

Accessing Luigi Nono's Correspondence: a User's Perspective

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In December 1993, Luigi Nono's heirs encouraged the creation of the Associazione Archivio Luigi Nono 'with the purpose of promoting the conservation and the knowledge of Luigi Nono's legacy', starting with the preservation of his personal archives. In November 2006, the Association was replaced by the Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, and moved to its current location. In the meantime, Nono's documents had undergone archival processing and were declared 'of local interest' in 1994 by the Veneto Region and 'of considerable historical interest' in 2000 by the Soprintendenza Archivistica per il Veneto [Archival Superintendence, Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage].

The Fondo Luigi Nono [Luigi Nono Collection], known as the Archivio Luigi Nono [Luigi Nono Archive] (ALN), is organised into five archival series, as follows:

- I. Personal documents (29 boxes);
 - a. personal and family papers
 - b. accounting and administrative documents

- II. Manuscript materials;
 - a. manuscripts regarding music compositions (notes, drafts, rough copies, etc.) set down on sheets of music paper, pads or notebooks (more than 23,000 folios)
 - b. theoretical and political writings (more than 6,000 folios)
- III. Printed materials;
 - a. monographs (more than 8,600)
 - b. periodicals (more than 1,700 items)
 - c. printed music by Nono and other composers (more than 1,800 items)
 - d. press clippings (more than 4 thousand folios)
 - e. concert programmes (approx. 1,200 items)
 - f. posters and flyers (approx. 100)
- IV. Letters (more than 6,400 items);
- V. Audio and audiovisual media.
 - a. records (1,783 titles)
 - b. audiocassettes (more than 200)
 - c. tapes (227)
 - d. videocassettes (approx. 50)

Archival series IV contains:

- the ‘letters’ received by the composer (approx. 6,000 units of different types: letters, aerograms, telegrams, letter cards, postcards, picture postcards, invitations, photographs and other documents sent by post);
- those he sent to his parents and his sister (approx. 200);
- notes, rough drafts, carbon copies, copies of sent letters and telegrams, and unsent originals (approx. 200) – all dated or datable to between 1947 and 1990.

In 1997, the Associazione ALN undertook archival treatment (filing, conditioning, and cataloguing) of the composer’s correspondence, which, throughout his life and mainly for his own purposes, he had assembled in different ways: by correspondent; according to incoming order; documents regarding specific projects or inside attachments (books, magazines). The series is divided into two subseries: individuals [‘Persone’] and corporate bodies [‘Istituzioni’], such as publishers, music institutes, festivals and concert societies. Six boxes still await treatment, and two of these contain contracts and business letters which are yet to be included in the first three archival series.

The documents of each subseries are kept in acid-free folders and have been placed in acid-free boxes, filed in alphabetical order by correspondent. Three boxes are an exception and include letters from unknown or uncertain senders and letters that cannot be consulted. Each file arranges the letters in

chronological order; those with no date are located at the beginning. Envelopes are found after their contents. Most of the attachments (books, magazines, programmes, audiocassettes, photographs, musical manuscripts, etc.) are preserved in other series and described with cross-references to their respective catalogues. For instance: on 6 March 1990, the music record producer and distributor Robert Zank (Edition RZ Robert Zank, Berlin) wrote an accompanying letter to Nono for the shipping of two documents: the proofs, dated 21 February, of the record RZ 1004 with three of Nono's pieces from the 1980s (*A Carlo Scarpa, architetto, ai suoi infiniti possibili; A Pierre. Dell'azzurro silenzio, inquietum; Guai ai gelidi mostri*) and a printed text for the record cover (later annotated by the composer). While this text is conserved together with the letter, the record is included in the subseries Va (ALN DS 1111). This not only ensures and simplifies conservation, but was also the way Nono himself had divided up the most complex items, separating and sometimes even scattering the various parts. This is the case, for example, of six scores from the *Antiqua. Eine Sammlung alter Musik* series, which Nono requested and received by mail from his publisher B. Schott's Söhne, of which only two are preserved in the ALN.¹

