

Financial Aspects in the Correspondence between Respighi and his Publishers

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INTRODUCTION

The image of the artist focused exclusively on the spiritual elements of his art is to some extent an ideal perpetuated by Romanticism. The attribution of a commercial value to an artwork is, however, generally well accepted in the figurative arts, when you think that materiality is constantly visible in, for example, painting or sculpture. Musicology, on the other hand, rarely focuses on the financial aspects of a composer's life¹ – which might nonetheless be helpful in understanding some of that composer's choices.

The objective of the present article is to review the financial aspects that have emerged in the correspondence between Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)² and selected publishing houses, which is mainly held by the Fondo Ottorino Respighi (henceforth FOR) of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, in Venice (henceforth FGC).

During the nineteenth century, thanks partly to technological progress in printing, 'publishers themselves became mediators between the authors of musical compositions and their audience',³ therefore creating a market where the composer could sell the property of his work to a music publisher, who would

then sell the scores to the public.⁴ Consequently, composers were obliged to attach a commercial value to their work and negotiate this value with the publisher. Meanwhile, laws were introduced separating the property of the work from its publication,⁵ therefore introducing an additional commercial value attached to the performance of an original composition.

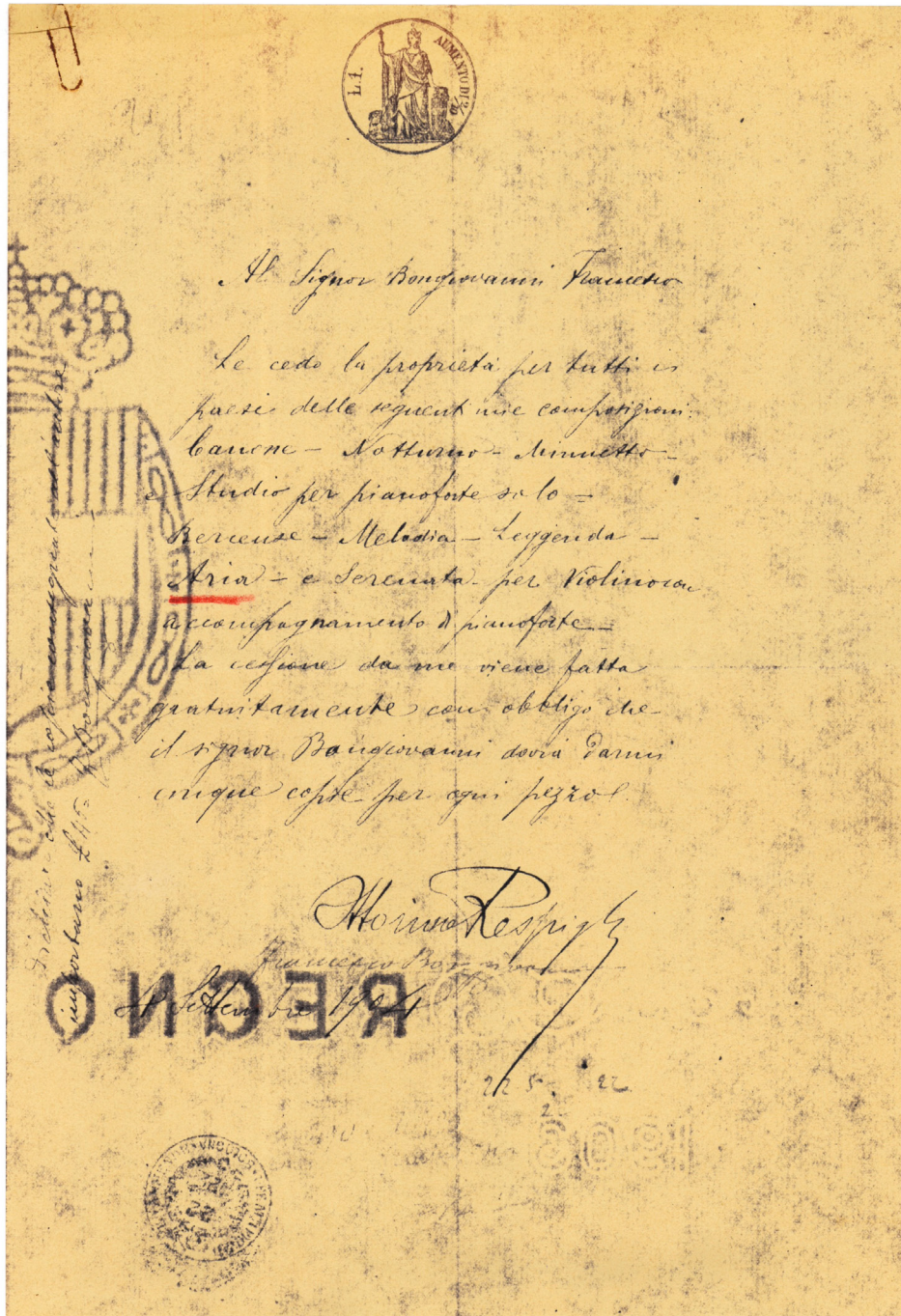
In Italy, where the musical landscape was dominated by opera, the first copyright laws after the unification were passed in 1865.⁶ When Respighi started publishing music for the first time, in 1905, the modern legislative and institutional apparatus for copyright protection was therefore in place. In the course of his life, Respighi had various publishers: Bongiovanni, Sonzogno, Pizzi, Ricordi, Universal, Bote&Bock, Carish, Chester, Benjamin-Rather, Trieste-Schmidl and the Société de musique russe (Paris). The contracts signed with these publishing houses had their own specific characteristics, some of which will be reviewed in this article. Finally, research has made it possible to estimate the extent of Respighi's earnings and especially the royalties the composer was earning during the 1919–1936 period.

THE BEGINNINGS: BONGIOVANNI AND LORENZO SONZOGNO

Respighi's first publisher was Edizioni Bongiovanni, which was a publishing house founded in 1905, by Francesco Bongiovanni, in Bologna (the composer's native city). In September 1904, Respighi signed a contract to sell four compositions for piano solo and five for violin and piano (FIGURE 1). These compositions would be included in, respectively, *Sei pezzi per pianoforte* (P 044)⁷ and *Sei pezzi per violino e pianoforte* (P 031), published in 1905.

The financial terms of the contract may be more the reflection of the friendship between the two men than a purely rational move by the young composer, who ended up getting published quite late, at age 26. In fact, Respighi sold all the rights for practically nothing – simply in exchange for five copies of the scores.⁸ Bongiovanni also published some important vocal works by Respighi, included *Nebbie* (P 064) and *Sei liriche* (P 090), which the composer sold without any financial return. Respighi was able, however, to rectify these terms some years later. In fact, in the autumn of 1932, following resolution of litigation over ownership of the *Adagio con variazioni* (P 133) for cello and orchestra (a composition originally published in 1922 by Umberto Pizzi) Francesco Bongiovanni agreed to cede 33% of the rights collected by the SIAE regarding all Respighi works published by his firm.⁹

FIGURE 1. Contract between Respighi and Bongiovanni. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ottorino Respighi.



