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**Accounting and music: The role of Giuseppe Verdi in shaping the 19<sup>th</sup>  
century culture industry**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to investigate the contribution of Giuseppe Verdi and Casa Ricordi in shaping the 19<sup>th</sup> century music culture industry by adopting a new perspective on accounting and history. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy, opera represented an important phenomenon, both artistically and socially, playing a fundamental role of intermediary between society and the political sphere. The complex relationships between the composer (artist) and the publisher (cultural intermediary) are analysed in the specific field of opera music, outlining the evolution and interweaving of artistic, social, and economic aspects. The study embraces the period 1839–1893 and examines the economic and private relations between Giuseppe Verdi and Casa Ricordi and their impacts on the culture industry to this day. This paper's novelty is to adopt a historical perspective to broaden accounting into the field of high music offering possibilities for further studies.

**Keywords:** cultural industry, performing arts, copyright, Giuseppe Verdi, Casa Ricordi

## **Introduction**

The idea of bridging accounting and art forms (including music) is not new in accounting literature (Gallhofer, 2018; McKinstry, 2009; Oakes and Oakes, 2012, 2019; Yamey, 1989), and the commercial and social significance of any forms of culture in

society should not be ignored by social science scholars (Jeacle, 2012). Art and accounting are certainly two distinct phenomena, apparently distant from each other, but sharing a common character as communicative and representational artefacts of reality (Gallhofer and Haslam, 1996; Zan, 2000, 2002, 2004a).

This relationship is easily recognizable when considering art as a vehicle of communication, characterized by its own dynamics and a specific language understandable through technical decoding (Formaggio, 1953). From a hermeneutic point of view, both art and accounting base their foundations on a certain technique and use their own language, through which they try to give representation to the real. If art draws its lifeblood from its very strong series of relationships with the outside world (Simmel, 1914), so does accountancy (Morgan, 1988; Sinclair, 1995). Accounting is a non-static and non-homogeneous phenomenon that can take different forms depending on the context (Hopwood, 1983). Its key purpose is to provide a representation of the real facts through numbers, allowing a necessary reconversion of the numbers into economic trends (Chambers, 1966; Mattessich, 1962; Robson, 1992).

In searching for a common denominator between art and accounting, the words of Leon Battista Alberti may be useful, which defined painting as: ‘... *Erit ergo pictura intersectio pyramidis visivae secundum datum intervallum, posito centro, statutisque luminibus, in datam superficiem, lineis et coloribus arte, repraesentata*’<sup>1</sup> (Alberti, 1436). A similar centrality of form and proportion can also be found in the Pacioli’s mathematics

book *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni et proportionalita* (1494). Thus, mathematics can be viewed as the common ground between art and science (Hauser, 1951). Among the different forms of art, music undoubtedly presents a particularly strong tie with mathematics (Fauvel et al., 2006; Zan, 2004b), and, through this, with accounting techniques. Music is based on mathematical relationships: to understand music, a certain understanding of relationships (for example, 3/4 time versus 4/4 time) and patterns of repetition is necessary. Studies have shown that Pythagoreans joined music and numbers irrevocably by means of a vibrating string (Helm, 1967). The famous composer Igor Stravinsky observed that ‘the musical form is close to mathematics - not perhaps to mathematics itself, but certainly to something similar to mathematical thought and the relationship between music and mathematics’ (Stravinsky and Craft, 1971: 34).

A relevant connection between art and accounting can be found in the centrality of accounting and business aspects when art becomes available to the public (Baumol and Bowen, 1966; Carnegie and Wolnizer, 1995). A new phase for art, and thus for music, began from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (DeNora, 1991), and within a few decades what is nowadays referred to as the culture industry emerged (Adorno, 2005), producing goods and services that were valued for their meaning (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002; Scott, 2004) and bought not simply for pure utility but for other reasons, such as aesthetics (Caves, 2000; Power, 2002). This is particularly striking in the field of classical music, which, belonging to the performing arts (Baumol and Bowen, 1966), finds its highest expression in theatrical

performance.

Despite the increasing attention toward accounting and performing arts (Beard, 1994; Jeacle, 2009, 2017, 2018; Zan, 2004b), classical music remains an under-investigated area in this field. Prior literature has mainly concentrated on popular music in modern contexts (Jacobs and Evans, 2012; Jeacle, 2012; Lapsley and Rekers, 2017; Smith and Jacobs, 2011; Zan, 2004b), while classical music, particularly that of ancient times, has remained remarkably unexplored. Studies have discussed the implications between accounting and popular music adopting a critical perspective (Jacobs and Evans, 2012; James, 2009; Smith and Jacobs, 2011), focused on music historiography to draw analogies and similarities with accounting (Zan, 2004a), or adopted a strategic management perspective (Lapsley and Rekers, 2017).

According to recent accounting literature that has identified links between accounting and music (Jacobs and Evans, 2012; Jeacle, 2012; Oakes and Oakes, 2019; Smith and Jacobs, 2011), and considering the conception of accounting as a social practice that is ‘much more than an instrumental and purely technical activity’ (Miller and Power, 2013: 559) and needs to be understood in its real context (Burchell et al., 1980; Laughlin, 1999), we aim to outline the evolution and interweaving of artistic, social, and economic aspects in the development of the music industry. The music industry has four main sectors: composition, performance, publishing, and production (Howkins, 2001) and is an interesting field of research because it is characterized by environmental uncertainty,

human asset specificity, and frequent and complex interactions (Montanari and Mizzau, 2007; Peterson and Berger, 1971).

In Italy, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, opera represented an important artistic and social phenomenon; it played a fundamental role as an intermediary between society and the political sphere. Attending the opera was a complex but vivid symbol of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984): opera was a place for seeing and being seen, a place of taste and emotion, but, above all, a place of great signification (Kotnik, 2013). One of the most interesting artistic figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Giuseppe Verdi whose intense life spanned the entire century and whose fame spread rapidly throughout the world. His life and music are completely enveloped by the Romanticism of the time; the *Maestro* was a predominant figure in the musical field, as Alessandro Manzoni was in the literary sphere (Kimbell, 1981). Throughout his artistic production, the *Maestro* showed his closeness to the realistic-objective current of Italian Romanticism, bringing romantic melodrama to the highest levels. If the turning point that decreed his success was *Nabucco*, it was between 1851 and 1853 that Verdi composed his most famous and important operas: *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Traviata*. No less significant were the operas of his full maturity, *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*, which confirmed Verdi's myth. The expression 'art for art's sake' is perfectly suited to the figure of the *Maestro*, who despite this, has also distinguished himself in the entrepreneurial and philanthropic fields (Phillips-Matz, 1993).

