5, Beatrice Horsdruub, violinist, won favor by her playing of a Fiocco Allegro, the Tartini-Kreiser Variations and pieces by Tertius Noble and Mozart-Alard. Aline van Barentzen, pianist, was heard in Chopin, Liszt, Faure, Albeniz and Beethoven pieces and Edda Vettori, soprano, sang a "Cavalleria" aria and songs by Ball and Sans-Souci.

**NEW OPERA OPENS IN SAN FRANCISCO**

**"Aida" Launches Season—Band, to Tour Australia with American Music**

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., April 8.—The principal event of the week was the opening of the new Washington Square Theater by the San Francisco Opera Company, an organization which will take the place of the Latin Square Opera Company, and which retains many of well as new artists.

At one time conductor of the orchestra and chorus, a specially selected has charge of the stage, and among the artists are Elena Avedano, Lina Reggiani, Elsie Beskow, Blanche Hamilton Fox, Lydia Sturdevant, Stella Best, Louise Nee, Gullis Miano, Joseph Fredricks, Ishmael Magrino, Everett Neri, Bartolomeo Dandone, Manuel Romero, Emmanuel Porcino, Beniamin Agostini, Corral and Everette Albertini. Two offerings, Aida on Saturday night, and the audience demonstrated their approval by hearty applause and numerous recalls. Elena Avedano as Aida, Blanche Hamilton Fox, Amerigo Joseph, Fredericks, Rhandames; Jose Corral, Ramfis, and Bartolomeo Dandone as Amnoro were equally well received. The other offering for this week is "Barbire di Seviglia," Sunday afternoon, with thousands of persons at the Civic Center for a Community Sing, with Robert Lloyd directing and several bands and a chorus leading in the patriotic songs which were lustily shouted by the multitude. One of the favorite songs was the Liberty Bond Song just written by G. A. Cummings of Oakland.

On Saturday wars were sung at Civic Center by thousands who had congregated near the reviewing stand to see the Liberty bond parade. Robert Lloyd, assisted by a male quartet with megaphones, led the singing.

The band of the Columbia Park Boys Club, consisting of fifty members, of which Major Sidney S. Peixoto is the head, has been signally honored by the Australian Government, which has extended to them an invitation to tour that country. The invitation was extended through L. A. Admison, head master of Wesley College at Melbourne. The war has had its effect on Australia, and although so far removed from the scene of action thousands of soldiers have been sent to join the Allies, and many of them have returned maimed or broken in health. The plan is for the San Francisco boys to visit the Australian cities and introduce new military music, such as will inspire confidence in the United States. They will leave next month. E. M. B.

**Music at Illinois University**

URBANA, ILL., April 10.—Several enjoyable recitals have been given recently at the Auditorium of the University of Illinois. As part of the Symphony Concert Course the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Frederick Stock, conductor, gave two programs on March 25. Besides patriotic works, these included a variety of compositions by American and European composers. Another recital was that given jointly by Harold Bauer and Pablo Casals, who played works by Beethoven, Chopin, Boccherini and Grieg. The organ recitals at the auditorium continue and on March 17 J. Lawrence Rich gave an attractive program. A students' recital was given on March 19.

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**OSCAR SAEIGE**

**SPLENDID SUCCESS OF MARTIN RICHARDSON TENOR**  
Tour of 60 Concerts Nov B. King for Season 1918-1919  
TULSA, OKLA. The artistic and subtle interpretation of every number given by Mr. Richardson was a joy. His excellent tenor is very unusual in beauty and quality.  
FLORENZA, ILL. Martin Richardson has a beautiful voice, clear enunciation and pure intonation.  
WAUKESHA, WIS. Martin Richardson sang with a finish, a verve and spirit and a beauty of enunciation which made his numbers gems to remember.  
FT. DODGE, ILL. Mr. Richardson uses his beautiful voice merely as the vehicle of expression for his refined and cultured mentality. His was a thoroughly satisfying and artistic performance.  
Hotel Wellington, New York June to Nov. Mohonk Lake, New York

Musical America, April 20, 1918, 21. Article on Alberto Bimboni and Winona. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

This opera incorporates Native American traditional chants, Chippewa and Sioux songs, love, war, and hunting songs. In order to respect the Indian musical traditions, Bimboni composed the choral scenes in unison, avoiding part-singing. Not only all the opera characters are American Indians, but some performers were of Native American descent as well.

The compelling opening scene of Act I displays a naturalistic and cultural depiction of Indian life and landscape—the night, the flute, Chatonska’s arrival on his canoe and his love call.



Alberto Bimboni, *Winona*, Act I, Scene 1. Orchestral Score, pp. 10-11: depiction of the night, the flute call, Chatonska’s arrival on his canoe and his love call. Unpublished. Copy of holograph manuscript. The ICAMus Archive.





Alberto Bimboni, *Winona*, Act I, Scene 1. Orchestral Score, pp. 12-13: depiction of the night, the flute call, Chatonska's arrival on his canoe and his love call. Unpublished. Copy of holograph manuscript. The ICAMus Archive.

Winona's lullaby in the final scene of Act III, just before her leap from the cliff, acquires the powerful color of preparation for a ritual suicide, thanks to the melody here introduced, very similar to Densmore's transcriptions of Indian sound documents, such as the Chippewa lullaby that we can see on page 60.

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Win: The highest love on earth is that which warms the hearts of

167

Win: moth - ers breathing for their babes. What beauty greater mother

168

Win: and her child! What mu - sic.