In November 1910, Respighi's three act-opera *Semirama* (P 094) was premiered at Bologna's Teatro Comunale. The success of the performance attracted the attention of Lorenzo Sonzogno, nephew of Edoardo Sonzogno (1836–1920), who proposed to buy *Semirama* for the publishing house he founded in that same year.

At the time, the success of an opera could ensure significant financial support for a young composer. The *Semirama* contract represented Respighi's first real negotiation and it was probably questioned by the composer. In fact, Sonzogno replied that he had drafted 'the contract according to the general rule [...] to share equally with the author any profits from the exploitation of the works in my charge, the launch, administration and expenses to be paid in advance [...]'; he added that during the last meeting of senior management of the *Società italiana degli autori*, Arrigo Boito had confirmed that this kind of contract was the most suitable for aligning the interests of the parties.¹⁰ The document was finally signed on 1 March 1911 and, in exchange for the transfer of ownership of the opera (including the libretto), the composer would have received: (1) 50% of all proceeds from performances and rental of orchestral parts (net of publishing or commercial fees) and (2) 10% of proceeds from the sale of the scores and the libretto. As can be seen, the contract did not include any lump sum for the composer – a practice that would become a delicate negotiating point in contracts between Respighi and his future publishers. Despite all efforts, Sonzogno was unable to get *Semirama* performed¹¹ and, in late 1925, five years after Lorenzo's death, Respighi was able to terminate the 1911 contract and recover ownership of the opera.¹²

In addition, Article 2 of the 1911 contract stipulated that Respighi should compose a new opera for Sonzogno. After discussions regarding the choice of subject (*La Nave* and *La rosa di Cipro* by Gabriele D'Annunzio and *Serinettes* by Luigi Illica were at first considered), Sonzogno and Respighi settled on a play by Edmond Guiraud, entitled *Marie-Victoire* (P 100). Negotiations between Sonzogno and Guiraud over adaptation and translation rights for the play proved difficult and the resulting contract was surprisingly unbalanced – the rights for any performance of *Marie-Victoire* in France and its colonies entitled Guiraud to 50% of the profits, while the remaining 50% would be split between Respighi and Sonzogno. For any performance outside France, the split was one third each.¹³ Completed in March 1914,¹⁴ with much difficulty, *Marie-Victoire* was not performed in Respighi's lifetime.

RESPIGHI'S MAIN PUBLISHER: CASA RICORDI

In 1916, three years after he moved to Rome, and thanks to his friendship with singer Clarina Fino-Savio, Respighi was introduced to Casa Ricordi.¹⁵ The firm

was run by Tito II Ricordi (1865–1933) the son of Giulio Ricordi (1840–1912). Tito was a complex figure, ‘a man of the new century, a modern business man in contrast to his father, whom he considered old-fashioned, even provincial’.¹⁶ Cosmopolitan, with literary skills, he paid attention to new technologies and tried to find solutions for the arrival on the Italian market of wax cylinders, shellac records and cinematographs – which led to some friction with his father.¹⁷ He did not, however, pay attention to the financial health of the company and, in 1919, Ricordi’s shareholders forced Tito II to step down, thus putting an end to a 111 years of family management.¹⁸ Leadership passed to executives Carlo Clausetti and Renzo Valcareghi, until 1943.

The earliest document from Casa Ricordi in the FOR is a reply from the publisher to Respighi’s letter of 5 November 1916, for the attention of Tito Ricordi. It states that ‘we will be happy to publish one or two volumes of ancient sonatas that you have collected. [...] We will also very willingly consider your short series of five or six songs [...]’.¹⁹ The works referred to are the *Cinque liriche* (P 108), published by Ricordi in 1918, and a series of sonatas for violin and continuo by early Italian composers (Vivaldi, Veracini, Porpora, Tartini, etc.) that Respighi had arranged for violin and piano, published three years later, in 1921. The first 18 months of their correspondence was mainly centred on vocal compositions (*Deità silvane, Il Tramonto*) and negotiating the corresponding translation rights with authors and publishers. Almost more interesting is the fact that, during this period, Respighi at no point proposed to Ricordi that they publish either his monumental, hour-long *Sinfonia Drammatica* (P 102) or his symphonic poem *Fontane di Roma* (P 106), which was premiered on 11 March 1917 at Rome’s Augusteo theatre, under the baton of Antonio Guarnieri. For *Fontane di Roma*, the reason could be that Respighi himself thought the work a failure.²⁰

However, in February and March 1918, Arturo Toscanini organised a series of popular concerts at the Milan Conservatory, as a charitable fund-raiser for musicians fallen on hard times. For the occasion, Maestro Toscanini conducted *Fontane di Roma*, on 10 February 1918, with great success. The following day, Tito Ricordi, who probably attended the concert, sent Respighi a congratulatory telegram. Although its content is unknown (the telegram is probably lost), we can deduce that Tito Ricordi offered to publish the work. In fact, on 12 February 1918, Respighi indicated that he would be honoured if Ricordi would publish his symphonic poem. Some days later, Carlo Clausetti, on behalf of Mr. Ricordi, began negotiating the contract:

As for the material conditions, he instructs me to ask if, given the kind of work for which, more than major sales, we can count on concert performances, while the

engraving and printing expenses will be quite significant, you are willing to accept a payment of 30% of all performance rights we collect, as well as interest on each copy of the score sold.²¹

At the beginning of March, Respighi complained, with some humour, that ‘concerning Fontane, the contract you propose seems a little thin’; he counter-proposed at least 40%, plus a lump sum, since with only 30% it would be quite difficult for him to ‘glean a few *liras*’.²² In a letter dated 19 March 1918, Clausetti clarified what would become the financial content of almost all contracts between Casa Ricordi and the composer: (1) a fixed lump sum,²³ (2) 40% of amounts received by the publisher for renting the orchestral parts and (3) a percentage of proceeds from the sale of miniature scores.²⁴ The lump sum would be the most sensitive issue in negotiations between Respighi and Casa Ricordi – to the point of sometimes jeopardising their overall relationship, as will be shown later.