On the contrary, the letters Nono kept among the papers relative to the creation of his work (series II) have been left in their 'original' series. 'Dear Gigi, here is the man', 'the stuff', 'the deranged woman', 'chorus III and IV – and the women of figure II of oppression'² are the openings of four significant and long letters from the poet and playwright Giuliano Scabia. Written in 1964 (Milan 24 January, 28 January, 23 February, undated), during his collaboration with the composer on an ambitious musical theatre project dealing with the Italian economical and social situation, the letters contain ideas for the 'libretto'. For this reason, they were found in a folder named 'unrealised projects' ['progetti non realizzati'], preserving documents from different unachieved compositional works. They are now conserved in the first file of series IIa (Manuscripts, Compositions), file 26: *Un diario italiano*.

In the first half of the noughties, the Associazione ALN set about retrieving the letters written by Nono, starting with those he had sent to publishers, promoters (event organisers, radio stations) and also to those recipients whose papers had already been included in some of the world's most renowned archives and libraries. To date, the institution and a group of researchers, together with Nono's recipients or their heirs, have actively encouraged the collection of a large part of the composer's correspondence in photocopies or digital format. This material, which today counts more than 2,000 pieces, is part of the Fondazione ALN's collection.

At the same time as archival processing started, a dedicated database, titled *Carteggi*, was set up on FileMaker. The database includes records of letters belonging to the composer's collection (ALN) and also copies of letters sent by Nono and conserved by the recipients or other archives (Fondazione ALN). With time, the layout of the descriptive records (one for each letter) has been slightly modified, but the basic structure has remained unaltered. Fields are currently grouped into three tabs, namely: data on sender/recipient; contents; types of document and recordkeeping system.

The first tab has fields for:

- reference code;
- name, place, organisation, references for both sender and recipient;
- dates (distinguishing between the date of the letter, the postmark or conjectural dating);
- references (to link the description of a given letter with the previous letter/letters to which it refers);
- remarks (particularly regarding conjectural dating).

The reference code (for example: 'Stockhausen/K 52-03-20 m') is made up of the following elements: the correspondent's surname and initial separated by a slash; a numeric string formed of six pairs of digits (year, month, day); and a final letter 'm' or 'd' indicating whether the correspondent was the 'Mittente' [sender] or the 'Destinatario' [recipient].

The second tab has one field for a short summary of the document and for observations or commentaries, and three further fields referring respectively to persons, titles of works by Nono, and titles of works by other authors mentioned or evoked in the document.

Using these searchable fields, users can explore the whole collection of letters from different perspectives, such as that of the genesis or the reception of a given work. The text of some of the letters is either partially or fully transcribed within the same record in a specific field. Originally designed for letter abstracts, the 'Contenuti/Note' [Content/Notes] field of some records offers a range of precious data, such as the recovery location (when the letter was found in a book or in another folder) or references to other existing documents mentioned in the text and conserved in other series, in Nono's library or in his collection of music recordings.

The third tab describes: the type of document (letter, telegram, postcard, etc.); the language, form and writing tool; the collection or the preserver of the original document (ALN or other organisations); a description of any enclosed attachments; permission to consult the document; cataloguing data (cataloguer's name and the date). The 'Invio' [Submit] button action displays a dialogue box

to report any mistakes or omissions from the catalogue, contributing to data integration and cleansing.

FIGURES 1–4 show the catalogue record for a 1977 letter from the music critic Massimo Mila to Luigi Nono, as the user sees it (FIGURE 1). The recipient's address is not indicated because the envelope is missing. The second tab (FIGURE 2) allows the user to access the transcription of the text (FIGURE 3) and also shows, among other things, that the letter had been published (Content/Notes field). This information is provided for both single and groups of letters and is obtained from the procedures involved in granting permits (see below). The reference to Mila's previous letter, dated 18 February 1977 (FIGURE 1), and that to a formerly attached document (FIGURE 4) come from the text of the letter.

