



**«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**

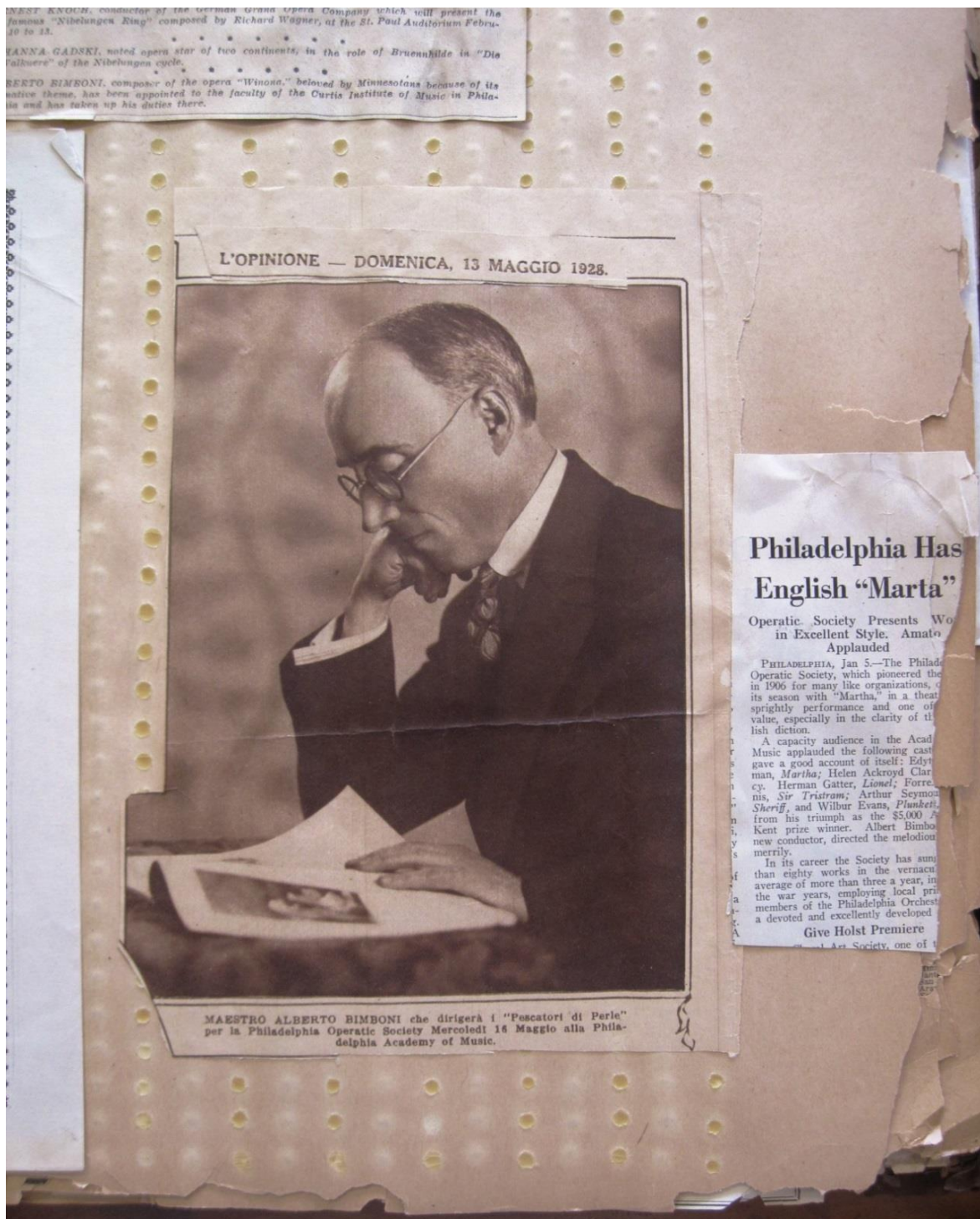
(ICAMUS - THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC)



*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**

ALBERTO BIMBONI, *Composer*  
PERRY S. WILLIAMS, *Librettist*

Public Auditorium, November 11th

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mme. Minna Pelz.....	Winona
Alice Price Moore.....	Weeko
J. McMillan Muir.....	Chatonska
Wm. Fraser Robertson.....	Wabasha
A. K. Houghton.....	Matosopa

Supported by a Chorus of Sixty Voices and  
a Forty-Piece Orchestra

Alberto Bimboni achieves the impossible by writing an all-Indian opera that breathes the atmosphere of the Aborigines, while abounding in exquisite melody. 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 Matosopa, 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 Matosopa, 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 Matosopa, but in defiance, casts herself from Maiden Rock, challenging him to follow her to death.