It is very likely that Tito II understood the potential of symphonic music as a diversifying element in the product mix of a publishing house mainly devoted to and focused on producing operas. Of course, the economic sustainability of orchestral music was, however, far from being assured, as shown by Clausetti’s above letter. For large-scale orchestral works, ‘derivatives’ sales, such as vocal reductions in the operatic field, were in fact limited, except for piano duo or duet reductions. The publisher generated revenues mostly by renting the parts of the score for which he had previously obtained exclusivity. Rental prices were fixed by Casa Ricordi according to the importance of the theatre and the circumstances.²⁵

Some months later, however, Respighi had more difficulty obtaining favourable conditions for other works, such as the *Sonata in B minor* (P 110) for violin and piano. In October 1918, Clausetti, highlighting the technical difficulties of the sonata, diplomatically pointed out its inferior marketability: ‘I confess that the publishing house is very embarrassed about making an offer: we therefore ask you to formulate an offer and we will see if it is convenient for us to accept it’.²⁶

Respighi asked for a lump sum of 500 lire,²⁷ which was what he had obtained for *Fontane di Roma*, but Casa Ricordi refused categorically, proposing 10% rights on the sale of the scores instead of the traditional 5%.²⁸ In early November, the composer accepted these conditions.²⁹ Elsa’s statement, that Ricordi simply granted favourable financial conditions for *Fontane* because the Casa thought Respighi’s tone poem rental potential limited,³⁰ can therefore not be accepted, in my view.

From study of the correspondence, it also emerges that Respighi’s main aim at the start of his collaboration with Ricordi was, not surprisingly, to write an opera for the publisher. On 2 December 1917, Respighi reminded Clausetti of a project he had introduced during one of their first meetings: ‘I would be very pleased to

write a theatrical work for the company. I would really enjoy a light subject, since I've already had enough drama on my hands. What do you say?'.³¹

Some days later, however, Clausetti answered that the publisher had no subject available and that, considering the current situation (i.e. WWI), they had decided not to embark on new operatic projects for the moment. The door was not completely closed, though. In fact, Clausetti also said that should Respighi find a subject of interest to him, the publisher would be very happy to review the work and perhaps purchase it.³²

In June 1919, Respighi wrote to Clausetti expressing enthusiasm for a comedy that he had just finished reading – *Belfagor*, by Ercole Luigi Morselli (1882–1921).³³ Casa Ricordi informed Respighi of the publisher's intention to meet Morselli in Milan, to start discussing a possible collaboration.³⁴ The meeting probably took place late that year.³⁵ However, Morselli's tuberculosis meant that his physical condition was starting to decline and, to complete the libretto, it was necessary to bring Claudio Guastalla (1880–1948) onboard.³⁶ The latter would become a close friend and collaborator of Respighi. In June 1920, Clausetti advised Respighi that the terms of the contract with Morselli and Guastalla were finally defined.³⁷ For the *Belfagor* opera, Casa Ricordi proposed a lump sum of 15,000 lire to Respighi. Having asked Toscanini for his opinion, Respighi was reluctant to accept.³⁸ Clausetti replied that the Board of Casa Ricordi had already validated the amount and it was therefore not possible to change it. However, the real reason was that Respighi, in spite of his symphonic talent, was still an 'unknown' opera composer for Ricordi – with all the risk that this implied.³⁹ The contract was finally signed on 30 September 1920 and the music completed at the beginning of June 1922.⁴⁰

Late spring 1923 brought the first significant conflict in the relationship between Respighi and Casa Ricordi, probably concerning the *Quattro arie scozzesi* (P 143).⁴¹ Writing about these new songs, the composer reminded Ricordi of conditions set forth in a letter dated 1921: a premium of 500 lire per song and 10% on the sales.⁴² At the beginning of June, considering the relatively low number of scores sold and the increase in selling price, Casa Ricordi wrote to the composer invalidating the 1921 agreement and offering a premium of 500 lire or 40% but not both.⁴³ Respighi considered these conditions 'absolutely unacceptable', adding 'I have just finished the second series of ancient dances and airs for lute but, considering the situation of great savings in which the company has put itself, I believe it is pointless sending it to you'.⁴⁴ Casa Ricordi sent a formal letter some days later, sending back the manuscript and reminding him that he had always benefitted from special conditions.⁴⁵ A couple of days later, Respighi tried to justify himself, by arguing that he lived from his work and could not accept proposals that were against his interests.⁴⁶ The crisis was over, however, as is shown by the

fact that in October 1923 an agreement was reached concerning the cession of the second suite of *Ancient Airs and Dances* (P 138).⁴⁷