169

Win: *rall* in 4 *Moderato* P  
Mother singing to her child. Close, close your

Alberto Bimboni, *Winona*, Act III, Final Scene (Death of Winona): *Lullaby*. Piano-Vocal Score, p. 214. Unpublished. Copy of holograph manuscript. The ICAMus Archive.

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Win. eyes, my mother-child, The owl still hoots from distant bough;

Win. Though dark the night Your lodge is bright. Peace to my little

(The indian girl from earliest impressions was taught to be a mother. Hence Winona's reasoning and her expression "mother-child" in addressing her imaginary girl baby in the first stanza. The second stanza of course refers to a boy child.)

Win. maid - en, Now close close thine eyes my mother-child.

PASSANTINO NO 18 - 18 Lines Symphony Size Printed in U.S.A.

Alberto Bimboni, *Winona*, Act III, Final Scene (Death of Winona): *Lullaby*. Piano-Vocal Score, p. 215. Unpublished. Copy of holograph manuscript. The ICAMus Archive.

## Children’s Songs

**W**E cannot imagine a mother without a lullaby, and the Indian women croon to their babies just as mothers do in our own race. The lullabies were not composed, nor “received in dreams” (like the important songs), but they developed gradually from the gentle crooning sounds with which the mothers soothed the little children. An old Indian smiled when I asked him about lullabies, and said “the women used to sing something to the children,” but he did not dignify a lullaby by the name of “song.” Sometimes the women record only a sort of “endless tune” when asked for a lullaby, but in many tribes there are distinct melodies sung to the babies. Such a lullaby was found among the Chippewa and their neighbors the Menominee, the same melody with slight variation being recorded in many localities through Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Chippewa woman still

No. 5

### CHIPPEWA LULLABY \*



\* *Chippewa Music*, Bulletin 45, Bureau of American Ethnology, No. 145.

[ 72 ]

Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Lullaby*, in *The American Indians and Their Music* (New York: The Womans Press, 1926), p. 72.

This opera is characterized by a continuous flow of ariosi, arias, duets, trios, quartets, choral scenes, instrumental introductions and preludes, solo instrumental “voices,” where the melodic phrasing blends into the rhythmic diversity and constant changes, as well as frequent alterations, making this score tonally adventurous. The Native-American carefully researched “authenticity” never produced truer operatic substance.

*Winona* was completed in 1918, eventually staged in 1926 and 1928. Meanwhile, Puccini had died in 1924. A Tuscan-American, inspired by the concise, non-decorative exoticism of Puccini’s approach to the American musical sources, Bimboni in a way “followed” Puccini to America, and in the US he grew new roots and developed an original style, that the rapidly changing American society and musical world of the 1920s and 1930s Jazz Age soon considered obsolete, while orienting the interests of composers towards other identities.

pected has happened once  
An Italian composer has writ-  
erican Indian opera. To be  
composer is not living in Milan  
ut right in New York. So,  
will not seem as strange as  
done it across the Atlantic,  
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untry and the West, where  
ill some Indians.  
bimboni is the composer and  
s a three-act work called  
For three years this gifted  
ian—he is now an American  
worked on the score, and  
mpleting the final act. It is  
opera, the first being “The  
pers,” after Thomas Moore.  
nbboni’s ability to handle  
lian themes was revealed to  
world last year when he pub-  
ndian songs, one of which  
y introduced at her last New  
How the composer came  
a he related recently to a  
e of MUSICAL AMERICA.  
cing on Broadway one day,”  
met Riccardo Martin, the  
Martin told me that he had  
a libretto from Perry Will-  
nt secretary of the Civic  
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howed it to me and then  
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**Retains Original Rhythms**  
“I think that I have done something  
different in my handling of the Indian  
themes. Never do I change in my set-  
tings a tune’s original rhythm, nor do I  
before the landing of the  
America that is still cheri-  
**HEIFETZ AND McCORMACK THRILL PROVIDENCE**  
**Violinist Creates Sensational Tenor's Appearance Patriotic Demonstration**  
PROVIDENCE, R. I., Ap-  
Heifetz, the violinist, gav-  
April 2 and created a de-  
No such excitement has b-  
a concert in this city sin-  
at the height of his pow-  
us many years ago. Ex-  
as the recital progresse-  
close the crowd rushed t-  
with mingled hand-clapp-  
fairly forced the youthfu-  
several extra numbers.  
largely composed of virtu-  
fetz displayed an amazin-  
in the few opportunities  
a depth of musicianship  
his hearers.  
Another notable cor-  
given by John McCorm-  
the Majestic Theater. T-  
mendous crowd and the  
patriotic demonstration  
tribute to the singer’s ar-  
Mayor Gainer urged t-  
Liberty Bonds and  
aroused tremendous ei-  
singing “God Be with  
night.” Responding to  
plause, he said: “If t-  
the song finds an echo  
buy Liberty Bonds and  
make a quick melody from one that is in  
its native form slow. Too many ar-

Alberto Bimboni, Photographic portrait, c. 1915, *Musical America*, April 20, 1918, 21.  
In the composer’s Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

In the full awareness of the controversial issues touched by *Winona*’s subject matter, particularly in the light of today’s historically informed, ethnically aware American-Music studies, we welcome this opportunity to experience the distinctive character of this score, and also to acknowledge a yet one more international expansion of the most influential Giacomo Puccini—Puccini, once considered a local composer.

The study of Alberto Bimboni and his opera, *Winona*, makes it possible to work on a new page in the book of American-music history—in an international perspective.



