DAVIDE CERIANI • ALEXANDRA MONCHICK
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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

IN MINNEAPOLIS with Perry S. the Civic & Co. has written the “Tf I feel that epoch in America ended as one of the
Oregon, and Grand Opera the first American by the day. The last production of music is what gives the opera
famous company, on Nov. 11, we will hear some of the great American operas.”

LE NOTE
opera novissima del Bimboni, è andata
Lettiamo il seguente siglietto — su soggetto fis-terland, Oregon; e il
Bimboni, compone il nuovo dell’Amer.
Perry B. Williams. Si
Perry B. Williams. Si

ICAMus 2018
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Winona

At the intersection of Italian Opera and Native-American motifs and music, *Winona* is an unpublished opera in three acts (c. 1915-1918) by Florentine-American composer and conductor, Alberto Bimboni (Florence 1882 - New York 1960) to a libretto by Perry S.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 19th 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 Buonumore 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 10th, 2018*
ORESTE AND ALBERTO BIMBONI, FLORENTINE MUSICIANS IN AMERICA: THEIR INTERNATIONAL CAREER AND HOW THEY INFLUENCED THE AMERICAN MUSICAL SCENE *

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AND

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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

* 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.¹

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.² 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


² 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.³ 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 1896.⁴ 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,⁵ and to conduct the New York-based Imperial Opera Company.⁶ In the spring of 1898, Oreste moved to California where he conducted several opera performances, which included the famous soprano Nellie Melba.⁷ 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.”⁸ After the performances in California, he returned to Florence.⁹ 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, 1905.¹⁰

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⁷ “Queen of Song and Master of Music,” *San Francisco Call*, April 11, 1898.  
⁹ Fortin, “A Tribute,” 73.  
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. Bimboni was asked to focus on the latter. 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*. 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. 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.

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. A last performance took place on March 10, 1904. In addition to his activities at NEC, Oreste Bimboni participated on a regular basis at gatherings of the *Sinfonia of America Society*. 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.

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12 See: http://necmusic.edu/archives/george-w-chadwick.
15 Quoted in *ibid*.
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. 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 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.

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 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.22

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22 “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.\(^{23}\)

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!\(^{24}\)

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.\(^{25}\)

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.\(^{26}\) 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

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
\(^{26}\) Hipsher, *American Opera*, 68.
characteristic Indian rhythms and melodic patterns to a degree [that] indicated the free play of genius.\textsuperscript{27}

The use of “tint” (\textit{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, \textit{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 \textit{Winona} should be accepted as a goodly stride toward the expression of American life.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} “Minnesota Indian …,” \textit{The Oregonian}, November 2, 1926.

\textsuperscript{28} Hipsher, \textit{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.  

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.

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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29 Untitled article in The Oregonian, October 24, 1926.
30 Hipsher, American Opera, 17.
Davide Ceriani presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1st, 2017.
GIACOMO PUCCINI, AMEDEO BASSI, ALBERTO BIMBONI: TUSCAN CONNECTIONS IN AMERICAN MUSIC

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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 20th 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 1st. 31


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.32

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,33 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,34 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,35 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.36


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, 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 recreation 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.38

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

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38 “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 in mind of italiana composer when american music is mentioned—here for production of "the girl of the golden west"

i'm telling stories of the early, occupied era of giacomo puccini at the hotel knock-achabbe, new york, stands a grand piano. it is puccini's piano; its string on a score of the most recent movements from the composer's mind. now, if you are a puccini enthusiast, you are consulted with hearing certainly as to whether the "girl of the golden west" is really as wonderful as reported has made the play, you need do it some some second act of calling upon the composer. with him you will find antonio berardi, of the miller publishing house, a most courteous, gentlemanly person, who will be only too happy to seat himself at the instrument and give you a foretaste of one of the themes you will hear at the metropolitan opera on several occasions. mr. puccini will seat himself close by and occasionally help out the piano playing with a word of encouragement to the listener to see what kind of an independent mind.