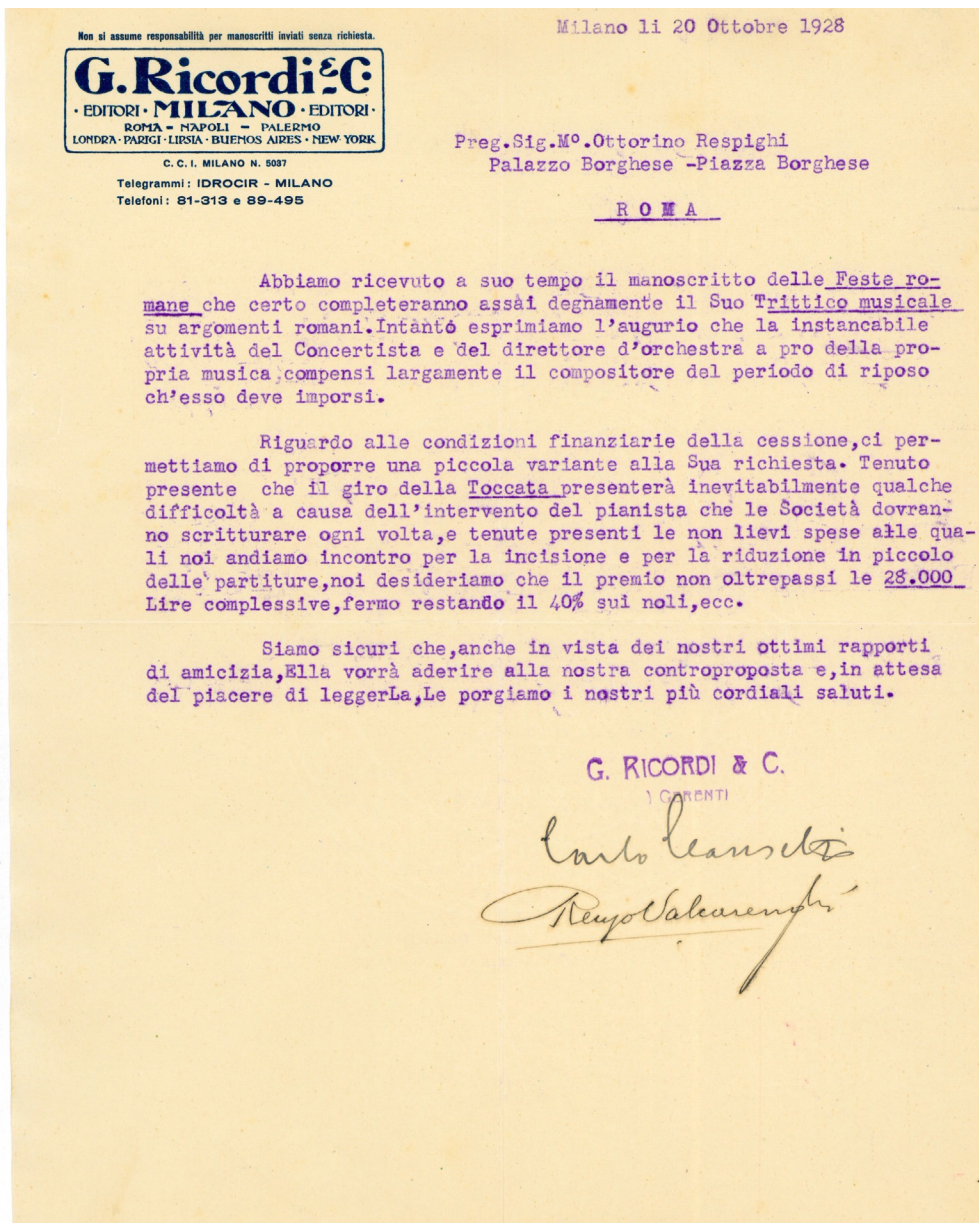
The unquestionable success of *Pini di Roma*, conducted for the first time by Bernardino Molinari, on 14 December 1924, at the Augusteo theatre, represents, in our view, a turning point in the composer's international career, as illustrated by Respighi's tours on the American continent during the following four years: United States (1925, 1927, 1928), Brazil (1927, 1928) and Argentina (1929). It is therefore not surprising that, in the late 1920s, Casa Ricordi became more inclined to accept Respighi's requests. In October 1928, the composer asked for a lump sum of 25,000 lire for *Feste romane* (P 157) and 8,000 lire for the *Toccata* (P 156) for piano and orchestra, in addition to the usual 40%. By arguing that the *Toccata* 'will inevitably present some difficulties, due to the necessity of a pianist, who societies will have to hire each time',⁴⁸ Casa Ricordi tried to lower the amount (FIGURE 2) but, in the end, the publisher paid 30,000 lire for both works, 25,000 lire of which was for *Feste*. This is an impressive amount, if we consider the lump sums received for *Fontane di Roma* (500 lire) and *Pini di Roma* (5,000 lire). By way of comparison, in October 1928, the French publisher Durand & Cie granted Ravel a lump sum of Fr. 20,000 (15,000 lire) for *Bolero*.⁴⁹

Respighi's greater bargaining power in the late 1920s also extended to opera. For *La Fiamma* (P 175), staged for the first time in Rome in January 1934, Respighi was able to negotiate, in addition to 40% on the renting of materials, a lump sum of 150,000 lire, paid in instalments, as follows: (1) 50,000 lire on signature of the contract, (2) 50,000 lire on delivery of the manuscript, (3) 10,000 lire after the sixth theatre, (4) 20,000 lire after the twelfth theatre and (5) 20,000 lire after the eighteenth theatre – a new season for the same institution also being considered a 'theatre'.⁵⁰

The exceptional nature of the conditions granted by Casa Ricordi are also confirmed by the fact that, after almost three years of tension between Respighi and Bote&Bock (publisher of the *La campana sommersa* opera, the *Concerto in modo misolidio* and the *Poema autunnale*) over lower-than-expected sales for the Sunken Bell opera, Casa Ricordi agreed to settle Bote&Bock's outstanding debt for the opera, in exchange for 20% of performance and orchestral-material rental sums received by the German publisher for this Respighi opera.⁵¹

The fact that such high amounts were an exception also seems confirmed by the fact that, for the most part, Respighi's contracts with Ricordi mention not the final negotiated lump sum but a lower amount. The very day of reception of a contract, Respighi would receive a letter modifying some of its terms – known as a 'side letter' in business terminology. This was the case, for example, for *Vetrata*

FIGURE 2. Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 20 October 1928. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ottorino Respighi.



di Chiesa (P 150), *Trittico Botticelliano* (P 151), *Concerto a Cinque* (P 174), *Feste romane* and the *Toccata*.

However, from 1932, the world economic crisis began to affect the music business in Italy⁵² and Ricordi was increasingly unable to continue agreeing such high lump sums. In fact, concerning Suite No. 3 of *Antiche arie e danze per liuto* (P 172), Ricordi stated that:

The conditions of the publishing market today are so disastrously changed that, in order not to go under, it is necessary to change the compensation systems used hitherto. [...] As long as these conditions last, it is therefore absolutely impossible for us to undertake light-heartedly to pay composers lump sums which it is becoming increasingly slow and difficult to recover [...].⁵³

In his reply, after two months of silence, Respighi did not hesitate to express his disappointment:

Your letter has hurt me and offended me. I was offended to see that you treat me like any of your composers, without regard for my name and my work, and I was hurt to see that, after I have given you the best part of my work for 15 years, at a time of great difficulty for everyone, you offer a solution that today places the burden on me alone.⁵⁴

Respighi was finally able to obtain a lump sum for his work, although this was only 3,000 lire. This trend was not to be reversed. In fact, for his last one-act opera, *Lucrezia* (P 180), Respighi was able to obtain only 13,000 lire, on signature of the contract.⁵⁵

AN EXAMPLE OF DIVERSIFICATION: UNIVERSAL EDITION

Respighi's *Sinfonia Drammatica* was premiered in 1915. It is not clear why the composer did not offer publication of the work to Ricordi, since by the end of 1910, as we have seen, Respighi was building a successful relationship with the publisher. The length (almost 60 minutes) of this work for large orchestra may have been a deterrent. Respighi probably thought that the stylistically Mahlerian *Sinfonia* was better suited to Universal Edition – a more instrumental-oriented Austrian publisher, founded in 1901. In a letter dated 27 January 1920, however, Universal was cautious: '[...] since the present publishing situation is very difficult, it would not be easy to publish such a huge symphonic work soon. We therefore recommend that you send us some smaller compositions (piano pieces, songs, etc.) for the moment [...]'.⁵⁶

The same position was expressed six months later, when Universal reaffirmed that it was too soon to publish the *Sinfonia Drammatica* (it was only printed in 1922) and asked again for smaller works. It is therefore no coincidence that, probably following a suggestion by the composer, Universal tried (unsuccessfully) to buy some of Respighi's compositions in the Bongiovanni and Pizzi catalogues.⁵⁷

Finally, after negotiations, Respighi sold some of his early works (*Aretusa* P 095, *La sensitiva* P 104, *Antiche cantate d'amore* P 098⁵⁸) and some more mature ones (*Sinfonia Drammatica*, *Tre preludi sopra melodie gregoriane* P 131, *Concerto gregoriano* P 135, *La primavera* P 136) to Universal in August 1921. The publisher granted only 20% rights on score sales, with a 20,000 mark advance. Any performance rights would have been paid to Respighi through his membership of local author societies. In addition, Universal refused to pay a lump sum for these works, arguing that special taxes were applicable for publishing foreign composers.⁵⁹ These financial terms were thus quite discouraging, compared to the Ricordi contracts.