Soprano Minna Pelz as Winona, during rehearsals for the opera premiere in Portland, OR, Nov. 11, 1926. Article from *The Sunday Oregonian*, Portland, OR, October 31, 1926; in Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive; gift of Julia Jacobs (1922-2014). Ms. Pelz was renowned as “Portland's Own Prima Donna.” She was also the director of her chorus, the Minna Pelz Singers.



Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, gift of the late Julia Jacobs, at The ICAMus Studio in Ann Arbor, MI, USA.

**IN REMEMBRANCE OF JULIA JACOBS,  
UNWAVERING CHAMPION OF WINONA’S “SONG AND STORY.”**

Julia Jacobs presents score of Winona by Alberto Bimboni

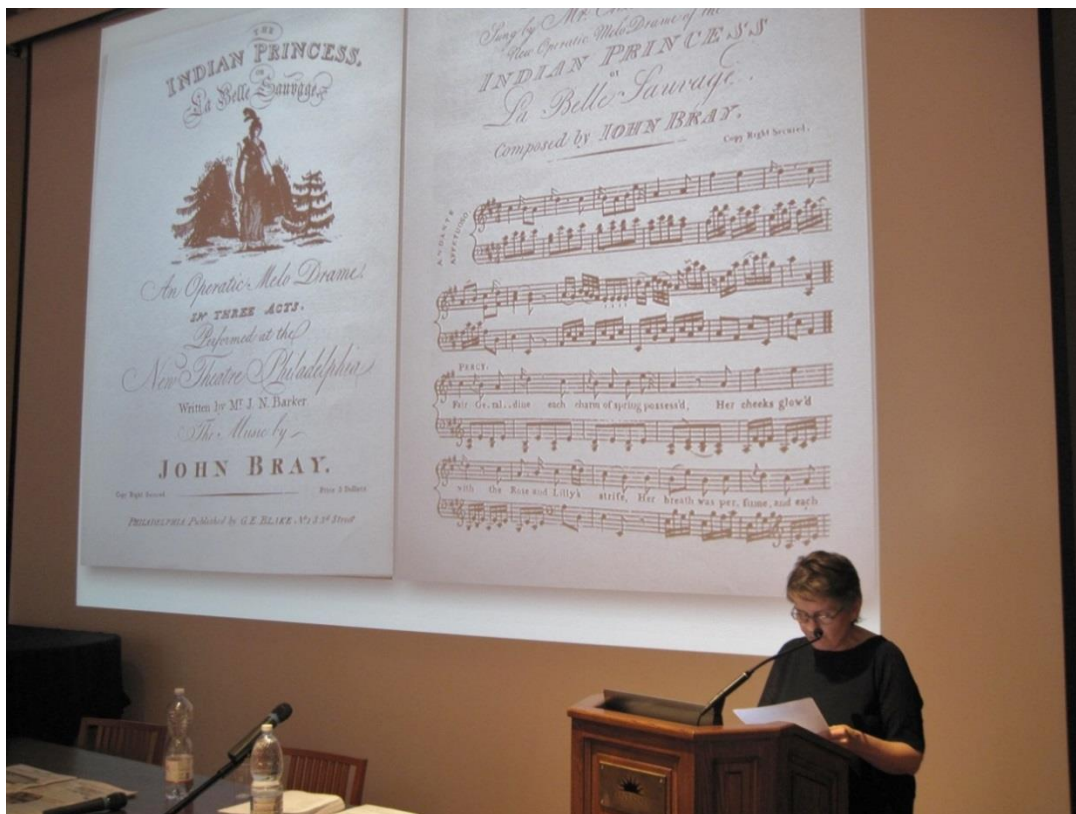
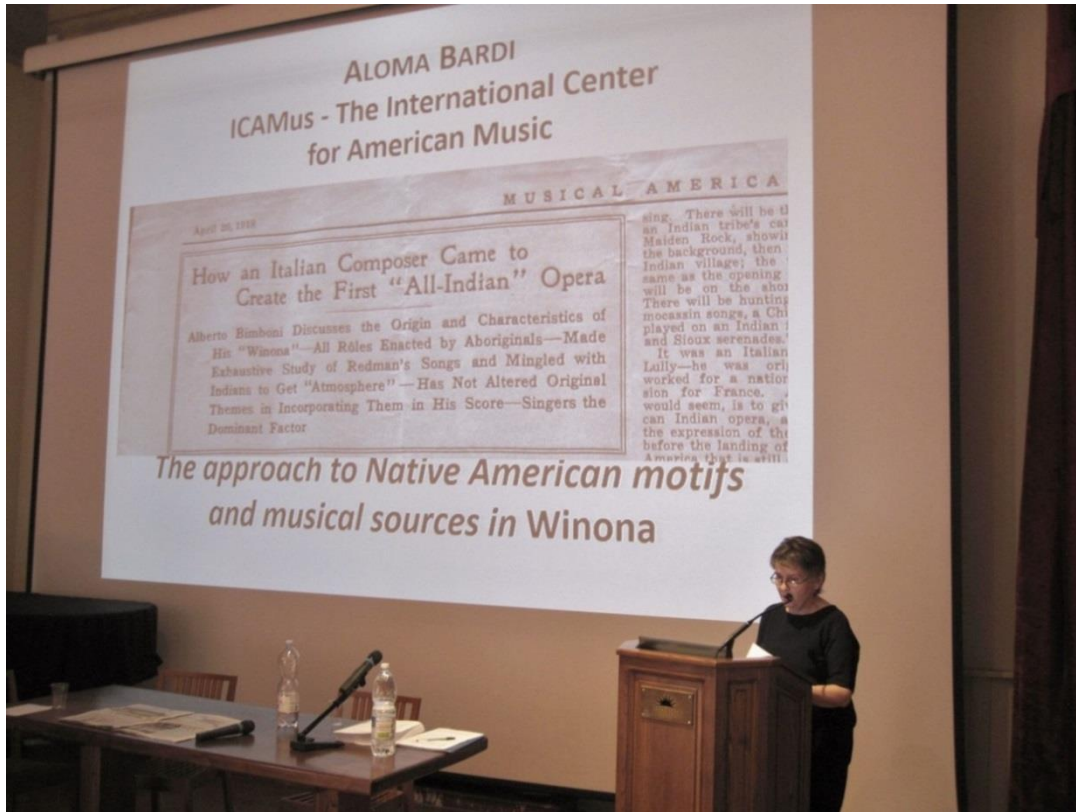