Alberto Bimboni, composer of Winona, and coach of Anna Case, Raisa, Bonci, Morgana and other world famous singers, is now in Portland to complete the training of the Company and conduct the Opera.

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Prices.....	50c, \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00, \$2.50
Season (5 Operas).....	\$2.00, \$4.00, \$6.00, \$8.00, \$10.00

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*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.





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>1</sup> Sadly, Julia passed away shortly thereafter, in November 2014, at age 91.

<sup>1</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>2</sup>, with remarkable early examples of a romantically sympathetic look at them.<sup>3</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>2</sup> Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> John Bray (1782-1822), *The Indian Princess: Or, La Belle Sauvage. An Operatic Melo Drame in Three Acts* (Philadelphia: G.A. Blake, 1808). Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861), *Pocahontas: The Pride of the Wilderness* (New York: Davis & Horn, 1839).



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# FAIR GERALDINE.

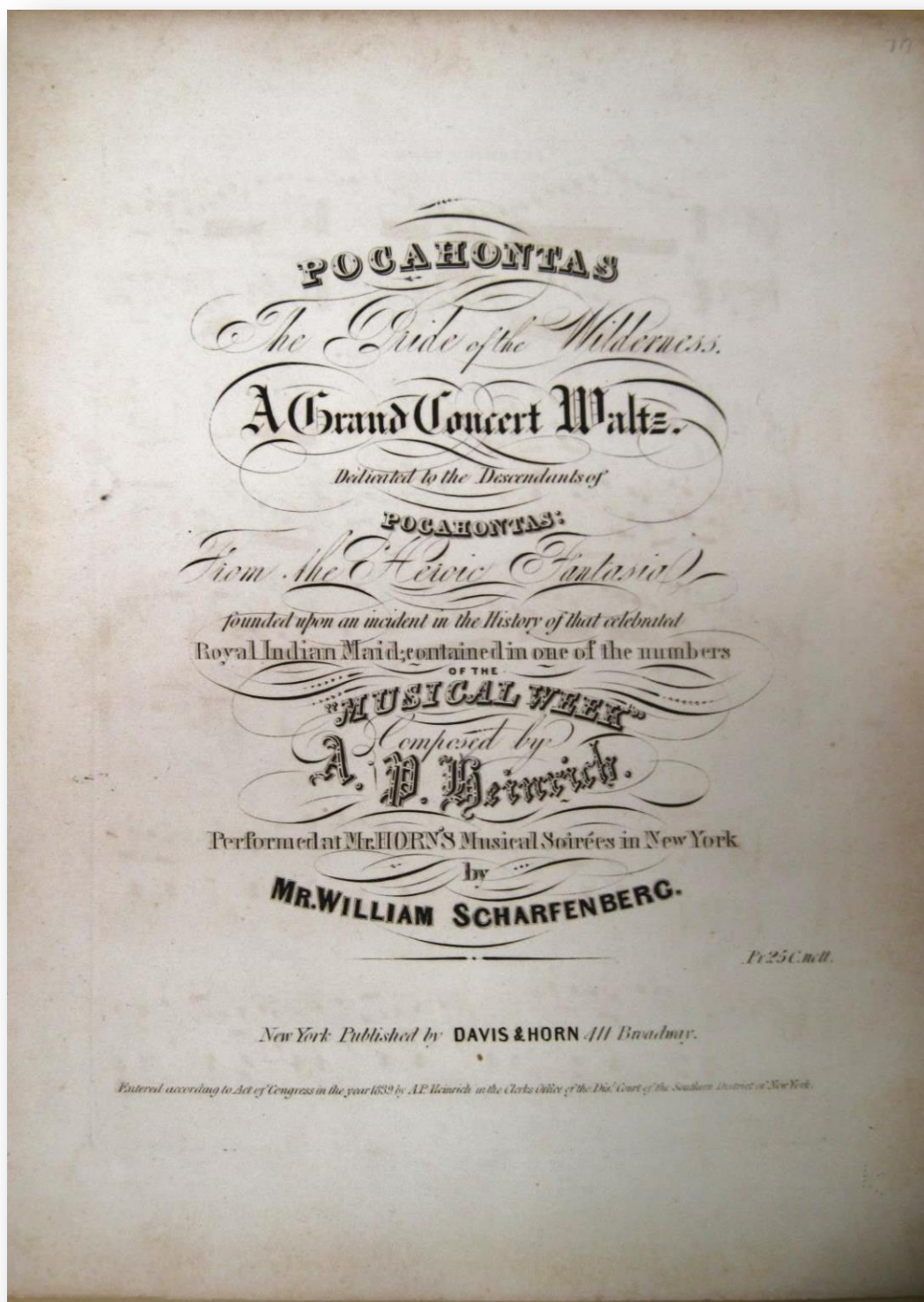
A favorite Song,  
*Sung by Mr. Charnock in the  
New Operatic Melo Drama of the  
INDIAN PRINCESS  
or  
La Belle Sauvage.*  
Composed by JOHN BRAY.