The last of Respighi's works published by Universal were the *Quartetto dorico* (P 144) and the *Quattro arie scozzesi*, in 1925. In 1926, the relationship with Universal deteriorated, when Respighi, after the success of *Pini di Roma*, wanted to orchestrate the *Tre preludi su melodie gregoriane* for piano solo and add a new one, thus giving birth to *Vetrata di Chiesa*. We do not know what Respighi's original financial claims were, but it is certain that Universal refused categorically, returning the manuscript to the composer and stating that any future publisher of the work would have to pay Universal 1,000 gold marks, because the original autograph score was its property (FIGURE 3).⁶⁰

In fact, when Casa Ricordi published *Vetrata di Chiesa*, it paid Respighi the supplementary sum of exactly 1,000 gold marks (in the 'side letter' to the contract), in addition to a 5,000 lire premium.⁶¹

RESPIGHI'S EARNINGS⁶²

What are the components of a composer's earnings? At least three can be identified: (1) royalties and lump-sum payments, (2) salaries of academic positions, including private lessons, and (3) performing fees, as an interpreter, a conductor or just for presence.

The analysis of Respighi's finances is difficult, considering the scarce documentation available. Before he moved to Rome in 1913, even in absence of documents, it can be deduced that Respighi's earnings were not significant. After graduating in violin (1899), except for periods spent in Saint Petersburg and

Berlin, Respighi's main professional occupation was as an orchestral player for the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, living in his parents' house.

Once in Rome, as a professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia, Respighi was probably earning a low salary. In fact, worries about his financial situation are often mentioned in correspondence of the summer of 1918 between Respighi and his secret fiancée Elsa Olivieri Sangiacomo. He was quite anxious about his capacity, once married, to provide an acceptable standard of living for the future household. These elements seem to be confirmed by the 1919 decree that elevated the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia from a provincial to a national level, in which it is indicated that the salary of a professor of composition and fugue (i.e. Respighi's position) was 7,200 lire (10,900 euros). This amount is coherent with the composer's monthly 600 lire charges, referred to by Elsa in a letter dated 31 July 1918. Interestingly, in the same document, Elsa also has the idea to study singing again, to exploit her voice and thus contribute to the family's finances. The couple ended up giving more than 350 concerts during the period of 1920–1930.⁶³ Once married, they started their common life in 'a one-and-a-quarter room'⁶⁴ in the Pensione Marchesini, in Via Pietro Cossa, before moving, in October 1920, to two rooms, in Elsa's mother's home in the Via Nazionale.⁶⁵

During the 1920s, Respighi's salary at Santa Cecilia gradually increased, reaching about 16,000 lire (14,800 euros) in 1928⁶⁶ and around 25,000 lire (27,500 euros) in 1936.⁶⁷ In 1932, he was elected to the art class of the Reale Accademia d'Italia – a coveted academic position during the Fascist period, not just in terms of prestige but also financially. In fact, contrary to the pre-existing Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (only absorbed by the Fascist institution in 1939), each member was granted a monthly income of 3,000 lire, or 36,000 lire (38,500 euros) annually, corresponding to the highest salary of a university professor.⁶⁸ This element, omitted in Elsa's biography, should be considered when assessing Respighi's attitude to Fascism.⁶⁹

What about royalties, the second component of a composer's earnings? Generally, Respighi received royalty statements from his publishers twice a year. In the case of Ricordi, statements were sent in January for royalties earned during the second half of the previous year and in July for rights earned in the first half-year. These documents include, for each of Respighi's works owned by Ricordi, a list of performances and associated royalties, mainly related to the rental of the score parts. In fact, performing royalties were collected principally by local copyright collecting societies, such as the SIAE for Italy. For some countries, such as the United States, rental fees corresponded also to performing fees. In others (such as France or Belgium), Respighi was entitled to receive only performing fees through the local author society, and the entirety of the sums received by Ricordi

for renting the orchestral material were kept by the Casa Ricordi.⁷⁰ Analysis of this information gives us a better understanding of the contribution of each of Respighi’s works to the composer’s overall royalty income.

TABLE 1 is a summary of the July 1935 (FIGURE 4) and January 1936 Ricordi royalty report. Three important observations can be made:

1. operas were still a significant part of the composer’s royalties, accounting for 56% in 1935. It is also noteworthy that lump sums negotiated for operas were generally higher than those for instrumental music;
2. the Roman Trilogy accounts for almost 40% of the total royalties from Respighi’s symphonic music and less than 20% overall;
3. Respighi’s free transcriptions or orchestrations of early music were the most significant source of instrumental-music revenues (approx. 50%).

Taking the lump sums negotiated with the publishers and all royalty reports contained in the Fondo Ottorino Respighi, it has been possible to estimate Respighi’s income from his publishers before tax, in terms of 2019 euros (GRAPH 1).⁷¹

Given the terms of his contracts with Bongiovanni and the complications with Sonzogno, it is not surprising that Respighi earned no royalties before 1919. The turning point came at the end of the 1910s, when Respighi was finally negotiating contracts with major European publishers such Casa Ricordi and Universal. It was only in the mid-1920s, however, that his revenues started to become significant. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that from 1925, Elsa and Ottorino finally moved to their first real home and rented an apartment in the elegant Palazzo Borghese, in the centre of Rome. Looking at the graph, we notice that 1930 was particularly

GRAPH 1. Respighi’s income from his publishers (in K€).