**Julia Jacobs (1922-2014) at her home in Monticello, NY, August 27, 2014,  
on the day she donated the Bimboni Collection to the ICAMus Archive.**

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Aloma Bardi presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.





## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF “REAL INDIANS” IN THE MINNEAPOLIS PERFORMANCE OF *WINONA***

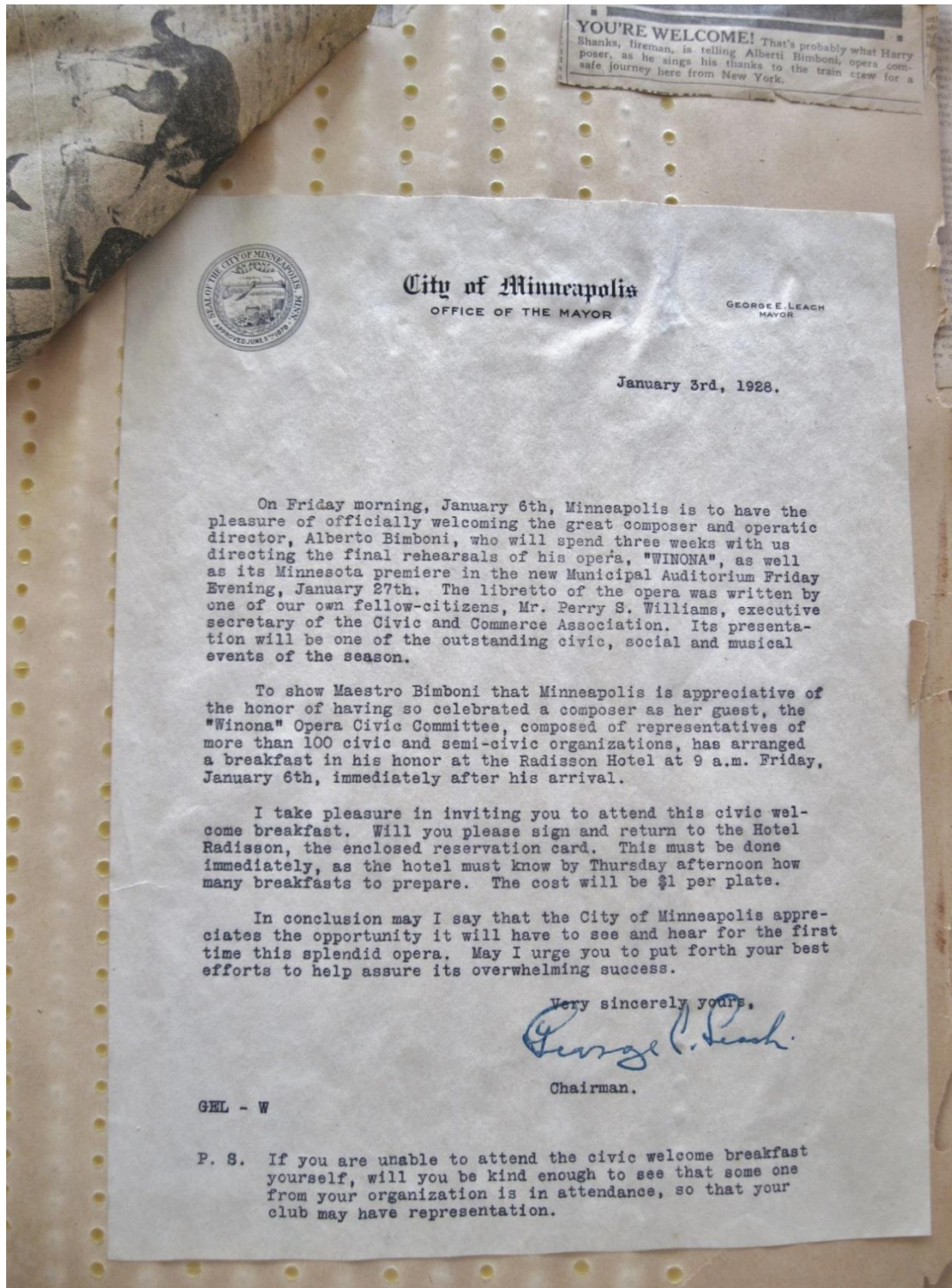
**GRETCHEN PETERS**

(UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE, MUSIC DEPARTMENT  
& THE AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES PROGRAM)

The performance of Alberto Bimboni’s *Winona* in Minneapolis on January 27, 1928, which drew an audience of 9,000 at the new Minneapolis Municipal Auditorium, was a point of pride for many in the region. A narrative surrounding the opera emerged in local newspapers and the playbill that emphasized the “genuine” and “authentic” nature of what was being called the “first all Indian opera.” Contributing to this interpretation was the participation of six Ojibwe Indians from the region in a dance in the final scene of Act I. The surrounding narrative isolated these men in the legendary past of the opera, as any attention to the diverse lives of these individuals would have detracted from a central purpose of this performance--to associate the image of the monolithic, legendary Indian with Minnesota.