Starting from this premise and echoing Hopwood's call (1994) to examine the association between accounting and 'everyday practices' to encourage the understanding of accounting within new domains (Jeacle, 2012), this work aims to investigate, through a critical viewpoint and adoption of a new accounting history perspective (Carnegie and Napier, 1996; Miller et al., 1991), the contribution of Giuseppe Verdi and Casa Ricordi in shaping the culture industry by analysing the complex and varied relationships between composer (artist) and publisher (cultural intermediary) in the specific field of opera music. This overall objective can be divided into two key items:

- a) the evolution of business relations between the composer Giuseppe Verdi and the publisher Ricordi from the perspective of classical contract theory, which states that trust between parties makes commerce more efficient (Lyons and Mehta, 1997). This evolution is studied in the light of repercussions on opera as a component of cultural capital and on economic capital, to highlight the changes occurring over time in the type and contractual conditions for the sale of the various works. The effects of the economic dimension formalized in the contracts between Verdi and Ricordi can be found in interesting accounting traces regarding Verdi and kept by Ricordi;
- b) the evolution of personal and professional relationships between Verdi and the Ricordi family. Analysing the close system of relations between Verdi and Ricordi makes it possible to investigate cultural, economic, and social capital. Verdi

directly influenced changes in the social dimension of capital, and the analysis of documents, including contracts and correspondence, reveals how and to what extent his success influenced the economic dimension (contractual conditions) and the cultural dimension of capital (number and type of works) and vice versa.

The present research covers the period 1839–1893 (the *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, Verdi's first opera, was published in 1839, and *Falstaff*, Verdi's last opera, was published in 1893) focusing on the complex system of business and private relations between Verdi and Ricordi. The commercial and private relations between Ricordi family members and *Maestro* Verdi represent a cross-section of the transformations that occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in copyright law, the conception of artistic work, and certainly, creating the modern culture industry. If Ricordi's success can be attributed to Giuseppe Verdi, it is also true that Verdi's success was deeply influenced by Ricordi, and both men contributed to the development of the modern culture industry. Verdi and Ricordi contributed significantly to changing the management of artistic organisations, playing a key role in the shift from an impresario style to a modern style of artistic administration (Peterson, 1986).

Adopting a new accounting history perspective (Carnegie and Napier, 1996; Miller et al., 1991), our research offers three main contributions to the literature. Firstly, by studying a yet unexplored field, namely classical music. Secondly, the study broadens the understanding of the industry's development since Giuseppe Verdi played an important

role in the introduction and development of copyright law, a decisive step in the development of the modern cultural music industry. The study is useful to better understand the assumptions and operating mechanisms of the music industry and the models developed by existing literature (Hirsch, 1972). Thirdly, this study offers interesting evidence of the application of accounting to the music field. The study finds proof of how contracts between artists and publishers generated accounting traces through a fascinating application of the ‘personalistic theories’ of popular accounting in 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Ricordi kept an accounting of the fees due to Verdi and the expenses incurred on behalf of the *Maestro* himself. Periodically, Ricordi provided the *Maestro* with the accounting to give evidence of the amount of payments. The accounting documents analysed in the research offer an intriguing cross-section of the music industry in general, and of *Maestro* Verdi’s work, which can be read through the language of accounting.

This study is structured as follows: in the next section, the theoretical framework is defined, followed by a presentation of the sources used. Next, the paper presents a biographical overview of Giuseppe Verdi, essential to profile the *Maestro*, it illustrates his actions and impacts, and explains the context of his contributions (Black, 2019). One cannot disregard his main biographical traits; in fact, ‘biography permeates history. Institutions, industries, and epochs are simply empty shells without the human element’ (Burrows, 2019: 145). The subsequent sections analyse the role of Verdi and Ricordi in

shaping the modern music industry, the economic dimension of Verdi's work through the contracts for his operas, and the consequent accounting traces. The final section is dedicated to concluding remarks.

## **Background and theoretical framework**

According to Jacobs and Evans (2012), in the truest sense of the terms, art and artists do not require social or economic approval. Art can be defined as a collective representation and an aesthetic product supporting the illustration of the collective's life (Durkheim, 1962). Art is therefore the expression of artistic creativity and is based on the ability of the imagination to generate new ideas and different ways of observing and interpreting the surrounding reality using texts, images, or sounds (Throsby, 2008). As stated by Bourdieu (1986), 'The world of the bourgeois man, with his double-entry accounting, cannot be invented without producing the pure, perfect universe of the artist and the intellectual and the gratuitous activities of art-for-art's sake and pure theory' (Bourdieu, 1986: 47). In this perspective, cultural products belong to a subset of the broader category of creative goods and services. The cultural product bases its 'production' on creativity, becomes the vehicle of a message that the artist intends to convey, and is eligible, even if only potentially, for recognition due to the author of its intellectual property (Throsby, 2008).

The works resulting from creativity are symbolic, experiential goods of non-utilitarian

value (Caves, 2000; Hirsch, 2000) and are characterized by inherent unknowability (Caves, 2000) due to the uncertainty of their public appreciation. Adopting an economic perspective, the result of artistic creativity can be interpreted as a product or a commodity (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Thus, it is liable to exchange, endowed with its own entity, separated from subjects and creative dynamics, and inserted in the institutionally organized circuit of the culture industry (Adorno, 2005; Roy and Dowd, 2010). This vision of cultural work and, therefore, of music, established itself from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the result of the development of music publishing and the introduction of specific copyright laws in some European countries (France and Germany) (Laing, 2004). The traditional, patronage-based model was gradually abandoned, and the market became the main mediator between artists and their public. This gave artists the financial independence necessary to stimulate the search for their own artistic development (Williams, 1981). From then on, the composition phase and a work's 'consumption' have been inexorably separated both in space and time. The main effect of the establishment of formalized commercial relations (contracts) has been the proliferation of musical texts (DeNora, 1991). The development of music publishing, and therefore of music production, has undoubtedly contributed to the diffusion of music among a wider proportion of the population, regardless of its social and economic census (Benjamin, 2000). This makes the field of cultural production an important site for the emergence of meanings, social forms, and social relations (Hopwood, 1983; Jacobs and Evans, 2012).

However, according to Williams (1981), the development of the music industry has also led to a weakening of the uniqueness and originality of the artistic performance, in other words, what he calls a 'sacred value'. From the purely cultural sphere begins to develop a restricted market of artistic products (O'Connor, 2010), aiming to guarantee notoriety and prestige, which in turn can generate economic success (O'Connor, 2010). Profit and wealth, and then accounting, may be elements essential to ensuring the consecration of the artistic practice as 'art for art's sake' (Jacobs and Evans, 2012). This vision has meant, and still means, that the artist was often considered a source of cheap labour. Artists can in fact accept salaries that do not meet their job opportunity cost. The bargaining process is also influenced and often complicated by artists' preferences for how to undertake their creative work. Before the introduction of copyright law, composers perceived this work as an exhausting task (Scherer, 2008), with little chance of influencing the definition and allocation of decision rights (Caves, 2003).

