

**Les collections des arts
du spectacle et leur traitement**

**Performing Arts Collections
and Their Treatment**

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The Institute for Letters, Theatre and Melodrama of the Cini Foundation

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Count Vittorio Cini set up the Cini Foundation in 1951 in memory of his son Giorgio, who tragically died in an air crash. During more than fifty years of activity, on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, opposite Saint Mark's, many collections and donations have arrived, several of them with connections to the performing arts.

The Cini Foundation comprises a series of research Institutes. One of them, founded in 1957 by Vittore Branca and Piero Nardi, is called *Istituto per le Lettere, il Teatro e la Musica* (Institute for Letters, Theatre and Melodrama). Under the direction of Giuseppe Ortolani many collections relating to the performing arts were acquired or donated.

Many Institutes are now concerned with these arguments: one of them, established in 1985 and directed by Professor Giovanni Morelli is dedicated to musical studies. Others, like the Italian Antonio Vivaldi Institute, which is entirely devoted to the Venetian musician, or the Ottorino Respighi Institute, are more specific. Over the last two decades, the Institute for Music has acquired many archives regarding important artistic personalities in 20th century Italian music: Arrigo Boito, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Alfredo Casella, Nino Rota, Aurél Milloss, Camillo Togni, Egidina Sartori and Olga Rudge. This Institute has also produced many publications about them.

However, I want to focus attention on the Institute for Letters, Theatre and Melodrama. This Institute contains a library, open to the public, of more than 20,000 books and 300 periodicals concerning music, theatre and dance. Many books are old and rare: collections of theatrical operas, works and treatises on dramaturgy with a specific section dedicated to the Veneto. Of great interest is the entire library of Gian Francesco Malipiero who was a passionate bibliophile and owned a lot of 16th century publications and early books in general. Some of

those were books sources of inspiration for his eclectic librettos. There is also the recent acquisition of the Gallia Library with more than 1,100 books on Wagner and his work.

The most important endowment is, without any doubt, the collection of Ulderico Rolandi, a Roman doctor who died in 1951. Rolandi was a collector, critic and eminent scholar who, during his life, created this big opera libretto collection. It comprises more of 37,500 pieces and 5,000 scores. In reality, it is one of the biggest collections in the world concerning Italian opera – not only opera in Italy, but also Italian opera in other countries – Mozart, Handel, Haydn, Meyerbeer, all wrote Italian operas. Some of the librettos are very rare; the earliest date starts from the second half of the 16th century while others are almost contemporary. The 19th century librettos represent some 44% of the entire collection. They comprise both which are no longer in the repertory and those in an enormous section dedicated to the first performances of the most important composers such as Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, etc in Europe and all over the world. This collection is also very interesting for studying the history of dance since it contains some 2,000 independent prints of dance librettos. To these must be added the great number of dances indicated inside the opera librettos.

Around the opera librettos, Rolandi built a specialised library for opera studies, and in this, it is possible to find repertoires, treatises, monographs, theatrical texts and a rich series of literary editions of great librettists, as well as theatrical chronology, musical scores, theatre bill and a miscellany of portraits of singers, composers, musicians, and librettists.

The Fondazione Cini promoted a computerised catalogue which was to have led to the publication of a paper catalogue with the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana; however, it has now been replaced by an on-line cataloguing project, guided by a scientific committee composed of Anna Laura Bellina, Bruno Brizzi, Luigi Ferrara and Anna Maria Pensa, all pupils of professor Gianfranco Folena who originated the enterprise. This project allowed for the publication of the electronic files in a Website endowed with instruments which permitted interrogations of the database both with selection queries on indexed fields (names, places, types) and free research of descriptive fields (title-page, examinations, dramatic personage and performers, character types, etc) with a full-text research motor with advanced functions (wild cards, Boolean operator, relationship of nearness and distance, etc).

Alongside the Rolandi Collection is the Theatrical Iconographic Archive created some 30 years ago by Maria Teresa Muaro. It contains visual materials comprising the staging of opera: scenography, stage design, costumes, photos, book illustrations, title-pages and prints of

theatrical subjects from early to modern times. In the Collection it is possible to find a section on theatrical architecture with plans and interior and exterior views and a particular focus on the Venetian area. The entries regarding each imagine, bring together all possible information about the object and the theatrical representation to which it refers. Presently, there are 16,000 slides, but now we are adding 5,000 more. Like the Rolandi project, the catalogue will be put on line, and then we have to add the photographic material from the Eleonora Duse and Aurell Milloss collections.