*Winona* was declared as “Minnesota’s own grand opera” in newspapers throughout the state. The story of Winona, the Indian maiden who jumped to her death into the Mississippi River from Maiden Rock to escape a forced marriage, was described in the playbill as “the state’s most popular legend.” The libretto was written by Perry Williams, a longtime resident of Minneapolis, who, according to one writer “steeped himself in Indian lore to such a degree that he [was] able to reproduce a verisimilitude of fact in this narrative of Indian romance and drama.” The composer, Alberto Bimboni, drew Native American melodies from two studies, *Chippewa Music* and *Teton Sioux Music*, conducted by native Minnesotan, Frances Densmore. While Minnesota could not make claims on Bimboni, himself, the foreword of the playbill emphasized that he was an American citizen with personal contacts with Densmore. As summed up in the *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, “This opera is a stupendous and spectacular production and of great

importance to Minnesota people. All should be interested in their own Indian legends and state people."



Invitation letter from the Mayor of Minneapolis, George E. Leach, to a welcome breakfast in Bimboni's honor, upon the composer's arrival in the city on 01-06-1928. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Underlying the representation of *Winona* in Minneapolis was the importance of tourism for the economic future of the state. The librettist had served as the manager of the tourist and resort information bureau for the *Minneapolis Journal*, and at the time of the performance, was the Secretary of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce. In this capacity, Williams emphasized the importance of Minnesota’s beautiful scenery, as replacement to the state’s lumber industry which had begun to decline after nearly one hundred years. The Nelson Act, which was passed in Minnesota in 1889, had the intention of relocating all of the Indians in Minnesota to White Earth Indian Reservation, providing individual land allotments to Indians, and selling off the remaining reservation lands to the lumber industry. The industry reached its peak from 1890 to 1910, but in 1929, one year after the Minneapolis performance of *Winona*, the world’s largest white pine company closed in Minnesota. Williams stated, “the tourist industry draws on a natural resource that is never exhausted—scenery. All it requires is judicious advertising and publicity efforts to attract them...”



Alberto Bimboni' arrival in Minneapolis, January 6th, 1928, to direct rehearsals of *Winona*. *Musical America*, January 28, 1928. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.



Announcements of the Minneapolis production of *Winona* in the local press, December 1927 - January 1928. Newspaper clips in Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Both the opera, *Winona*, and the surrounding narrative served this effort by highlighting the natural beauty of Minnesota, of which a crucial component was the ideal legendary Indian. The first two acts are set in an Indian village on Lake Pepin, a spot on the Mississippi River that naturally opens up to form the largest lake on the river. The third act is set on the cliffs at Maiden Rock, a 400 foot limestone cliff that extends for nearly a mile. The opera’s scenic design included richly painted backdrops, large painted canvas rocks, canoes, and a ten-foot cliff from which the heroine jumped into a pile of hay. The recounting of the Indian legend of the moccasin flower in the first act drew attention to Minnesota’s state flower and one of Minnesota’s oldest state parks, Minneopa, which is the name of the girl in the legend. Throughout the playbill, an ideal Indian is blended with the natural setting of Minnesota. As one description reads, “Today, as in the days when the love song of Winona echoed through the evening stillness of the Mississippi, the lure of the Minnesota water trails--the winding, bewitching canoe paths that wind their way through the forests- in and out among the hills, or across the prairie country, still grips the heart of the lover of the outdoors. Today the fame of Minnesota as a place of great scenic beauty is spreading throughout the world.” An advertisement in the playbill, with images of Indians on Maiden Rock, encouraged passengers on the Burlington route from Chicago to Minneapolis along the Mississippi River. This narrative recalled and immortalized what was “worthwhile” about the Indians.

Perry Williams and Alberto Bimboni were adopted into the “Mississippi tribe of Chippewa Indians” the night of the dress rehearsal, offering further sense of Indian authenticity to the opera and the region. The six Ojibwe Indians who participated in the opera performed the ceremony; Chief J.P. Buffalo and Joseph Belgard conducted the ceremony and “a large group of Twin City Chippewas clad in tribal regalia” formed the “tribal council.” According to the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, “The ceremony was simple. J.A. Belgard, a Chippewa, welcomed the two white men who were to be made brothers of the red man. The chief filled his hand with earth. This he rubbed on the hands of the director and librettist. ‘You are children of the earth,’ the chief chanted. ‘The blood which runs in your veins is as red as ours, and we love you. You, Maestro Bimboni, shall be known to your red brethren as Wa-Ben-Na-Quid, the Cloud With a Silver Lining; and you, Brother Williams, shall be known as Nay-Ta-Gad, Successful, Progressive Hunter of the Tribe.’” The newspaper interpreted the adoption ceremony as an endorsement of the opera’s depiction of the “primitive Indian character in all its native nobility.”

A photo of the adoption ceremony simultaneously reflects the fascination with the legendary Indian and the failure to acknowledge the contemporary Indian. Below the photo entitled, “Chippewas Adopt ‘Winona’ Authors in Tribe,” it reads, “Above are shown, left to right, Mr. Williams, Chief J.P. Buffalo, who conducted the adoption ceremonies, Maestro Bimboni and Joseph Belgard, orator for the ceremonies. In the background is some of the scenery to be used in the opera.” No recognition is made of the four remaining men standing right alongside the others. The *Minneapolis Tribune* did print an article that day, however, with a list of the names of the four additional Indians: Rd. W. Cart, Emanuel Gustave and Benny Holstein all from White Earth, and Frances Blake from Red Lake.