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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

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>4</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>5</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.

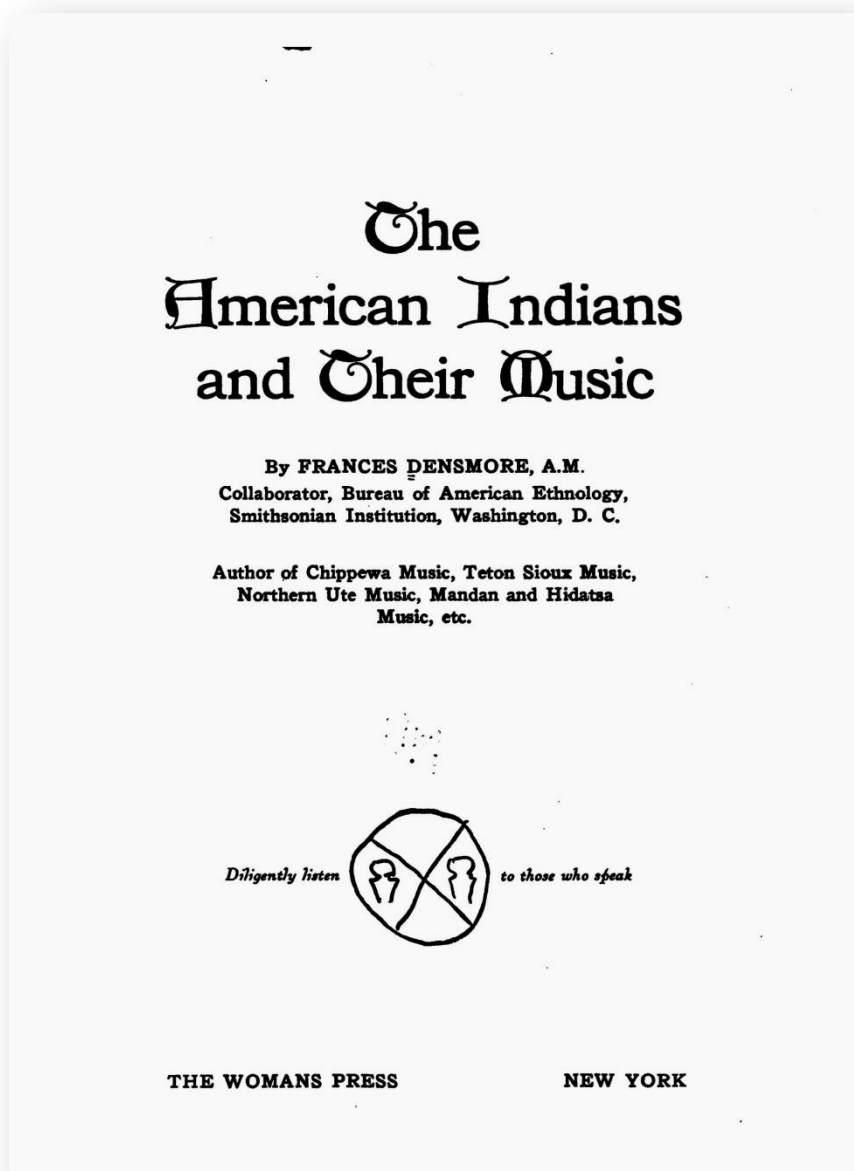


Alberto Bimboni's *Winona*, a Native-American legend, and a sense of place. Illustrated article in *The Oregon Sunday Journal*, November 9, 1926. Alberto Bimboni's Scrap Book, The ICAMus Archive.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*. "With more than 300 Illustrations" (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1883).