It is now possible to make a search on the iconographic material using the Archimistica programme used for the Acom project; however, it is not possible to have the image on video.

The Iconographic Archives, also contains the original material of the Cini Foundation art collection of original drawings and prints: these are stage design sketches of the Bologna School with the Certani Collection and they are signed by Ferdinando and Francesco Bibiena and collaborators; together with many by Antonio Basoli and his school. Others sketches are from the Milan School, that came from the Daniele Donghi Collection, which were made by his father, Felice Donghi, a stage designer at the Scala Theatre during the 19th century. In the latter collection it is possible to find important drawings by Alessandro Sanquirico, Pietro Gonzaga, Francesco Fontanesi and other stage designers of this era.

Of particular interest is the album signed by Anton Maria Zanetti the Elder, in which it is possible to find a total of 350 caricatures of the variegated world of the 18th century Venetian stage. Here leading actors and singers in the world of music are often recognised by a manuscript annotation: examples are the Giuseppe Farinelli or Sebastiano Ricci.

Among the collections is a very important corpus relating to the actress Eleonora Duse. It was donated to the Cini Foundation in the 1960 and 70's and it contains different, but complementary, documents of varying origins which together form a collection permitting deeper analysis of the artistic figure of the actress.

Her granddaughter, Sister Mary of Saint Mark, Eleonora Ilaria Bullogh, the daughter of Duse's only daughter, donated the most important part of the collection. It arrived in Venice during the 1968: it contains letters, books, scripts, dresses, personal objects and furniture. Some 570 letters were written by Eleonora to different correspondents, many in the last years of her life. It is possible to find the names of famous writers or theatrical people such as Giovanni Papini, Grazia Deledda, Natalia Gontcharova, Yvette Gilbert, Angelo Conti, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Marco Praga, Ermete Zacconi or Morris Gest. Many letters, perhaps about a thousand, were addressed to her by people such

as Giuseppe Primoli, Ida Rubinstein, Luigi Pirandello and others. Many letters directed to the Duse's daughter Enrichetta after the actress death and up to 1954; there are also letters by various authors to different addressees.

The corpus consists of the correspondence between actress and daughter and it contains more than 80 letters; and most interestingly are Enrichetta's notebooks.

Some 40 scripts contain autograph production notes and documents of theatrical life: contracts and indications for costume and stage designers. Sister Mary's donations include some hundreds of original photographs that represent the actress from her youth to her last days in the United States.

It is possible to find some rare examples of 19th century prints showing the actress in costume or portraits made in the studios of important artists like Edward Steichen, Mario Nunes Vais and Giuseppe Primoli. The archive was further enriched by the donation of Olga Signorelli. Together this material provided the basis for the CD-ROM prepared for the Duse exhibition organised in Venice last year. More than 700 photographs are catalogued on the CD-ROM; a very simple system enables the material to be used for the purposes of performance didactics.

Nineteen dresses owned by the actress form an integral part of the collection. These dresses were her private property, but she sometimes used them on the stage. Other collections relating to Duse are the Carandini-Albertini Collection, which contains the correspondence between the actress and Arrigo Boito, and the Agostini Collection, which has 130 letters addressed to the Casali family, 113 of them written by Eleonora Duse during the years between 1884 and 1922; the Cervi Collection contains a mere 6 letters from Duse to Annunzio Cervi, an official during World War I.

The Nardi Collection brings together different kinds of material, including 40 letters from Duse to Giuseppe Giacosa. This and the Olga Signorelli Collection contain material assembled by the author while writing Duse's biography. The Signorelli Collection contains over 500 letters written by Duse to various correspondents and about 350 to her friend Emma Garzes of Florence, wife of the actor Francesco Garzes. As of yet, none of these materials have been catalogued.

Last but not least is the donation of Aurél Milloss (1906-1988) to the Cini Foundation. It is a precious collection of some 3,000 books, including important 17th and 18th century treatises, original photos, theatre programmes, magazines and periodicals documenting the art of dance during the 20th century.

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A summary cataloguing project of the 5,000 photos of the dance performances in the collection is now under way with the *Photoshop Infofile* program.