If music, and especially classical music, is considered a commodity, it can be interpreted as a product or a set of services. While music production is driven by high ideals (Bourdieu, 1984), its consumption is part of the process of building and maintaining social status. In classical music, a central role is played by the figure of the composer (the artist), his network of relationships, and the mix of forces and pressures to 'produce music' (DeNora, 1995). Music is mainly a result of creativity; however, over time, it has become a 'product' created and shaped by industrial mechanisms and systemic processes

through the so-called culture industry (Adorno, 2005). Culture was traditionally understood as an activity addressed through the intellectual and artistic development of the individual (Throsby, 2001). The traditional culture industry deals with art as a ‘symbolic type’ whose economic value is judged by its cultural value (O’Connor, 1999). Meanwhile, Bourdieu (1984) argued that artistic taste is the product of class conditioning and considered an individual’s cultural upbringing to be encoded in what he called the habitus reflecting class factions. According to him, preferences for certain kinds of music and singers reflect both educational level and class standing.

Music becomes a cultural product when included within a wider project (representation) and directed at the public, for whom it performs an aesthetic or expressive function (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972). The performances of famous operas such as those of Verdi, Wagner, Rossini, Donizetti, were intended, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a form of entertainment aimed at creating an opportunity for social interaction for the aristocracy and the urban upper middle class and at emphasising their social status (Bianconi and Walker, 1984; Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio, 1982). Musical performance is considered a tool to build and maintain a social status: the more an artist is preferred by the less cultivated, the more the same artist is rejected by the more cultivated (Smith and Jacobs, 2011). Bourdieu (1993) suggested that the distinctiveness of the artistic field is understood as a rejection of the heteronomous values associated with the economic and political fields; while artistic consumption is essential to the maintenance of social

position, the artists themselves maintain their consecrated position within the artistic field through being denied financial resources and political influence (Bourdieu, 1993).

According to Durkheim (1962), the artist's creativity is part of a wider context of protective and conservative functions exercised by third parties such as patrons, agents, businessmen, museums, academies, etc. In the field of music, and in the context of opera during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a chief function was carried out by the *impresario* (the person responsible for the preparation of the operas of a theatre, which operated in an entrepreneurial logic). They acted as an intermediary between the artist and the theatre, becoming the *fulcrum* of the complex organizational machine of the culture industry (Santoro, 2010).

The creative industries (Galloway and Dunlop, 2007; Hartley, 2005; Hirsch, 1972; O'Connor, 1999) develop products and services of an artistic, cultural, or simply entertaining nature (Caves, 2000). Based on intellect, knowledge, and skills, their main output is intellectual property (Howkins, 2001). Throsby's perspective (2001, 2008) is interesting in its representation of the culture industry as a subset of the creative industries. To define the boundaries of the culture industry, Throsby developed a 'concentric circles' model. This model focuses on creative ideas of an artistic nature, which radiate outwards in a series of levels or 'concentric circles' where the weight of cultural and commercial content gradually decreases. Music, and thus lyrical representation, belong to the culture industry, occupying a central position in the model.

In the culture industry, the main factor is ‘artistic creativity’. Creative work is not remunerated through wage bargaining but by contracts stipulated to regulate the distribution of profits among the various actors and characterised by an asymmetry in bargaining power (Caves, 2000). The study of the relationships between these different actors can be conducted by retrospectively adopting the Hirsch model (1972) of the culture industry, analysed through the lens of contract theory. The cultural industry (Figure 1) is based on the work of artists – in the case of this study, composers – to ensure that their artistic creativity is ‘transformed’ into ‘marketable cultural products’.

**[Insert Figure 1 here]**

Publishers began to play a key role in the music field in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, representing a part of the entrepreneurial subsystem aimed at creating and formalizing relations with other actors, specifically *impresarios* and theatres (Figure 2). The *impresario* was the key figure in Italian operatic life in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Rosselli, 1984). Every year the *impresario* commissioned new operas, paying the composer a fixed fee in two tranches: an advance and the remaining amount on delivery. It was the *impresario* who held the scores and guaranteed their diffusion (Baia Curioni, 2011; Toelle, 2012). From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the *impresario* moved to the background and the publisher gained increasing importance. The publisher assumed

control over productions and enforced the copyrights often neglected by the *impresarios*. Since most composers had ceded their rights to publishers, publishers could control performances by facilitating or contravening them through the imposition of fees to theatres. The effect is that a relatively small number of operas, including all of those by Verdi, have been played relatively often (Toelle, 2012). It is from this moment onwards that the artist, more conscious, claims recognition as the sole creator of a composition in which both the music and scenes are jointly designed and supervised. He therefore claims to be remunerated both economically and socially. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the artist, if successful, is no longer bound to annual production rhythms. The artist is entitled to the rights generated by each performance and which are set aside for him or her by the publisher. Consequently, in place of new annual productions, a repertoire is progressively affirmed which includes all the works that guarantee a probable success with the public (Baia Curioni, 2011; Rosselli, 1984).

When adopting an accounting perspective, music can also be understood as a product or a commodity (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002) belonging to the culture industry (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). Consequently, the economic dimension associated with its 'commercial value' becomes of interest for analysis, for example, via the study of the contracts between the main actors (artist/composer, publisher, *impresario*, theatre, public) that regulate the remuneration/reward systems associated with the transfer of intellectual property rights.

**[Insert Figure 2 here]**

Three different types of capital coexist in the system of relationships between the main actors of the culture industry: economic, cultural, and social. Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) is associated with the artistic dimension and the prestige obtained. In terms of opera, it can be converted into economic capital in three distinct and successive stages: when the artist cedes a work to a publisher for a fee, when the publisher applies the performance rights and rental fee for the score<sup>2</sup> to the theatre and when the theatre sells opera tickets to a public who is willing to pay a sum of money for the performance. Social capital can be defined as a set of actual and potential resources derived from the network of relationship possessed by an individual or social unit (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243). This is a relevant factor in studying the culture industry: it becomes a critical resource, facilitating, *inter alia*, the access to knowledge and to other complementary resources (Hitt et al., 2001).

In the model of cultural industry, social capital is represented by the system of relations between the main actors (composer-publisher-*impresario*-theatre-public) and becomes a critical resource to facilitate the achievement of specific goals and to improve prestige and social position, further determining effects from the economic-financial point of view (Bourdieu, 1986; DiMaggio, 1979). With regard to the system of relations, according to

Johnson et al. (2002), contracts can be useful to facilitate the establishment of new relationships as they reduce the initial exposure that individuals face due to the potential risk of opportunistic behaviour from their partners (Doz et al., 1986).

These new relationships, which establish accountability between the parties, create the prerequisite for developing a systematic accounting (Oldroyd and Dobie, 2009) through which the economic dimension of the relationship can be tracked. In the case analysed, as will be discussed later, Verdi, through contracts, aims at preserving his rights (both artistic and economic) in supplying artistic products to Ricordi, while Ricordi, in exchange for the artistic product, undertakes to provide accounting for, and payment of, contractual sums due to Verdi.

## Sources

This study used both primary and secondary sources (Carmona, 2004; Paisey and Paisey, 2004). The primary sources include the extensive correspondence between Verdi and Ricordi (1867 to 1893), about 200 letters of which are held at the *Biblioteca Palatina* in Parma (Music Section) and the remaining letters (over 3,500 from years 1880-1882, 1885-1886, 1888, 1892 and 1893) published in reproduced form by the *Istituto di Studi Verdiani* in Parma<sup>3</sup>. Several documents concerning the *Maestro's* private and professional life are also kept in the *Archivio di Stato* of Parma. Unfortunately, a current

legal dispute between Giuseppe Verdi's heirs and the State forbids consultation of almost all the documents.