*Winona*, with its all-Indian cast and 125-member chorus, provided the opportunity for many Minnesotans to assume an Indian persona. On the morning of the performance, a large

photograph with the chorus and cast in costume appeared in *The Minneapolis Journal* with a headline that read, “All Set, Pale-Faced Indians Ready for ‘Winona’ Opera Premiere Tonight.” Grouped as “hunters and villagers” and “Indian women,” each member of the chorus was identified by name in the playbill, including Joseph Belgard, the only one of the six Ojibwe to be part of the chorus. Belgard and Chief Buffalo are identified as the leaders of the dance, but in contrast to the “pale-face Indians,” the others remain anonymous.



*The Minneapolis Journal*, January 27, 1928. Article on *Winona*, on the day of the Minneapolis premiere. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

The Ojibwe men danced in the final scene of Act I of the opera. Emphasizing the authentic nature of the dance, a rare reference to these men ten days prior to the performance reads, “Chief J. P. Buffalo is leading the group of Indians who today began work on a group of dances. While the tuneful melodies are sung, Indian dancers in aboriginal garb will perform dances which the red men executed long before white men trod the continent. Joseph Belgard of North Dakota, a member of the chorus and himself a full blooded Indian, will coach the Indians.” Despite the below zero January weather, the Indians dressed only in loin cloths, unlike the pale-face Indians in covered up. The Indian dance was not intended as the focus of the stage, but rather as an extension of the scenery, as intense drama unfolded between the major characters. Throughout this scene, all four voice-parts of the chorus sing a prayer to the “Great Mystery,” requesting health and safety, and over the chorus, *Winona*’s uncle, Wabasha, forbids the young lovers to see

each other. Despite all of this activity on stage, one writer noted “the realistic Indian dancing” and “their apparently simple and yet quite subtle stepping nearly walked off with the show...” For this scene, Bimboni made use of at least three dance songs transcribed by Frances Densmore from the Lakota Sun Dance ceremony, a sacred ritual not intended for outsiders that was banned for Indian use by the U.S. Government for fifty years from 1883 to 1934 (six years after the performance of *Winona*).

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Win. Then sing the day But

Chato. Then sing the day But

Wab. call Great Mys - ter - y!

S. dance to Thee. Come! Great Mys - ter - y! Hear our

A. dance to Thee. Come! Great Mys - ter - y! Hear our

T. dance to Thee. Come! Great Mys - ter - y! Hear the

B. dance to Thee. Come! Great Mys - ter - y! Hear the

Piano accompaniment with various musical notations including chords, arpeggios, and dynamic markings.

Alberto Bimboni, *Winona*, Act I, Final Scene (Invocation to the “Great Mystery” and chorus dance). Piano-Vocal Score, p. 88. Unpublished. Copy of holograph manuscript. The ICAMus Archive.

The pursuit of the authentic image in this performance was consistent with the work of Frances Densmore, and other ethnographers at this time. They placed high value on preservation of the past noble world of the American Indian, while at the same time encouraged assimilation and criticized contemporary Indian culture. As articulated by one newspaper writer, “out of these studies [of Perry Williams] grew an ideal Indian, not in the least comparable to the Indian of our modern times...” The diversity and the reality of the lives of these Ojibwe men, who were dancing in loin cloths to forbidden Sun Dance melodies, contradicted the Romantic image of Minnesota that was being so carefully crafted through this “true Indian opera.” A consideration of the lives of three of these men provides a strong antidote to the romantic narrative that melds Indian legend to Minnesota, and it challenges the prevalent distinction between the ideal and real Indian.



Minneapolis Daily Star article on Indian operatic singer, Chief Caupolican, engaged to sing the role of Matosapa in Winona. Newspaper clips in Alberto Rimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.





Articles on the Minneapolis production of *Winona* with photos of the cast of principals in Indian costumes. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

Joseph Belgard, from Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota, who was known as Chief Chibiaboos, had a long and successful career performing Indian culture. At the time of the Minneapolis performance of *Winona*, Belgard was in his mid-twenties and already known in the region. He had attended Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, a well-known Indian boarding school, where he was in a glee club, served as director for a choir, and sang in a quartet at the University of Kansas. Six months prior to the performance of *Winona*, an article in the *Minneapolis Star* focused on Belgard's desire to combine his past training with American Indian music. He is quoted as saying, "...my main interest lies in native Indian music. This field is almost untouched, and I believe it presents boundless possibilities. My ambition is to gain a full comprehension of Indian music, to study its background and its themes. I believe these themes could be worked into music which would prove very much worthwhile. It would take a great deal of research work, I know, but I don't believe it is immodest for me to say that I am well fitted for it. Naturally, being an Indian, I understand what Indian music means." He is quoted in the newspaper, while not by name, as saying that at rehearsals when he heard the opening chorus of *Winona*, it almost made him cry, implying that on some level this music resonated with him.

Throughout his career, Belgard offered a narrative of Indian culture – in tourist shows to President Roosevelt’s first inauguration. In the discussion around *Winona*, however, the ideal and true Indian culture and music lay in Minnesota’s past, not with contemporary Minnesota Indians. *Winona* was described as a model for a true American opera, with inspiration coming from the legendary Indian. In context to *Winona*, one author questioned, “Will the vanished red man teach the world that there can be real opera in English, about real American scenes?” This type of questioning had no place in the answer for Belgard and others like him.