matters are different when one comes to charles m. thompson. lamartine is not one of his strong points, and while he is willing to answer queries more readily than he does, he is a most courteous and obliging person. when mr. ricordi accept the situation, so that one does not have to tom pucinelli 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 original author. lamartine has an excellent french language and with which his distinguished friend is perfectly familiar—a far better french than the latter.

as is already known, the fashioning of "the girl of the golden west" was under the guidance of giacomo puccini, the "shakespeare of opera." the theme has been long than did that of the music, which is more moderate concerning the identity of the music, as will be described, mr. puccini on the occasion of an interview with a representative of the daily news, was asked how he could possibly be. there were only two authors, and none as to what has been presently stated. and it is true that etta diana m. thompson, in the news of the day, had not the least idea that it was due to the war. when he was first asked to tell something about it, that it was just the sort of thing was looking for, even though in account of my association with english people. "for this play, in the music of the "shakespeare of opera." the theme was chosen especially by mr. puccini for "musical america." in the lower right hand corner is g. vicente's cartoon of puccini's arrival reproduced from the new york news "telegraph.

with very few exceptions i have borrowed from the music. all practically are of my own invention. it is american music, though puccini at the same time.

pianist friedheim's tour for a tour

one of last's favorite pupils arrives for concert appearance

arthur friedheim, who was one of last's favorite pupils and arthur friedheim's first friend of the great composer, was a tour of america this year. friedheim's first visit to this country was in 1916, when he gave a series of historical recitals in the principal cities with decided success.

arthur friedheim, who is german, traveled extensively after finishing his work with last and continued his studies in boston and new york. at the death of anita stewart friedheim was invited to succeed him as conductor of the new york philharmonic orchestra, and his position as director of the royal stewart music foundation was also offered.

it was already after this invitation that friedheim found it possible to come to this country, where his engagements were immediately and gratifying. those who remember his name will say that friedheim was a particularly well-bred and mannerly man. he has technical, artistic gifts of the highest order, and his performances are characterized by his unassuming and well-mannered temperament. he has written among other concertos for piano, opus 12, "the young girl," which was performed successfully in cologne. he has also written a concerto for piano which he plays while in the concertos.

to branch music of society

pittsburgh composers organizing symphony orchestra on brief tour

pittsburgh, jan. 1.—a branch of the pittsburgh music society is to be organized by prominent pittsburgh musicians. steps toward a greater reason for assembly will be brought into the organization, and the first gathering was a success.

the pittsburgh symphony orchestra played a number of songs, played by charles m. thompson, in the studio of silas g. pratt. all members in the city will be brought into the organization, and the first gathering was a success.

the organization was well attended and the concerts have been well received. large crowds welcomed the orchestra at franklin, warren and other locations. the organization was well attended and the concerts have been well received. large crowds welcomed the orchestra at franklin, warren and other locations.

"nights dream" played by b. r. brown, the pianist in "nights dream," was played by charles m. thompson, pianist in "nights dream," with the orchestra. the concerts have been well received.

the pittsburgh symphony orchestra played a number of songs, played by charles m. thompson, in the studio of silas g. pratt. all members in the city will be brought into the organization, and the first gathering was a success.
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, led 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."\(^{39}\)

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

\(^{39}\) *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*.

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.40

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.](image)

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.\footnote{L’Arte melodrammatica, Anno VII – No. 133, Milano 16 Marzo 1911 and No. 140, Milano, 1 Agosto 1911.}

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.\footnote{L’Arte melodrammatica, Anno VII – No. 145, Milano, 1 Novembre 1911.}
In ogni tono

A mediocri intervalli, senza giornali o riviste, per la musica amica, e per la cultura da noi, si trae dalla rivista degli artisti di L'Arte melodrammatica, che ha sempre saputo interpretare con molta abilità e grazia le varie sfumature dell'arte melodrammatica. E sempre di questo che si tratta, nel nostro mezzo, con le sue varie espressioni. E questo è il suo valore, in quanto ci permette di vivere in un mondo di bellezza, di saper piacere e di saper incoraggiare il gusto dell'arte melodrammatica.