We also consulted original documents relating to the summary of the manuscript purchase contracts and the contracts for the sale of operas signed by Verdi and Ricordi at the *Archivio Storico Ricordi* in Milan. The material conserved in this Archive mainly consists of sketches, figures, and scores; few documents have an accounting character and those available have been consulted. The registers of the *Camera di Commercio* in Milan (Chamber of Commerce) were also consulted in search of the Ricordi balance sheets in the period under examination. Unfortunately, in the *Archivio Storico Ricordi* are preserved the balance sheets only from 1967 onwards. No trace of previous documents has been found. Additionally, we analysed the contracts between Ricordi and La Scala Theatre, where they were available from the Archives of the La Scala Theatre Foundation. Lastly, we searched for authentic documents at the *Archivio di Stato* in Milan, at Verdi's home *Villa Verdi* in Sant'Agata di Busseto, and at the 'Musicians' Retirement Home' in Milan but found nothing useful for the purposes of this research.

### **Giuseppe Verdi: Composer, politician, and entrepreneur**

Giuseppe Verdi was born in Le Roncole di Busseto (Taro District, near Parma) on 10 October 1813<sup>4</sup>. His interest in music emerged at an early age as he attended church services in Roncole, which were accompanied by the organ. This was the instrument on

which he first learnt to play, and his first music teacher was in fact the village organist Pietro Baistrocchi (Walker, 1964). The turning point for the young Verdi came when he was unexpectedly asked to substitute for the organist in this village church, and thanks to the talent he showed, he was invited to join the Busseto Philharmonic (Gatti, 1981). At the age of 15, Verdi composed his first symphony inspired by Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and asked the Busseto theatre orchestra to play it (Demaldè, 1976).

In 1832, Verdi arrived in Milan and applied to be a paying student at the Conservatoire, was admitted to the examination, and was asked by the selection panel to perform on the piano as his first test. Despite various accounts of Verdi's talent on this instrument, the panel noted the incorrect position of his hand on the keyboard. Due to the fact that he was over 14, the age limit for admission to the Conservatoire, and that he was not from Lombardy, his application was rejected, and although there was some dissent, his ineptitude and unworthiness were cited (Aimi and Leandri, 1998; Gatti, 1981; Phillips-Matz, 1993; Walker, 1964). Verdi remained in Milan to continue his studies privately with Vincenzo Lavigna, the *Maestro* of La Scala Theatre (Walker, 1964) who issued him with a certificate attesting his musical abilities in 1834 (Gatti, 1981).

Milan was the starting point of Verdi's career and a determining factor of his success. There he met people who would help him become famous, including one of the most important Milanese publishers, Giovanni Ricordi (Degrada, 2000; Walker, 1964). Giovanni Ricordi founded 'Casa Ricordi' in 1808 and became one of the largest music

publishers in Europe, having almost total control over the music in local theatres (Baia Curioni, 2011). The success of the Ricordi publishing company was absolutely related to the deep artistic and professional relationship with Giuseppe Verdi: Giovanni Ricordi became Verdi's publisher and business manager from 1839 (Scherer, 2008), publishing more than 20 Verdi-composed works over the next 55 years.

In October 1839, Verdi worked on his first important opera: *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*. The first performance took place with the *impresario* Bartolomeo Merelli<sup>5</sup> on 17 November at La Scala Theatre (Phillips-Matz, 1993; Walker, 1964). Here, Verdi met publisher Giovanni Ricordi. The two men became friends, and Verdi awarded almost exclusive rights of 'economic and artistic management' to Ricordi and his heirs in the family-run publishing house.

Verdi's artistic output continued, and his links with Milan (Degrada, 2000) and with cities such as Genoa, Naples, and Turin, where his works were staged, became closer. In June 1840, his young wife died suddenly of encephalitis, but with Merelli's encouragement he completed the writing of *Nabucco* in October 1841 (Gelli, 2000; Phillips-Matz, 1993; Walker, 1964). The first representation at La Scala was a great success, as were the subsequent performances, and Verdi himself stated, 'With this opera we can truly say that my artistic career began' (Bragagnolo and Bettazzi, 1905: 60). *Nabucco* in fact marked the beginning of a period of about 20 years of his intense artistic activity and travel between Rome, Florence, Parma, Milan, Venice, Vienna, London, St.

Petersburg, Madrid, and Paris (Aimi and Leandri, 1998; Phillips-Matz, 1993). Verdi referred to these years, during which he composed numerous operas, as the ‘prison years’.

These were also the years in which Verdi became a businessman and benefactor (Aimi and Leandri, 1998; Alleghi and Monici, 1998; Cafasi, 1994) and began to invest his earnings in the purchase of land and farmhouses, first in the area of Parma and then in Piacenza. During this time, Verdi also embarked on a political career (Aimi and Copelli, 1988; Gelli, 2000), and a period of intense political activity began in which Verdi and the Count of Cavour were bound by mutual esteem and admiration (Gatti, 1981).

From the end of the 1860s, at the peak of his career, Verdi’s artistic production slowed considerably as he reached the height of artistic and human maturity with *Don Carlos* (1867), *Aida* (1871), *Otello* (1887), and *Falstaff* (1893). After *Falstaff*, he undertook a series of philanthropic endeavours, including the construction of a retirement home for musicians in Milan, which he called ‘my most beautiful work’, and a hospital in Villanova sull’Arda near Busseto (Aimi and Leandri, 1998; Budden, 1993; Degrada, 2000; Phillips-Matz, 1993). Verdi settled in Villa Sant’Agata, where his second wife died of acute pneumonia in November 1897. Verdi died in Milan on 27 January 1901 (Gatti, 1981; Phillips-Matz, 1993).

## **The role of Giuseppe Verdi and Ricordi in the culture industry**

The study of the relationship between Verdi and Ricordi is useful to understand how

copyright legislation has changed and how, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, music has progressively become a cultural product, contributing to the development of the musical culture industry and to the definitive consecration of Verdi's creative work.

In pre-unification Italy, a system of laws regulating copyright and authors' rights arrived later than in other European states.

In 1840, the first international convention between the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia was promulgated. The convention, negotiated during pre-unification Italy, was then ratified by other Italian States (Caselli, 1907; Ginsburg and Treppoz, 2015). The Austro-Sardinian Convention dealt with all copyright issues systemically for the first time, and the articles covered the right to authorize the publication of a work, theatrical performances, anonymous works, counterfeiting and related sanctions, and the rights of heirs (Ubertazzi, 2000). Giovanni Ricordi attended the Austro-Sardinian Convention as a key proponent who was strongly committed to the recognition of the fair rights of authors (Baia Curioni, 2011).