<sup>5</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>6</sup>



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

<sup>6</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

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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.

April 20, 1918

MUSICAL AMERICA

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

Alberto Bimboni Discusses the Origin and Characteristics of His "Winona"—All Roles 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

## NEW OPERA OPENS IN SAN FRANCISCO

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

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—now an American citizen—has worked on the score, and now he's 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*.

"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 Densmore's Chippewa book. I became deeply interested in the story of Winona, the Indian girl, who leaped from Maiden Rock at Lake Pepin in order to escape being married to a chieftain of another tribe of 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 such is the case.

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

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 Maiden Rock, showing Lake Pepin in the background, then the second scene an Indian village; the third scene is the will be on the shore of Lake Pepin. There will be hunting songs, war songs, moccasin songs, a Chippewa lullaby, calls played on an Indian flute, and Chippewa Indian serenades.

It was an Italian, known to us as Lully—he was originally Lulli—who worked for national musical expression for France. Another Italian, it would seem, is to give us a real American Indian opera, all-Indian, and thus the expression of the America that was before the landing of the Mayflower, the America that is still cherished by us.

A. M.

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

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

PROVIDENCE, R. I., April 11.—Jacsha Heifetz, the violinist, gave a concert here April 2 and created a decided sensation. No such excitement has been observed at a concert in this city since Paderewski, of his powers, first visited us many years ago. Enthusiasm grew as the recital progressed, until at the close the crowd rushed to the stage and with mingled hand-clapping and cheers fairly forced the youthful genius to add several extra numbers. In his program, Heifetz displayed an amazing technique and in the few opportunities offered, showed a depth of musicianship that enthralled 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 McCormack aroused tremendous enthusiasm after singing "God with Our Boys Tonight." Responding to a tumult of applause, he said: "If the sentiment of the song finds an echo in your hearts, buy Liberty Bonds and show that it is more than echo."

Seldom in his many appearances here has Mr. McCormack inspired such fervor into the expression of those songs which demand the outpouring of the strongest emotions of a human being.

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

A. P.

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

SCHENECTADY, N. Y., April 3.—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, "Voci di donna," Ponchielli, and "Chi vuol la Zingarella," Paisiello. Her singing gave evidence of excellent technique. A group of songs—German, English and French—brought forth a demand for many encores. Edith W. Griffing, coach of the Witherspoon studies in New York, acted as accompanist.

**American Criterium Society Hears Gifted Artists**

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

**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 Erb gave an attractive program. A students' recital was given on March 19.

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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

Win: moth — ers beating for their babes. What beauty greater mother

Win: and her child! What mu — sic.

Win: Mother singing to her child. Close close your

Win: tell — Moderato. P

Win: tell — Moderato. pp

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.*

**CASSANTINO BRANDS** № 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

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

No. 5  
CHIPPEWA LULLABY \*



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

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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.



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.