Dearest Gigi,

can we at least try and piece this blessed interview together by mail? I'm sending you a copy of the one with Petrassi for you to take a look at [...].³

In fact, Mila had previously written:

I don't know if I've already told you that *La Stampa* wants to run a series of interviews on avant-garde music in Italy [...] I'll start with Petrassi, for obvious reasons of seniority, then let come whoever's next [...].⁴

Data records show that the current description is the result of 3 entries.⁵ The first cataloguing in 2001 was subsequently revised in 2011, following the publication of the Mila–Nono correspondence in November 2010. Since I needed to identify the Petrassi interview linked to the letter (FIGURE 4) for my work on this paper, I used the Submit button to send the Fondazione ALN all the bibliographical details of the publication which now appear in the 'Accluso' [Attachment] field.⁶ This is just one small example of how collaborative cataloguing functions.

All users can access the database locally. Users can execute their queries remotely through a web interface found on one of the pages of the Fondazione ALN website (FIGURE 5). Designed to help the user plan a research trip, this method obviously does not substitute onsite consultation, although it does render a substantial amount of data. On the other hand, consulting the transcript or the letters is subject to a number of conditions and restrictions. Italian legislation strives to guarantee access to documents, while also

Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono Onlus **LN**

CARTEGGI

Mittente/Destinatario/Date Contenuti/Testo Tipologie/Caratteristiche

Mittente

Segnatura
Mila/M 77-03-08 m

Nominativo
Mila Massimo

Luogo
Torino, via Amedeo Peyron 54, Italia

Istituzione

Riferimento
Mila/M 77-02-18 m

Destinatario

Nominativo
Nono Luigi

Luogo

Istituzione

Riferimento

Date
77-03-08 (lettera)

Osservazioni

[aa-mm-gg (yy-mm-dd) = es. 65-10-12; 61-02-??; 75-08/09]

FIGURE 1. Letter from Mila to Nono, 8 March 1977: catalogue record, tab 1 (Venezia, Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, Carteggi catalogue)

Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono Onlus **LN**

CARTEGGI

Mittente/Destinatario/Date Contenuti/Testo Tipologie/Caratteristiche

Contenuti / Note

Mila chiede a Nono di "imbastire" per corrispondenza l'intervista per La Stampa proposta nelle lettere precedenti. Invia come esempio l'intervista con Petrassi già pubblicata. Ricorda alcune domande, chiede approfondimenti sull'opera per pianoforte [... *sofferte onde serene* ...] e invita a leggere una recensione di d'Amico su Petrassi che acclude. Commenta polemicamente l'organizzazione del Festival della Biennale del 1977. Annuncia un suo futuro soggiorno a Venezia per assistere alla *Donna senz'ombra* di Strauss.

Publicata in: *Nulla di oscuro tra noi - Lettere 1952-1988*, a cura di A. L. De Benedictis e V. Rizzardi, Milano, Il Seggiatore 2010

Opere di L. Nono menzionate

... *sofferte onde serene* ...

Persone / Interpreti

Petrassi G - Maderna B - Porena B - D'Amico F - Canino B - Breznev L - Argan G - Ripa di Meana V - Strauss R - Pollini M

Opere di altri menzionate

Strauss R, *La donna senz'ombra (Die Frau ohne Schatten)*

Trascrizione presente
 Sì No

Visualizza testo completo

FIGURE 2. Letter from Mila to Nono, 8 March 1977: catalogue record, tab 2 (Venezia, Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, Carteggi catalogue)

FIGURE 3. Letter from Mila to Nono, 8 March 1977: catalogue record, transcription (Venezia, Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, Carteggi catalogue)