However, the structure of the Italian art and music industry at the time slowed the application of the rules of the Austro-Sardinian Convention, and, therefore, the Convention was not fully successful. However, it was still a crucial step in the progress towards full recognition of copyright and the key role of the publisher, both intellectually and legally. At the political level, there was little interest in the matter. The diffusion of music was entrusted to the *impresarios*, while copies and adaptations were agreed

between the copyists and the theatres. The first Italian musician to benefit from the new copyright law was Giuseppe Verdi. Other famous Italian composers such as Bellini, Rossini, and Donizetti died or retired before its introduction, or too early to obtain significant benefits. Nevertheless, Verdi was judgmental about the system. He believed the arbitrariness of the *impresarios*, due to the lack of full copyright protection, was one of the main reasons for the failure of theatrical performances. In 1851, Verdi wrote:

These impresarios have not yet understood that when operas cannot be given in their entirety, as they were conceived by the author, it is better not to give them; they do not know that the transposition of a piece, of a scene is almost always the cause of the failure of an opera. Imagine when it comes to changing topics! (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Vincenzo Luccardi, Busseto 1 December 1851. National Academy of Lincei. Library Corsiniana Archive: Luccardi Vincenzo).

A significant step forward took place in 1865, after the unification of Italy, with the adoption and nationwide application of Special Law No. 2358. An important event in the history of copyright in Italy was the creation of the Italian Society of Authors (SIA, now SIAE) in 1882 in Milan.

In terms of the musical culture industry, opera undoubtedly played a central role in national life during the *Risorgimento* (Italian unification) (Davis, 2006). Nevertheless, from 1848, a significant crisis began in the Italian opera system. The increase in the

number of theatres, associated with Italian economic and political instability, weakened both the role of *impresarios* and of the whole Italian opera system (Baia Curioni, 2011). The historical phase in Italy was difficult: the pre-unification mottos became intense with the effect of keeping the public away from the theatres for many months (Rosselli, 1984). In this context, the Ricordi's family entrepreneurial success arose, mainly due to Giovanni's ability to affect significant change in the industry.

By organizing a staff of managers and lawyers, Ricordi helped to put an end to the wide-ranging use of scores procured from copyists for illegal performances of operas in Italy (Scherer, 2008). Giovanni Ricordi was the first to create an extensive catalogue, based on the works entrusted to his printing house and those purchased from existing archives. In his contracts with the theatres, he inserted a provision by which, once the performances of an opera had been completed, all the material copied would remain his property (Degrada, 2000). To protect both his own interests and Verdi's, Ricordi required theatre managers to use only 'official Ricordi' scores and to pay performance fees. Ricordi's strategy can be defined as control over the product, adopting a logic of *summum jus summa injuria* (Filippi, 1881) and presenting an all-inclusive, branded, and original product to the market (Campana, 2015). From 1880, Ricordi promoted the diffusion and success of the operas by integrating Verdi's scores and librettos with detailed provisions for the orchestras and the quality of the costumes and sets, all validated by the author. For the first time, opera was intended as a cultural project and the role of publisher was not

limited to copying and to stamping texts but to disseminating the author's cultural project in its entirety (Degrada, 1983). The roles of *impresarios* and theatre managers were therefore drastically reduced to simple groundwork and local arrangements (Degrada, 1983).

The relationship between Verdi and Ricordi comprised the essence of artistic, commercial, and managerial aspects of opera; they established a personal and professional association characterised by mutual interests and collaborative orientation. Verdi always paid great attention to his operas' cultural projections, establishing direct relations with publishers, librettists, *impresarios*, and theatres. He had input into deciding methods of payment, choosing the performers, costumes, scenery, and rehearsals, and introducing the principle of copyright for the hiring of scores (Degrada, 2000).

Music was 'transformed' into 'marketable cultural products' included within a wider project (representation) and directed at the public, for whom it performed an aesthetic or expressive function (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972).

Giuseppe Verdi and Ricordi's family radically modified the highbrow music industry, contributing to giving relevance to artists' preferences and to the consecration of the artist's creative work (Townley et al., 2009). In the transfer contract for Don Carlos, Verdi inserted a specific clause providing that the original score, rented by theatres, 'cannot under any circumstances be halved by any other play and must be performed entirely without making cuts and transports of tones'<sup>6</sup>.

## **The development of the culture industry through Verdi's contracts**

The culture industry system can be studied through the complexity of economic relations that underpin the broader cultural system of artist-*impresario*-theatre-public. Adopting a historical perspective, these relationships can be analysed considering the original contracts stipulated by the three actors in the model: Verdi, Ricordi, and Milan's La Scala Theatre. The original contracts can be useful in reconstructing the types, methods, and details of the business relations; they not only contain economic data but represent an interesting cross-section of the complex systems of relations concerning both the public and private spheres of the actors involved and proof of their role in the culture industry development. These historical documents show how Giuseppe Verdi – supported by Ricordi – struggled throughout his career to ensure better protection of his opera and all composers.

Since at the time artistic work was related to the concept of 'art for art's sake', it was the practice for novice composers to pay for the performance of their works without receiving any compensation. From 1836, Verdi, not yet famous, attempted to change the traditional relationship between artist and *impresario*. At a time when it was common practice for newcomers to ask for compensation, Verdi, in proposing a score to Alessandro Lanari – one of the most influential businessmen of the time – asked not to receive any compensation, but to retain the right to property. Lanari rejected the bold

proposal of the young Verdi (Panico, 2002). In the following years, Verdi was the protagonist of a great revolution in the relationship between the main actors of the music industry: the musicians, publishers, and *impresarios*. He was inspired by the French *droits d'auteur*, which allowed authors a fairer share of the profits from their performances. In 1839, Verdi signed an unusual agreement with the *impresario* Bartolomeo Merelli, the manager of La Scala Theatre in Milan from 1829 to 1850 and friend of Giovanni Ricordi. Verdi obtained an agreement from Merelli that, in case of success, half of the proceeds from the sale of the score of *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio* would be given to the publisher Ricordi (Panico, 2002). On 17 November of the same year, the opera was performed at La Scala Theatre with great success. Ricordi immediately acquired the rights of its representation worldwide for 2,000 lire. Although no percentage of sales was guaranteed to the composer, Verdi, given his inexperience, willingly accepted. The opera was hired out at a figure of between 500 and 1,000 lire, in Turin, Milan, Naples, and Genoa. Verdi was deeply disappointed by Ricordi's lack of recognition of his rental rights (Baia Curioni, 2011). For his next opera, *Un giorno di regno*, Verdi received no payment from the publisher, because the first and only performance in 1840 was a commercial failure. Due to the weakness of his contract, Verdi reluctantly accepted the conditions dictated by the publisher and the *impresario*. In 1843, continuing to be deeply disappointed by Ricordi's behaviour, Verdi transferred half the royalties for his new opera, *Nabucco*, to the publisher, Francesco Lucca, Ricordi's historical rival. *Nabucco*

was met with huge success and became a turning point in Verdi's career.

In cultural industries, the contractual power between the actors, and consequently the economic value of the artistic product, is dynamic and mutable as it is deeply influenced by the artist's prestige. These mechanisms play an important role in guiding artists' careers (Crane, 1976) and are closely conditioned by the success and failure of the cultural product. The latter is influenced, in turn, by the prestige enjoyed by the artist.