Emanuel Holstein, who was twenty-two at the time of the performance. Holstein was born at White Earth Ojibwe reservation in 1906 to parents who were both enrolled members of the reservation. Holstein attended numerous boarding schools in both Minnesota and North Dakota, and he remembered during his second year running away three times. As punishment he recalled being “licked in front of the whole school” and getting all of his hair clipped off, as well as being required to wear a sign on his back that said “runaway jack.” Looking back toward the end of his life, Holstein said, “It must have been something I ate to make me run like that.” In reference to completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Wahpeton, North Dakota, Holstein recalled, “I finished the following spring and we were all honored because for an Indian to reach that grade in school was considered to be very good as the white education wasn’t going over so good with the Indian people.”

Holstein, who became a truck driver for the local newspaper in Minneapolis and an organizer for the labor union, also performed in vaudeville as an Indian. He recalled, “I kind of got myself into the entertainment world for awhile and really enjoyed it.” As a boy in the band at White Earth boarding school, he had learned to play the alto sax and the drums. As a young man he performed at sportsman’s shows in lodges in the Turtle Mountains where he met Belgard, and the “few dollars [he] made in the entertainment field” helped him get by. A gig he said he liked to “brag about,” was for the movie *The Lone Star Ranger* at the Minnesota Theatre, where he entertained the customers in line. Referring to *Winona*, Holstein said, “I remember well because in this we wore the breech cloth, moccasins and a roach. I remember Chibiabush coming over to me when we were dancing and dancing close and saying, ‘Get in front of me,’ as he backed up and got off the stage as we went on to finish the act. I went back later and asked what happened and he said he had almost lost his breech cloth, and that was all he had on so he had to be careful.”

One of the men who appears to have had a more difficult time navigating the harsh realities of Minnesota history was Frances Blake. According to census records, Blake was born in 1903 at Red Lake to parents who only spoke the Ojibwe language. His father was a laborer in a lumber camp, but their family still depended upon rations from the government. Succumbing to a disease that hit northern Minnesota hard in the early twentieth century, Blake’s wife died of tuberculosis when their son was only three years old, and he died of it in his forties. His son, offered his perspective of his father, in his book, entitled *We Have the Right to Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought*, which was published in 1995. His son described depressed economic conditions and despair at Red Lake during the 1920’s and 1930’s, and thought his father’s generation received a crippling pressure to assimilate. He wrote, “The *Ahnishinahbaeo jibway* of my father’s generation went through a brutal compulsory education, and my father was

a broken man who grappled with the European diseases of tuberculosis and alcoholism—and lost.” While Frances Blake is barely mentioned in the narrative surrounding the opera, and his name does not even appear in the playbill or under his photograph, his appearance in the Minneapolis performance of *Winona* is central to the meaning of this opera. The lives and experiences of the real Indians in *Winona* were purposely being buried by a Romantic narrative that melded the ideal Indian with Minnesota to benefit the state’s economy.





Gretchen Peters presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, & the ICAMus group celebrating the conference’s conclusion.

la Repubblica  
GIUGNO 1 2017  
**Firenze VIII**

# Società

SPETTACOLI CULTURA SPORT

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## La storia Una principessa da melodramma

Agli inizi del '900 negli Stati Uniti il fiorentino Bimboni scrisse “Winona”  
 Dopo lunghi anni di silenzio, quella musica riappare oggi al Cherubini



**IL FESTIVAL**  
**Passeggiate e reading dentro l'altra Maremma**



La cripta di Giugnano

**ELISABETTA BERTI**

**L**a Maremma del mare, del vento, delle campagne sconfinata la conosciamo già. Ma ci sono posti che raccontano storie più belle, antiche o moderne che siano, per lo più sconosciute. Sono queste a cui si dedica *I luoghi del tempo*, festival che porta scrittori, artisti, attori, musicisti e giornalisti a fare da guida per un giorno ai luoghi poco frequentati disseminati nella provincia di Grosseto, angoli suggestivi che fanno da scenario a passeggiate, concerti, reading, interviste, in un programma che nasce dalla collaborazione tra la rete museale della Provincia di Grosseto, AdArte Spettacoli e Pro loco Follonica. Domani Antonio Iozza e Flavia Mastrella, anime di un binomio teatrale che non ha paragoni in Italia, presentano il libro *Clamori al vento* alla cripta di Giugnano (Roccastra-