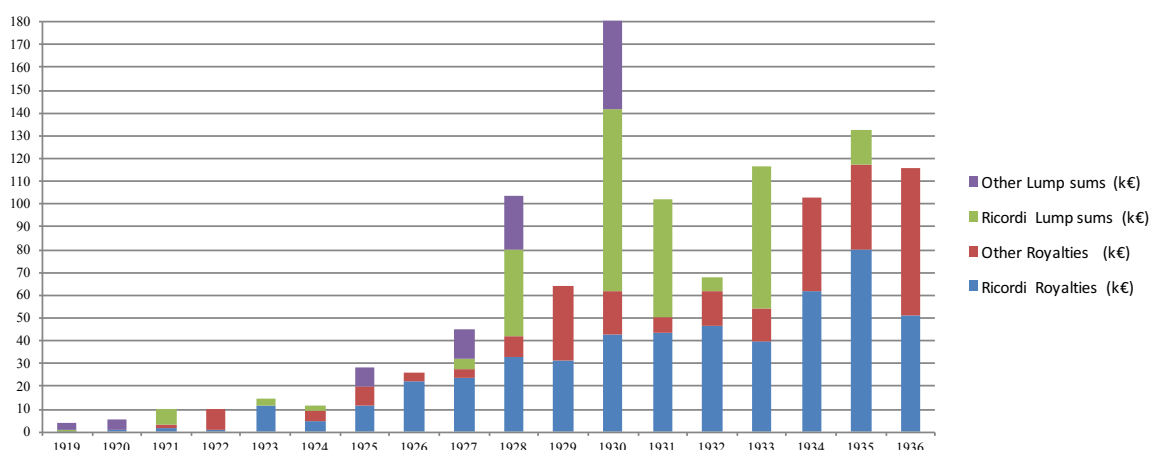


TABLE 1. Analysis of a royalty report from Casa Ricordi. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ottorino Respighi.

Composition	Number of performances	Royalties received (in liras)	Percentage of Total 1	Percentage of Total 2
<i>Fontane di Roma</i> (P106)	26	3.229	15,2%	6,7%
<i>Antiche danze e arie per liuto</i> (P 114, P 138, P 172)	27	2.462	11,6%	5,1%
<i>Pini di Roma</i> (P 141)	29	4.876	23,0%	10,1%
<i>Vetrare di chiesa</i> (P 150)	4	200	0,9%	0,4%
<i>Frittico botticelliano</i> (P 151)	9	799	3,8%	1,7%
<i>Gli uccelli</i> (P 154)	20	2.302	10,9%	4,8%
<i>Feste romane</i> (P 157)	4	292	1,4%	0,6%
<i>Passacaglia in do minore</i> from J.S. Bach (P 159)	23	3.038	14,3%	6,3%
<i>Laude per la natività del Signore</i> (P 166)	2	484	2,3%	1,0%
<i>Preludio e fuga in re maggiore</i> from J.S. Bach (P 158)	15	2.221	10,5%	4,6%
<i>Il tramonto</i> (P 101)	3	112	0,5%	0,2%
<i>Concerto a cinque</i> (P 175)	2	146	0,7%	0,3%
<i>Tre corali</i> from J.S. Bach (P 167)	3	386	1,8%	0,8%
<i>Toccata</i> (P 156)	3	248	1,2%	0,5%
<i>Belfagor</i> . Overture for orchestra (P 140)	1	120	0,6%	0,2%
<i>Belkis, regina di Saba</i> . First suite for orchestra (P 177)	2	100	0,5%	0,2%
<i>Impressioni brasiliane</i> (P 153)	2	157	0,7%	0,3%
Total 1 - instrumental music	175	21.172	100,0%	44,0%
<i>Belfagor</i> (P137)	2	4.515	16,8%	9,4%
<i>Maria egiziaca</i> (P 170)	8	2.821	10,5%	5,9%
<i>La fiamma</i> (P175)	9	19.586	72,7%	40,7%
Total 1- operatic music		26.922	100,0%	56,0%
Total 2		48.093		100%

FIGURE 4. Ricordi royalty statement dated 1 July 1935. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Ottorino Respighi.

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CONTABILITÀ

Milano, 1 luglio 1935

a. S. E. Ottorino Respighi
Roma

Ci preghiamo rimetterle in conformità ai nostri accordi, l'estratto del suo conto chiuso al 30 giugno 1935 con un saldo a Leo favore di

La preghiamo del suo benestare e in tale attesa distintamente La salutiamo.

G. Ricordi & C.

fontani de' Romani Modena	250		€ 100
Ludovigspen - Wiesbaden Kofas Berlino 4 trim 1934	1175 60		470 25
Berlino Radio et British Broadcasting 4 trim 1934	151 15		60 60
Osler Metzoff B. direct settembre 1934	489 85		295 95
" " Radio	207 90		85 25
" " Radio	424 80		169 90
" " Radio	75		30
" " Radio	94 80		37 90
Montblideo Jungo Melrose U.S.A. 1 trim 1935	78 15		51 25
" " U.S.A. 1 trim 1935	277 20		110 90
" " U.S.A. 1 trim 1935	283 20		113 20
Pouit Bourmenouff. Parision 1 marzo 1 trim 1935	180 40		56 15
" " Parision 1 aprile 1 trim 1935	66 25		26 10
" " Parision 1 maggio 1 trim 1935	97 20		38 90
" " Parision 1 giugno 1 trim 1935	643 25		256 50
" " Parision 1 luglio 1 trim 1935	75 40		30 20
Report			
	4528 90		€ 1811 25

significant for Respighi, in particular thanks to the advance on future royalties received for orchestrating four of Rachmaninov's *Etudes Tableaux*.

The last source of Respighi's revenues was performing fees, mainly for conducting his own works and accompanying Elsa at the piano during their concert tours. Documents containing Respighi's fees are rare and it is not possible to have a clear overview across Respighi's life. It is possible, however, to have an idea of their extent. For example, Respighi received the significant sum of 55,000 lire (51,000 euros) for his 1928 Brazil tour in Brazil.⁷² The same year, for the U.S. concert tour, the cachet was around USD 5,800 (approx. 110,000 lire or 102,000 euros). These American contracts are useful in assessing the average fee Respighi received as conductor of his own works (USD 1,250 for conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for example) or the cachet Elsa and Ottorino received for recitals as a couple (USD 300 per concert).⁷³ The year 1928 was therefore significant in terms of performing fees, with around 165,000 lire (approx. 150,000 euros). The following year, for conducting the *Sunken Bell* and two symphonic concerts in Buenos Aires, Respighi earned 70,000 lire (approx. 64,000 euros).⁷⁴

Finally, putting everything together, an average year for Respighi's income in his fifties could have been as follows: 100,000 lire of royalties and lump sums, plus 25,000 lire as professor at Santa Cecilia, plus 36,000 lire as member of the Italian Academy, plus 50,000 lire for performing fees, totalling around 210,000 lire (approx. 250,000 in 2019 euro terms). The amount is, of course, significant and higher than, for example, Elgar's 1933 earnings (approx. 3,631 GBP or approx. 218,000 euros, but mainly driven by conducting and broadcasting fees),⁷⁵ but well below the yearly royalties (800,000 lire or 760,000 euros) Giacomo Puccini received from Casa Ricordi in 1922.⁷⁶ This confirms the fact that a composer of successful operas could hope for a higher financial return than a composer of successful symphonic works.