Ricordi tried and succeeded in reconciling with Verdi, and thus, for his next work, *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*, the composer signed another contract with Ricordi. Although this opera was not a great success, Verdi received 8,000 lire, four times as much as the amount paid by Ricordi only four years earlier (in 1839) for his first opera *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*. In the same year, Ricordi paid a further 9,000 lire for the opera *Ernani*. Meanwhile Lucca, despite a poor relationship with Verdi, obtained the rights for *Attila*, *Alzira*, and *Il Corsaro* (Walker, 1964).

From 1844 to 1845, Verdi, supported by Ricordi, requested ever higher fees for the performing rights to his works. He earned 9,000 lire for *I due Foscari*. Guillaume, the *impresario* of the San Carlo Theatre in Naples, paid 10,000 lire for *Luisa Miller*, Lanari paid 16,000 lire for *Macbeth*, and the *impresario* Merelli paid 18,000 lire for *Giovanna d'Arco* (Table 1 and Figure 3).

**[Insert Table 1 here]**

**[Insert Figure 3 here]**

In 1847, Verdi travelled to France for the staging of *Jerusalem* (French edition of the opera *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*), receiving royalties directly from the Opéra de Paris. During his long stay in Paris, Verdi became aware of the French right to the greater protection enjoyed by composers in France. Verdi understood that *impresarios* are additional members of the mediation chain without added value. The *Maestro*, now famous, realized that he no longer needed the favour of an *impresario* to be represented. He grasped how the situation was now reversed: it was the *impresarios* who competed for Verdi's repertoire to fill their theatres.

Verdi sold the rights for abridgements of *Jérusalem* for private use to the French publisher Escudier, as was permitted in France at the time. After this experience, Verdi and Ricordi began to directly request rights in all countries worldwide (except France and England). Verdi obtained fixed fees (500 lire for the first 5 years, 200 lire for the next 5 years) for the printing rights of Italian abridgements and increased the amount of the rental fees. From that point, Verdi a) would no longer request only a fixed amount of money for the transfer of ownership of the Opera, but a real share in the profits through rights on sales and rentals; and b) imposed the condition that it was strictly 'forbidden to do any intrusion or mutilation in the score', on pain of a 1,000 lire fine (Panico, 2002).

Verdi showed an increasing interest in economic issues. From the correspondence between Verdi and Ricordi, Verdi's inclination and attention to business clearly emerges. In a letter dated 31 January 1850, the *Maestro*, surprised by the drop in economic conditions for his *Stiffelio*, proposed that the publisher accept his offer on condition that Ricordi increase the remuneration due for the opera *Jérusalem*. At that time, there were no rental and sales rights for *Jérusalem* in Italy:

... I am only surprised, [...] that you would have accepted the 50% and you are now lowering me down to 30%. It's too much!! With all this I don't want to be stubborn, and I will accept your conditions, that is, to give me for ten years 30% for every rental, and 40% on the sale in any country, as long as you want to understand in these rights for ten years *Luisa Miller* and give it as a companion<sup>7</sup> in *Jérusalem*, and *Battle of Legnano*... (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giovanni Ricordi, 31 January 1850. Ricordi Historical Archive, Letter Verdi-Ricordi 31 January 1850, segnatura: LLET000703).

In a subsequent letter dated 2 February 1857, it was the *Maestro*, whose fame and notoriety were now consolidated, who established the economic conditions for his operas.

In the letter the *Maestro* wrote:

... As far as the Venice Opera is concerned, therefore, the following remains established: first, you will give me 36,000 francs (thirty-six thousand) in twenty-franc Napoleons.

Second, you will give me 40% on rentals and 50% on sales... (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giovanni Ricordi, 2 February 1857. Ricordi Historical Archive, Letter Verdi-Ricordi 2 February 1857, segnatura: LLET000745).

The relationship between Verdi and Ricordi therefore changed, laying the foundations for the development of the modern music industry. The traditional system of purchases and sales of works was replaced by a partnership between composer and publisher, who jointly shared any risk and revenue from operas and performances. Up to that time, it had been customary for even Verdi to accept small modifications or abridgements made by the publisher to meet requirements for sales and performances, but from then onwards he no longer accepted any interference with his scores, which had to be faithfully followed by the publisher, and therefore, during performances. The role of publishers became increasingly important and that of *impresarios* less, and they lost the freedom to manoeuvre that they had enjoyed since the 1830s.

In 1850, Ricordi wrote to Verdi about the high cost of renting theatres and proposed new economic conditions to the *Maestro*. Verdi replied:

I don't want to be stubborn and I'll accept your conditions, that is to give me, for ten years, 30% for every rental you make, and 40% for sales in all countries (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giovanni Ricordi, 31 January 1850. Ricordi Historical Archive, Letter Verdi-

Ricordi 31 January 1850, segnatura: LLET000703).

The successful partnership between Verdi and Ricordi continued in the following years, even though Verdi was very demanding and charged high prices for his operas on the strength of his growing fame and contractual power. In 1853, Ricordi paid 20,000 lire for *Il Trovatore* and a total of 34,000 lire for the two operas *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*. Between 1855 and 1858, Tito Ricordi, Giovanni's son, paid 107,000 lire for the four operas: *I vespri siciliani*, *Simone Boccanegra*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and *L'Aroldo*.

The property rights of the opera *Simone Boccanegra* were transferred in 1857 to Tito Ricordi. The contract, signed in Busseto on 14 February 1857, provided a fixed payment of 36,000 lire 'in various instalments at the request of the master'. A further variable commission on the price of each rental and on the value of each sale was also agreed.

Starting with *Simone Boccanegra*, the percentage became more favourable for the composer: an additional 10% with respect to the previous contracts. A commission of 40% on each rental was established and of 50% for each sale, 'and this for the course of ten consecutive years starting from the day of the first performance that will take place in Venice ...at the great theatre La Fenice' (Ricordi Historical Archive in Milan, *Contratto di cessione dell'opera e del libretto di 'Simone Boccanegra'*, 14 February 1857, manoscritto, bifoglio 1 segnatura, DOC00221).

The 1861 contract for *La Forza del Destino* awarded Verdi an immediate payment of

40,000 lire, and in 1867, Verdi obtained from Tito Ricordi and Escudier, his publisher in France, an immediate payment of 30,000 lire for *Don Carlos*. This opera was first performed at the Grand Opera in Paris and then in Bologna, Italy.

In November 1867, Tito Ricordi hired the score for *Don Carlos* (Figure 4), granting the rights to perform the opera to the *impresarios* of La Scala Theatre in Milan, Giuseppe Bonola and Giuseppe Brunello, for the representation of 1868. He obtained a sum of 15,500 lire, plus 60 lire for 100 copies of the libretto. However, the *impresarios* enforced a condition that Verdi would participate in at least one of the rehearsals. Otherwise, the agreed fee would have been reduced to 10,000 lire. Ricordi, for his part, was able to veto the date of the general rehearsal and the first performance. He also obtained the right to replace the orchestra members if their performances were not considered satisfactory. The theatre was obliged to clearly state on the billboards that the score and libretto belonged to Ricordi, who also obtained the right to attend the performances of 1867 and 1868 free of charge for himself, his family, and anyone accompanying them.