# C'era una volta in America

## L'opera dimenticata che raccontava gli indiani

**GREGORIO MOPPI**

**L**ei è un'eroina da melodramma come tante. Il suo amore viene ostacolato dalla famiglia. Lotta con le unghie e con i denti per poter passare la vita insieme all'uomo dei sogni. Alla fine soccombe. Tuttavia Winona non è personaggio operistico come gli altri. È un'indiana d'America, una specie di Pocahontas che canta, all'italiana, melodie del suo popolo. L'ha creata un fiorentino, Alberto Bimboni, emigrato oltreoceano ai primi del secolo. Dapprima per impugnarne la bacchetta, da affiliato alla compagnia del direttore d'orchestra Giorgio Polacco che nel 1911 scorse la "Fanciulla del West" di Puccini in lungo e in largo per gli States. Allora aveva poco più di vent'anni. In seguito si dedicò prevalentemente alla scrittura e all'insegnamento, facendo l'allenatore di cantanti. Il successo toccato con "Winona", però, non riuscì a replicarlo più finché campo - si spense a New York il 2 giugno 1960. L'opera indiana, scritta mentre in Europa si combatteva la Grande Guerra, suscitò gran clamore e file sterminate al botteghino sia quando debuttò a Portland, Oregon, nel 1926, sia quando fu ripresa a Minneapolis due anni dopo. Fu Barbara Bogani, intervistata da Altona Bardi, Barbara Bogani, Davide Ceriani, Gretchen Peters). Soprattutto è possibile riscoprirlo, anche se parzialmente, e con accompagnamento dal solo pianoforte, cantata da sei studenti del Conservatorio "Cherubini" nella Sala del Buonumore (piazza delle Belle Arti 2, ore 18, gratis, info 338 6601819). L'opportunità di riscoprire questa rarità è offerta da Icamus, centro per lo studio della musica americana con base tra il Michigan e Montespertoli, che nel 2014 ha acquisito le carte di Bimboni comprendenti pure parecchio materiale documentario: dono di Julia Jacobs, insegnante di danza e coreografa collega della figlia del compositore, anche lei di nome Winona, da cui le aveva a sua volta ricevuto.

«Bimboni, ultimo rampollo di una dinastia di musicisti che a Firenze si era fatta un nome già da un secolo nella didattica e nella costruzione di strumenti, in America solidarizzò con il movimento indianista, soggiornò perfino presso una tribù, e per lavorare su "Winona" si documentò con acribia sugli studi etnomusicologici di Frances Densmore che aveva registrato e trascritto i canti di guerra, d'amore e di caccia dei nativi», spiega Altona Bardi, presidente di Icamus. «Lui, in quest'opera in tre atti sul libretto del giornalista e politico Perry S. Williams, teneva a conseguire un risultato musicalmente autentico. Cosicché, entro un tessuto sinfonico d'aspet-

IL SUCCESSO





**RITRATTI E NOTE**  
 Sopra, due pagine della partitura di "Winona". A sinistra, dall'alto, il compositore fiorentino Alberto Bimboni arrivato negli Stati Uniti nei primi del '900 (è morto nel 1960). Sotto, Minna Pelz interprete dell'opera che racconta una storia di indiani

to pucciniano, ricrea motivi dal sapore indiano nel profilo melodico e nel ritmo. Inoltre a cantare il coro all'unisono, rifuggendo la polifonia che sarebbe suonata troppo accademica in questo contesto folk. Ad dirtirittura il cast della produzione di Minneapolis era completamente indiano. Del resto Bimboni rilasciò diverse interviste prendendosi cura di quei compositori che tendevano allora a normalizzare il materiale popolare, conformandolo all'uso della tradizione europea colta». La trama è quella di un tipico melodramma romantico, con soprano e tenore contrapposti a baritono e basso, soltanto che tutti i personaggi sono nativi americani. La principessa Winona è costretta dallo zio Wabashaw, capo villaggio, a sposare per convenienza politica non Chatoonska, il guerriero di cui è innamorata, ma Motosapa, di un'altra tribù. Bardi: «Il soggetto rielabora antiche leggende. Anche Mark Twain ricorda il personaggio mitico di Winona in "Vita sul Mississippi" del 1883. In un passo di queste memorie di viaggio descrive rupi misteriose a picco sul grande fiume e, dice, il navigatore che vi passi vicino può ancora percepire il canto della principessa. Proprio la scena in cui Winona ascende al masso da cui si suiciderà è tra le pagine più toccanti: lei intona una ninna-nanna ai suoi bambini mai nati, modulando un motivo indiano. Un'altra situazione toccante sta al principio. Si ascoltano i flauti volteggiare nella notte densa mentre Chatoonska giunge in canoa, cui fa seguito il duetto d'amore con Winona». Come mai, dunque, quest'opera bella e di successo è stata subito scordata? «Perché dopo gli anni '30 il movimento indianista fu spazzato via dalla storia...».

La rassegna "I luoghi del tempo": tra gli appuntamenti una serata dedicata ad Albertazzi

da, dalle 18,30) presso i ruderi di un monastero dell'XI secolo che sorge su una roccia a cento metri di altezza. Sabato Paolo Hendel rileggerà le pagine di Italo Calvino in compagnia di Roberto Incerri e Patrizia Guidi, direttore della Biblioteca Italo Calvino, lungo una passeggiata dentro Castiglione della Pescaia sulle tracce dei luoghi calviniani; si tiene invece domenica sotto le querce del parco comunale di Montieri, quasi al confine con la provincia di Siena, l'incontro con il poeta rock star Guido Caranano seguito da un recital di Tommaso Novi dei Gatti mezz, mentre ci saranno Jacopo Fo, l'astrofisico dell'Osservatorio di Arcetri Paolo Tozzi e Stefano Adamani l'11 giugno alla cinquecentesca fonte del Canali, fuori le mura di Scarlino.

Il finale spetta però a Giorgio Albertazzi, alla cui memoria è dedicata una serata, l'unica a pagamento, a cui partecipano Serena Autieri, Mariangela D'Abbraccio, Laura Marioni, Ornella Vanoni, e l'ensemble Musica da Ripostiglio insieme a Stefano Ciccocantini (17 giugno, Tenuta La Pescaia, 20 euro). Ingresso libero agli eventi con prenotazione obbligatoria allo 0566/52012, info@prolocofollonica.it

La Repubblica, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, article by Gregorio Moppi on “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.



“Intersections/Intersezioni” Conference, Logo - Signature Image.