CONCLUSION

Even in the case of classical music, the relationship between the marketplace and the commercial value of an original musical work cannot be ignored. Correspondence between composers and their publishers is, in this sense, illuminating – as Respighi's case illustrates. It also opens new perspectives in the analysis of a composer's life as an artist and as a man. For example, did the musician very often repeat the formula that ensured him the highest artistic success and financial return or did he, at some point, try taking a different path, involving some financial risk? Did the composer, during his career, reject pursuing certain musical forms because

there was no market for them? What was his main source of earnings? What was his relationship to money? This list of questions is, of course, non-exhaustive.

Notes

- 1 To my knowledge, except for some steps usually taken in individual biographies, literature on composers' finances and music economic history in general is scarce. It is in the operatic field that research seems to be more developed. See for example John Rosselli, 'Verdi e la storia della retribuzione del compositore italiano', *Studi verdiani*, II, 1983, pp. 11–28, or John Rosselli, *The opera industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 and, more recently, Stefano Baia Curioni, *Mercanti dell'Opera*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2011. In the symphonic field, a first dedicated book that rationalises a composer's earnings in the light of British copyright laws is John Drysdale, *Elgar's earnings*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013. The influence of material circumstances on music has been explored in: *The Business of Music*, ed. by Michael Talbot, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002.
- 2 For the main facts of Respighi's life see Elsa Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, Milano: Ricordi, 1954. See also Daniele Spini, 'Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936) – Profilo biografico', in: *Ottorino Respighi*, a cura di Giancarlo Rostirolla, Torino: ERI, 1985, pp. 7–84. Elsa's biography contains a number of inaccuracies (dates, name misspellings). A first rectification has been attempted by Norberto Cordisco Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, Paris: Bleu Nuit Editeur, 2018, followed by Michael Webb, *Ottorino Respighi, his life and times*, Leicester: Troubador, 2019. For an analysis of Respighi's compositions, see Alberto Cantù, *Respighi compositore*, Torino: EDA, 1985, and Christoph Flamm, *Ottorino Respighi und die italienische Instrumentalmusik von der Jahrhundertwende bis zum Faschismus*, Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2008, 2 vols.
- 3 Axel Beer, 'Composers and Publishers Germany 1700–1830', in: *Music Publishing in Europe 1600–1900*, ed. by Rudolf Rasch, Berlin: Berlin Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2005, pp. 159–181: 159.
- 4 Gilles Demonet, *Les marchés de la musique vivante*, Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2015, p. 30.
- 5 Demonet, *Les marchés de la musique vivante*, p. 30.
- 6 Baia Curioni, *Mercanti dell'Opera*, pp. 82–86.
- 7 I refer to Potito Pedarra catalog number (P plus a three-digit number), as reported in Potito Pedarra, 'Catalogo delle composizioni di Ottorino Respighi', in: *Ottorino Respighi*, a cura di Giancarlo Rostirolla, pp. 327–404.
- 8 Contract between Respighi and Bongiovanni, 24 September 1904 (FOR).
- 9 Letter from Bongiovanni to Società Italiana Autori ed Editori, 17 December 1931 (FOR).
- 10 'Io ho redatto il contratto secondo la norma generale da me adottata di partecipare alla pari con l'autore agli utili che potranno derivare dallo sfruttamento dei lavori restando a mio carico, il lancio l'amministrazione e le spese da anticiparsi'. Letter from Sonzogno to Respighi, 19 February 1911 (FOR).
- 11 For example, letter from Sonzogno to Respighi, 17 May 1912 (FOR).
- 12 Letter from Respighi to Sonzogno, 25 June 1915 (FOR).
- 13 Contract for *Marie-Victoire*, between Respighi and Sonzogno, October 1912 (FOR).
- 14 Spini, 'Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936) – Profilo biografico', p. 27.

- 15 Letter from Chiarina Fino-Savio to Elsa Respighi, 15 January 1952 (Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondo Ottorino Respighi).
- 16 Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007, p. 221.
- 17 Archivio Digitale Ricordi (henceforth ADR): www.archivioricordi.com/en/features/the-cosmopolitan-tito-ii-ricordi-the-period-from-1912-to-1919.
- 18 Baia Curioni, *Mercanti dell'Opera*, pp. 205–206.
- 19 'la nostra casa sarà ben lieta di eventualmente pubblicare uno o due volumi di sonate antiche da lei raccolte. [...] Prenderemo pure assai volentieri in visione la sua piccola serie di cinque o sei canti'. Letter from Casa Ricordi to Respighi, 16 November 1916 (FOR).
- 20 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, pp. 98–101.
- 21 'Quanto alle condizioni materiali egli mi incarica di domandarle se, dato il genere del lavoro per il quale, più che su una larga vendita, si può contare su esecuzioni in concerti, mentre le spese di incisione e di stampa saranno piuttosto rilevanti, Ella è disposto ad accettare il compenso di una percentuale del 30% sui diritti di esecuzione che incasseremo, oltre a una interessenza per ogni copia venduta della partitura'. Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 18 February 1918 (FOR).
- 22 'In quanto alle Fontane il contratto che mi propone mi pare un po' magro. Col solo 30% avrò da penare assai per racimolare qualche centinaio di lire, dato che un pezzo di orchestra non pagherà che 25 o 30 lire di nolo'. Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 14 March 1918 (ADR).
- 23 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 19 March 1918 (FOR). Clausetti proposed a lump sum for *Fontane* of L. 200. However, on 31 March 1918, Respighi replied asking for a 500 lire lump sum, arguing that the cost of copying the orchestral materials was exactly 200 lire and that he had also been asked by Casa Ricordi to produce a four-hand piano reduction of the symphonic poem (ADR).
- 24 Some years later, the contracts were adapted to new technological developments and included 33.33% on proceeds from phonographic recordings, as shown by Respighi's contracts in the FOR.
- 25 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 26 August 1920 (FOR).
- 26 '[...] Le confesso che la Casa è molto imbarazzata nel farLe una proposta: voglia quindi Ella stessa formulare una domanda e vedremo se ci converrà di accettarla'. Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 10 October 1918 (FOR).
- 27 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 16 October 1918 (ADR).
- 28 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 25 October 1918 (FOR).
- 29 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 5 November 1918 (ADR).
- 30 Elsa Respighi, *Cinquant'anni di vita nella musica*, Roma: Trevi Editore, 1977, p. 58.
- 31 'Io terrei molto a fare un qualche lavoro teatrale per la Casa; mi sarebbe molto piacevole un soggetto leggero ché di drammi ne ho già avuti abbastanza per le mani. Che mi dice?' Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 2 December 1917 (ADR).
- 32 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 5 December 1917 (FOR).
- 33 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 10 June 1919 (ADR). In the same letter, Respighi informs Clausetti that he is starting the orchestration of *Ballata delle Gnomidi* (P 124). The importance of this letter lies in the fact that Respighi explicitly asks the author of the poem what orchestral colour he would see in the *Ballata* ('Vorrei interpretare perfettamente il suo pensiero e calcare più su di un colore che su di un altro a seconda della sua interpretazione e del suo modo di vedere. Vedrà poi se ho colto giusto io stesso nel mio pensiero [...]'). These aesthetic choices –