**[Insert Figure 4 here]**

In 1872, Ricordi paid Verdi 60,000 lire as well as the new higher percentages of rights on rental (40%) and sales (50%) to obtain the famous opera *Aida*.

The end of the long journey of collaboration between publisher and composer, which

had not been without disagreement and conflict, was marked by Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*, in 1893. In 1893, the last contract between Verdi and Ricordi was signed, which provided Verdi with the highest payment ever of 160,000 lire.

The contract for this opera once again reveals the strength of Verdi's contractual power and forceful character (Lyons and Mehta, 1997); he obtained the same high percentages on the hire and sales of the scores as in the 1872 agreements, and a large initial payment. Ricordi was confident in both the consolidated partnership with the *Maestro*, and that the *Maestro's* last opera would find favour with audiences and opera aficionados.

Between Verdi and Ricordi can be seen the creation of what has been defined as a 'small world' (Uzzi and Spiro, 2005), which is a typical element in the artistic world, likely to generate positive effects in terms of the type and intensity of relations established between members (Granovetter, 1973; Uzzi and Spiro, 2005). During the shareholders' meeting on 16 June 1892, Giulio Ricordi, in answering a question about the *Maestro's* intentions to concede the rights to *Falstaff*, without hesitation said:

With Verdi, it is not the case to argue in the slightest: it has always been done so and also for *Otello*, *Maestro* Verdi had offers three times higher than the amount that he signed with us in the contract. (*Verbale della Seduta Assemblea dei Soci Casa Ricordi*, 14 June 1892, DOC02173.013).

In the culture industry, belonging to a network allows the artist to benefit from a

fruitful exchange of ideas and opinions. The individual members act both as critics and as admirers of each other (DeNora, 1991). Through the system of relationships that is established, belonging to a network allows members to expand their pool of knowledge by establishing relationships with individuals who share the same interests. Long-term, committed relationships promote social attachments, social norms, and familiarity-based trust (Granovetter, 1985; Gulati, 1995; Macneil, 1980; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). In the Verdi-Ricordi relationship, the strong sense of trust and embeddedness is evident from and expresses itself in contracts and appropriate accounting.

The cost of staging a Verdi opera also rose in the contract between Ricordi and the La Scala Theatre, represented on this occasion by the *impresario* Giuseppe Brunello. In October 1871, Tito Ricordi received a fee of 22,000 lire for the hire of the score and for the concession of the rights to perform *Aida* (Figure 5), on its premiere in Italy in February 1872, after the December 1871 world premiere in Cairo. As in the contract for *Don Carlos*, Ricordi was able to veto the date of the dress rehearsal and first performance and intervene in the selection of orchestra members. Furthermore, Tito Ricordi again required the *impresario* to highlight in the theatre billboards that the publisher owned the score and librettos. In these last contracts made between the three main actors in this system of artist-*impresario*-theatre relations<sup>8</sup>, a new and strong partnership between the publisher and the composer can clearly be seen. This relationship came to underpin the entire process an opera underwent to be produced as a public performance.

**[Insert Figure 5 here]**

Analysing Verdi's productivity (Table 2) through his contract details and the evolution of property rights clearly demonstrates that social capital, represented by the system of relations between composer-publisher-*impresario*-theatre-public (Hirsch, 1972), is a critical resource that is able to enhance an artist's prestige, social position, and economic and financial status (Bourdieu, 1986; DiMaggio, 1979).

**[Insert Table 2 here]**

The development of the music industry and the introduction of copyright laws gave artists the financial independence necessary to stimulate the search for their own artistic dimension (Williams, 1981) without the need to perceive artistic composition as an exhausting but necessary task (Scherer, 2008).

## **Accounting for Verdi**

Despite the unquestionable artistic integrity that the *Maestro* maintained throughout his career, making 'art for art's sake' his watchword, he showed a strong entrepreneurial

attitude. His significant contribution to the introduction of copyright demonstrates his attention to the economic aspect, as well as the increasing attention paid to the drafting of contracts for the rights of his operas.

The turning point in the Verdi-Ricordi relationship began in 1851 when the *Maestro* asked Ricordi to keep the accounts of his operas. Verdi asked Ricordi to keep records for every rental and sale that that they be periodically verified (in June and December) by Verdi or his delegate.

In a letter dated 31 January 1850, Verdi wrote to Ricordi:

... you will keep the record of every rental, and every sale you will make, which will be revised twice a year, once a year at the end of June and at the end of December, and you will pay out the money to me. This agreement will begin today, and my rights will continue for ten years... (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giovanni Ricordi, 31 January 1850. Ricordi Historical Archive, Letter Verdi-Ricordi 31 January 1850, segnatura: LLET000703).

What was established in the contracts gave rise to periodic payments from Ricordi to Verdi. These payments were the result of the rental rights' percentage due to the *Maestro* for each performance of his operas.

Thus, Ricordi began to keep a systematic accounting, periodically provided to the *Maestro*, of the sums of money due to Verdi and the payments made by Ricordi on behalf

of Verdi himself. Verdi used to delegate the economic management to third parties. For a certain period (1867-1879), Verdi entrusted Mr Corticelli, who also acted as secretary, with the management of his wealth which was then entrusted to his lawyer (Chusid, 2015). However, it is not known if Verdi kept his own accounts or if he wrote down in some diary or register his expectations in terms of receipts. As noted above, no such document has been found either at the Archives consulted or at Villa Sant'Agata, Verdi's residence.

Certainly, Verdi paid great attention to economic issues, demonstrating on several occasions that he had a clear and lucid vision of them. The *Maestro* used to give evidence of every amount paid by Ricordi with whom, as further confirmed by a letter dated 11 November 1847, he had a relationship of real trust and friendship. Giovanni Ricordi sometimes supported the *Maestro* financially with loans, which Verdi took care to pay back as soon as he received his periodic remuneration. The *Maestro* writes to Giovanni Ricordi:

... In the meantime, I give you evidence of 11,000 francs in 550 actual gold napoleons, which arrived here last night by stagecoach, bound for me. Of these 11,000 francs, 1,000 are the monthly instalment on 1 November for the opera *Rigoletto*, the other 10,000 are by way of a graceful loan, of which I am obliged to pay the annual 5% starting from 30 October 1851. These 10,000 francs will be returned to you in 500 gold 20 francs napoleons within one year at the latest ... (Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giovanni

Ricordi, 1 November 1851. Ricordi Historical Archive Letter Verdi-Ricordi, 1 November 1851, segnatura: LLET000703).

In the Institute of Verdi Studies in Parma, among the correspondence between Verdi and Ricordi, some of the accounting records sent by Ricordi to the *Maestro* were found. Ricordi not only communicated to Verdi the amount of payments due, but as requested by the *Maestro*, he provided detailed accounting. Through analyzing the documents, it emerged that Ricordi used to send Verdi a sort of double entry accounting based on a form of ‘personalistic theory’ (Degranges, 1795; Marchi, 1867).