Siamo contenti di aver potuto, attraverso la rivista, far conoscere questo meraviglioso mondo di bellezza, che è il nostro, e che è la nostra, e che è il nostro. E questo è il nostro merito, e questo è il nostro orgoglio, e questo è il nostro amore, e questo è il nostro onore. E questo è il nostro mondo, e questo è il nostro mondo.

Giovanni Amedeo Bassi

Mio zio, il mio maestro, il mio amico e il mio artista, che ha sempre saputo interpretare con molta abilità e grazia le varie sfumature dell'arte melodrammatica. E sempre di questo che si tratta, nel nostro mezzo, con le sue varie espressioni. E questo è il suo valore, in quanto ci permette di vivere in un mondo di bellezza, di saper piacere e di saper incoraggiare il gusto dell'arte melodrammatica.

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Giovanni Amedeo Bassi

Mio zio, il mio maestro, il mio amico e il mio artista, che ha sempre saputo interpretare con molta abilità e grazia le varie sfumature dell'arte melodrammatica. E sempre di questo che si tratta, nel nostro mezzo, con le sue varie espressioni. E questo è il suo valore, in quanto ci permette di vivere in un mondo di bellezza, di saper piacere e di saper incoraggiare il gusto dell'arte melodrammatica.

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Giovanni Amedeo Bassi

Mio zio, il mio maestro, il mio amico e il mio artista, che ha sempre saputo interpretare con molta abilità e grazia le varie sfumature dell'arte melodrammatica. E sempre di questo che si tratta, nel nostro mezzo, con le sue varie espressioni. E questo è il suo valore, in quanto ci permette di vivere in un mondo di bellezza, di saper piacere e di saper incoraggiare il gusto dell'arte melodrammatica.

Siamo contenti di aver potuto, attraverso la rivista, far conoscere questo meraviglioso mondo di bellezza, che è il nostro, e che è la nostra, e che è il nostro. E questo è il nostro merito, e questo è il nostro orgoglio, e questo è il nostro amore, e questo è il nostro onore. E questo è il nostro mondo, e questo è il nostro mondo.
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.43

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).

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43 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.44

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.

44 “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,

eccoci in mezzo al mare da due giorni; Mare buonissimo calmo come un lago.
Mi dispiace che tu abbia lasciato ma spero di rivederti 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 correggendola e cambiando, di tirarne fuori un soggetto - Chi sa?

Non lo dimenticate.

Scrivetemi come è andato Bohème al Manhattan?

Tanti affettuosi saluti da Elvira e dal vostro

Giacomo Puccini

P.S. Prego di dirmi le novità circa Conried 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.

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

3 Manuel Conried (1853-1909), manager del Metropolitan Opera House, predecessore di Gatti-Casazza alla direzione dell’ente 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
Barbara Boganini presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session,
Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1st, 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)

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.
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.
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)

**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)

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.
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.45 Sadly, Julia passed away shortly thereafter, in November 2014, at age 91.

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.
Winona finds its sources in old legends and American national identity myths. Native Americans had been portrayed in American music since the late 18th century, with remarkable early examples of a romantically sympathetic look at them. 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.

The legend of Winona – We-No-Nah, “First-born daughter” – dates back at the latest to the 18th 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 20th century?).

Mark Twain, in his charming memoir and travel book, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) 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.

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.

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48 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*. “With more than 300 Illustrations” (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1883).
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.⁵⁰

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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


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.
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.
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.
Children’s Songs

We 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


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.

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.

Scan the QR Code to visit the ICAMus website on your mobile phone or tablet

www.icamus.org

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Aloma Bardi presenting at “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1st, 2017.
The Significance of “Real Indians” in the Minneapolis Performance of Winona

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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.”
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...”
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 mocassinn 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 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*).
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 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 8th 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 a while 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 1st, 2017, & the ICAMus group celebrating the conference’s conclusion.
La Repubblica, June 1st, 2017, article by Gregorio Moppi on “Intersections/Intersezioni” - ICAMus Session, Kent State University, Florence Program, June 1st, 2017.