- finding an orchestral color that perfectly matches an idea – contradicts Elsa Respighi contention that for Respighi, orchestrating was mechanical work. See Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, p. 100.
- 34 Letter from Valcarengi to Respighi, 12 June 1919 (FOR).
- 35 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 26 November 1919 (ADR).
- 36 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, pp. 142–143.
- 37 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 7 June 1920 (FOR).
- 38 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 25 June 1920 (ADR).
- 39 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 10 July 1920 (FOR).
- 40 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 6 June 1922 (ADR).
- 41 The *Four Scottish Songs* would finally be published in 1925, by Universal.
- 42 Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 15 June 1921 (FOR).
- 43 Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 2 June 1923 (FOR).
- 44 ‘Ho finito in questi giorni la seconda serie delle antiche danze ed arie per liuto ma, data la grande economia in cui pare voglia mettersi la sua casa, credo sia inutile di mandarglielo’. Letter from Respighi to Clausetti, 6 June 1923 (ADR).
- 45 Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 12 June 1923 (FOR).
- 46 Letter from Respighi to Clausetti and Valcarengi, 14 June 1923 (ADR).
- 47 Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 25 October 1923 (FOR).
- 48 ‘Tenuto presente che il giro della Toccata presenterà inevitabilmente qualche difficoltà a causa dell’intervento del pianista che le Società dovranno scritturare ogni volta [...] noi desideriamo che il premio non oltrepassi le 28000 Lire complessive [...]’. Letter from Clausetti and Valcarengi to Respighi, 20 October 1928 (FOR).
- 49 Manuel Cornejo, *Maurice Ravel. L'intégrale: correspondance (1895–1937), écrits et entretiens*, Paris: Le Passer, 2018, pp. 1663–1664.
- 50 Letter from Valcarengi and Clausetti to Respighi, 8 May 1930 (FOR).
- 51 Letter from B&B to Respighi, 4 April 1931 (FOR).
- 52 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, p. 251.
- 53 ‘Oggi le condizioni del mercato editoriale sono così disastrosamente mutate che, per non naufragare, è necessario di mutare anche i sistemi di compenso sin qui in uso. [...] Finché duri questo stato di cose, è dunque assolutamente impossibile che noi, a cuor leggero, ci addossiamo degli oneri per premi agli autori, il cui recupero diviene sempre più difficile e lento [...]’. Letter from Ricordi to Respighi, 26 February 1932 (FOR).
- 54 ‘Vi dirò che quella lettera mi ha molto addolorato ed offeso. Offeso per vedermi da voi trattato come uno qualunque dei vostri compositori, senza nessun riguardo al mio nome e alla mia opera, e addolorato per dover constatare che, dopo avervi dato per 15 anni la parte migliore del mio lavoro, proprio in momenti di grandi difficoltà per tutti, Voi non sapete proporre che una soluzione che oggi viene a gravare solamente su di me’. Letter from Respighi to Casa Ricordi, 12 April 1932 (FOR).
- 55 Contract for *Lucrezia* between Respighi and Ricordi, 8 December 1935 (FOR).
- 56 ‘[...] Però, la situazione presente per pubblicazioni è molto difficile, sicché non sarebbe cosa facile, di pubblicare presto un lavoro sinfonico così enorme. Le raccomandiamo quindi, lasciarci per il momento alcune composizioni più piccole (pezzi per pianoforte, canzoni, ecc)’. Letter from Universal to Respighi, 20 January 1920 (FOR).
- 57 Letter from Universal to Respighi, 19 May 1921 (FOR).

- 58 The work was never published.
- 59 Letter from Universal to Respighi, 26 August 1921 (FOR).
- 60 Letter from Universal to Respighi, 4 November 1926 (FOR).
- 61 Letter from Valcarengi and Clausetti to Respighi, 10 January 1927 (FOR).
- 62 Original figures are in Italian lire or foreign currencies. For foreign currencies I have first converted the foreign amount into Italian lire, using the historical rates provided by the Bank of Italy (<https://tassidicambio.bancaditalia.it/timeSeries>). I have then translated the historical amount into 2019 euros, using coefficients published by the Italian Statistical Institute (ISTAT) and available here: <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/30440>. As stated by ISTAT, the coefficients were determined from the Consumer Prices Index for blue and white-collar worker households.
- 63 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, p. 134.
- 64 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, p. 123.
- 65 Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi*, p. 147.
- 66 I have calculated the salary using the data contained in Serie 'Documenti', Pezzo N. D4, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondo Ottorino Respighi.
- 67 As emerged in the documents contained in the folder 'Malattia di Ottorino' (FOR).
- 68 Gabriele Turi, 'Le accademie nell'Italia fascista', *Belfagor*, LIV/4, 31 July 1999, pp. 403–424: 420.
- 69 For a detailed discussion of music and politics during the Fascist period, see the fundamental work of Fiamma Nicolodi, *Musica e musicisti nel ventennio fascista*, Fiesole: Discanto, 1984, and also Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy*, New York: Norton, 1987; Stefano Biguzzi, *L'orchestra del duce*, Torino: UTET, 2003; *Italian music during the Fascist period*, ed. by Roberto Illiano, Turnhout: Brepols, 2004; Lee G. Barrow, 'Guilt by Association: The effect of attitudes toward Fascism on the critical Assessment of the Music of Ottorino Respighi' or, more recently, Charlotte Ginot-Slacik and Michela Nicolai, *Musiques dans l'Italie fasciste (1922–1943)*, Paris: Fayard, 2019.
- 70 Letter from Clausetti to Respighi, 26 August 1920 (FOR).
- 71 All the original data used is from the FOR. In particular, royalties and lump sums have been extracted from correspondence with the following editors: Ricordi, Pizzi, Universal, B&B, Benjamin, Chester, Société de musique russe (Paris) and SIAE. Original figures are in Italian lire or foreign currencies.
- 72 Serie 'Documenti', Pezzo N. D4, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondo Ottorino Respighi.
- 73 Documents from U.S. concert tours (FOR).
- 74 Documents from Argentina concert tours (FOR).
- 75 Drysdale, *Elgar's earnings*, p. 208.
- 76 Calculated based on 400,000 lire half-yearly royalties in: Dieter Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini, la via e l'arte*, Ghezzano: Felici Editore, 2008, p. 358.

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