The statement provided to the *Maestro* had two sections. The first, called ‘Avere’ (credit), recorded the amounts due to the *Maestro* from Ricordi for each performance (Figure 6). For each Opera, Ricordi indicated the city where the performance took place, the name of the theatre, the total amount collected by Ricordi, and the percentage due to Verdi for the rental (net amount). This percentage, ruled by the contracts, from 1857 amounted to 40% (as previously mentioned).

**[Insert Figure 6 here]**

The second section (Figure 7) was entitled ‘Dare’ (debit). It contained the list of payments made by Ricordi on behalf of Verdi. The type of payments made testifies to the

strong link between Ricordi and Verdi and the *Maestro*'s reliance on his publisher to deal with even personal matters. The payments made by Ricordi include, among others, magazine subscriptions, payments for legal expenses, bookbinding expenses, business card expenses, playing card expenses, and payment of an allowance to Mr Corticelli.

The difference between the amount entered in the credit and debit sections represented the amount due by Ricordi to Verdi.

**[Insert Figure 7 here]**

The peculiarity of Ricordi's accounting is that it seems to be definable as an 'accounting for artist', in this case 'accounting for Verdi'. The object of the account is Giuseppe Verdi for whom are marked, through a double section, the amounts that the *Maestro* 'must have' and the amounts that Verdi 'must give'.

## **Conclusions**

The evolution of the economic relations Verdi established from the start of his career gives a clear picture of the key role that Verdi played in the deep changes in the entire cultural industry in Italy at the time. Certain effects, such as the role of the SIA/SIAE, have lasted to the present day. Verdi maintained a life-long fight for the fair recognition of rights of composers for their original works. The artistic/economic system which had

previously held sway for centuries comprised weak and fragmentary regulations, acquired practices and privileges, and a widespread trade in counterfeit and derivative works, all dominated by the theatre *impresarios*. In his stubbornness, Verdi was instrumental in overturning this system.

Verdi and Ricordi contributed significantly to the development of the modern cultural industry: Hirsch's (1972) cultural industry model can be considered the consequence of the profound changes they brought about in the musical and cultural arenas of the time.

The new system of cultural production and exchange from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards emerged against a background of increasingly clear and comprehensive copyright regulations, while publishers became key figures. These new times were characterised by new actors, who came into play by establishing different rules and customs, and in most cases, composers no longer had to worry about the fruits of their talent being stolen or altered. It was in protecting his operas against adaptations and arrangements that Verdi played the political card and exploited his position as a member of parliament. In this, he had Ricordi's continuing support, which had transported him from being an unknown musician from the backwoods of Busseto to a figure of worldwide renown in music and opera. Ricordi worked hard to obtain greater protection for his artists, as well as towards wider international collaboration and the creation of a music archive as complete, rich, and varied as possible.

However, Ricordi was also able to achieve publishing and commercial success in this

‘Verdi evolution’. The publishing house succeeded not only in making a name in the world of Italian and international publishing, becoming a firm point of reference in the cultural industry of this period, but also in growing its business and signing contracts with the greatest composers of the time. Giovanni Ricordi began his career as a humble copyist, but over time his firm created a unique music archive and organisational-management structure from scratch.

This paper contributes to the development of the study of the relationship between accounting and music by examining the connections between these two fields through the lens of culture industry model and contract theory. The research is novel because it attempts to broaden accounting into a specific and unexplored domain of culture industry: high music, by adopting a historical perspective. It provides an interesting insight into the active role that artist Giuseppe Verdi played in the development of the modern music industry. The research highlights the contrast between the *Maestro*’s artistic integrity and his attention to economic aspects, such as the mercantilism of the artistic work. Through analysing contracts aimed at protecting the economic aspect of the work and the consequent accounting traces, it has been possible to read, through numbers, the success of the *Maestro* from Busseto. What emerged from reading the contracts and accounting documents is the strong link between economic, social, and cultural capital that finds its most explicit and tangible link in copyright.

Figure 8 summarises the theoretical model followed in the research aimed at analysing

the evolution of business relations between the composer Giuseppe Verdi and the publisher Ricordi from the perspective of classical contract theory in the light of repercussions on opera as a component of cultural capital and on economic capital. The economic dimension has been studied through contracts and accounting traces regarding Verdi and kept by Ricordi. By analysing the close system of relations between Verdi and Ricordi has been possible to highlight the cultural, economic, and social capital. Verdi directly influenced changes in the social dimension of capital, and the analysis of documents, including contracts and correspondence, has revealed how and to what extent his success influenced the economic dimension (contractual conditions) and the cultural dimension of capital (number and type of works) and vice versa.

**[Insert Figure 8 here]**

The main limitation of the study is due to fragmentation of sources and the difficulties in accessing some of them due to a legal dispute between the Italian State and *Maestro* Verdi's heirs. Moreover, the material stored and catalogued consists mainly of musical scores and stage sketches. The accounting material, on the other hand, is limited.

However, the themes analysed and the perspective used present a diverse range of research possibilities for further scholarly inquiry in the field of new accounting history. It may be useful to extend the analysed model to other actors gravitating in the music

industry (*impresario*, actors, public) and to deepen, adopting Bourdieu's (1977, 1993) perspective, the relationship between composer and other components of social and cultural capital. It is also fascinating to conduct the search for new and additional accounting tracks that allow one to read the music industry through numbers.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> ‘A painting is the intersection of a visual pyramid at a given distance, with a fixed center and a defined position of light, represented by art with lines and colors on a given space’.

<sup>2</sup> From the middle of the 19th century in Italy, artists used to transfer ownership of their operas to publishers for a fee. If a theatre wanted to stage an opera, it had to pay the performance rights and rental fee for the score from the publisher who owned the opera.

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence is one of the main primary sources for the study of musicology and the cultural industry of opera and melodrama. Verdi wrote more than 15,000 letters to more than 100 recipients, and these are indispensable for tracing the phases of his life as a man and an artist (Baldassarre and Von Orelli, 2010; De Cicco, 2015; Degrada, 2000; Gelli, 2000; Luzzio, 1947). It should be noted, however, that for this research we relied on correspondence published by the Institute of Verdi Studies in Parma, rather than unpublished primary sources.

<sup>4</sup> For detailed information on Giuseppe Verdi’s biography, see Aimi and Leandri, 1998; Demaldè, 1976; Gelli, 2000; Mila, 1974; Oberdorfer, 1941; and Phillips-Matz, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the La Scala *impresario* Merelli and his close relationship with Verdi, see Walker (1964).

<sup>6</sup> Sale contract of ‘*Don Carlos*’ (5 atti), 16 February 1867, manoscritto, bifoglio 1 - segnatura: DOC00173.

<sup>7</sup> Verdi intends to ensure that Jerusalem, which until then had no rights to rent or sell, enjoys the same economic treatment as Luisa Miller and the Battaglia di Legnano. In this case he declares himself ready to accept a more unfavourable condition in the definition of the rights due for the opera Luisa Miller.

<sup>8</sup> See this paper’s background and theoretical framework section (pp. 7–16) for a discussion of the model of the cultural industry and the system of relations mentioned here.