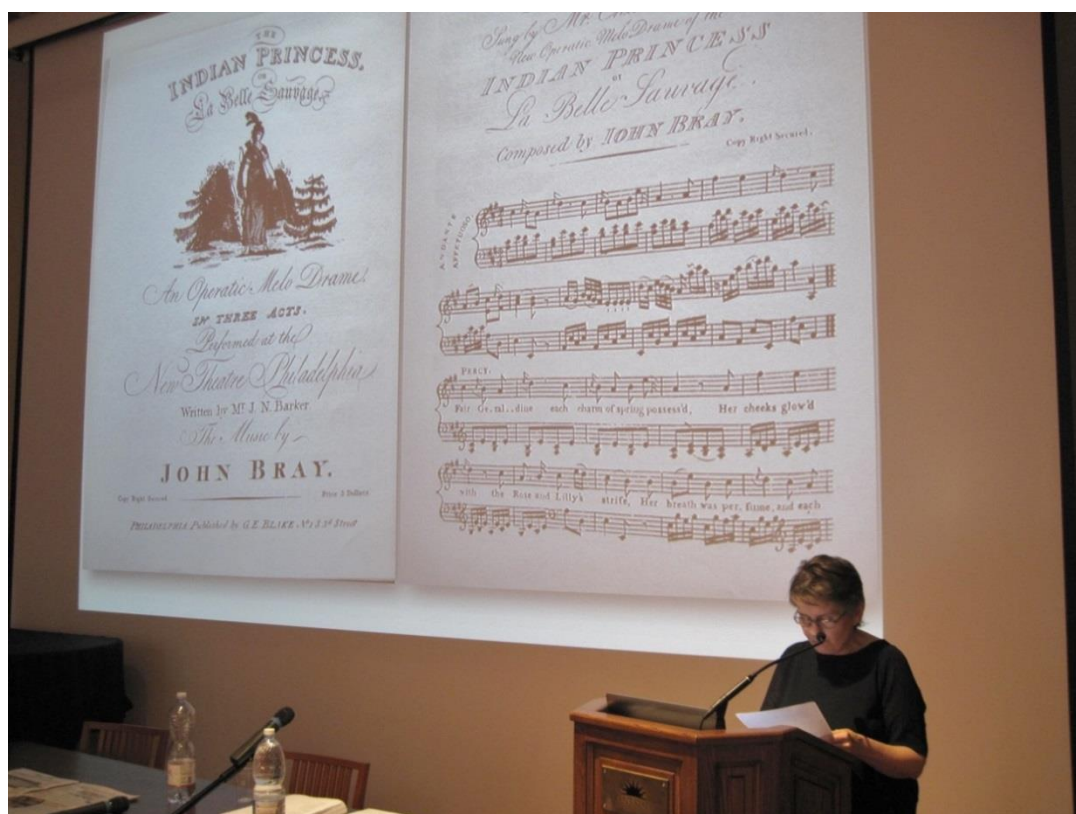
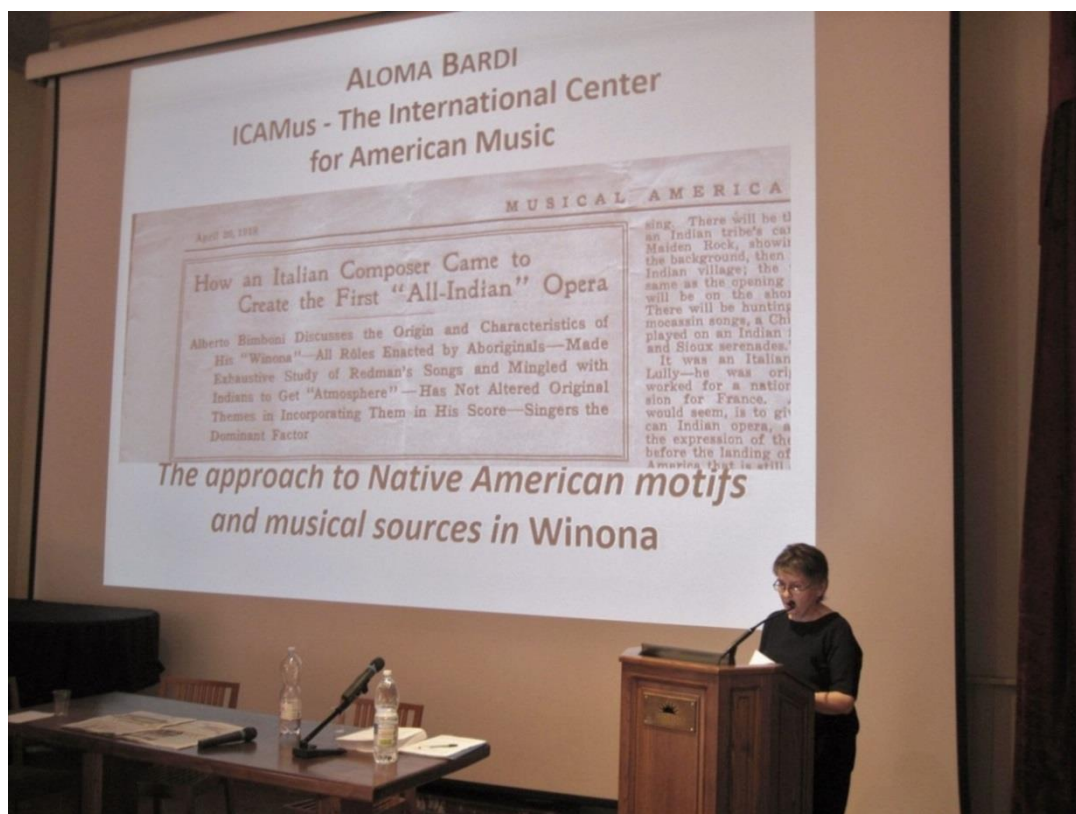
**IN REMEMBRANCE OF JULIA JACOBS,  
UNWAVERING CHAMPION OF WINONA’S “SONG AND STORY.”**



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







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