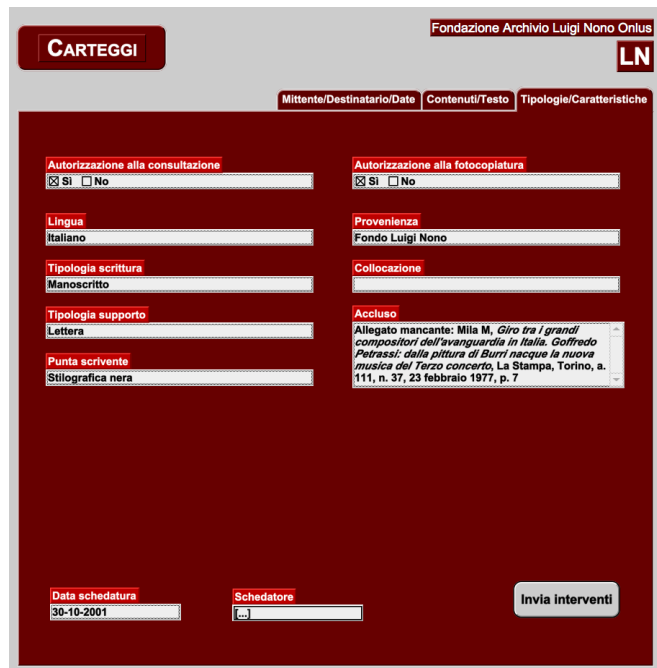
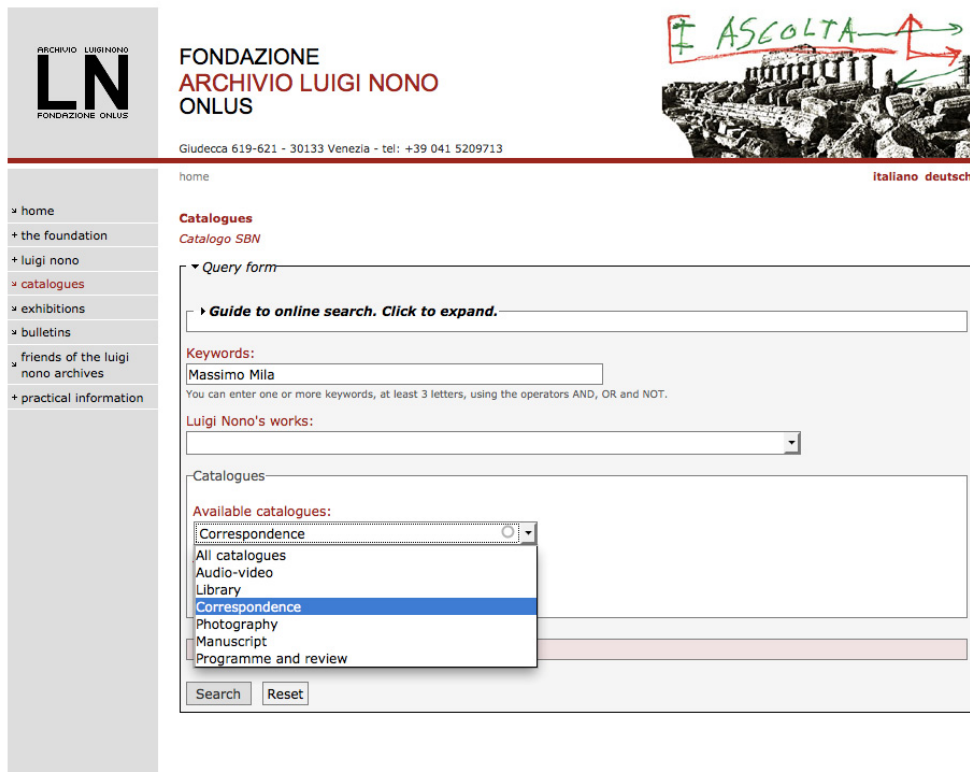


FIGURE 4. Letter from Mila to Nono, 8 March 1977: catalogue record, tab 3 (Venezia, Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, Carteggi catalogue).

safeguarding the rights of the creators, persons or organisations involved. In line with these principles, first of all, one needs permission either from the creator or his/her heirs and (for letters that are not part of the Luigi Nono collection) from the preserver. Where the Fondazione ALN does not have a written release, users must obtain authorisation themselves, with the eventual mediation of the Foundation. It should be noted that preservers have sometimes only provided copies of letters for cataloguing purposes and not for consultation. On presentation of the required authorisation, the Fondazione ALN staff check and eventually censor the text of the letters, removing any sensitive or classified data from consultation, in accordance with Chapter III of the 2004 Legislative Decree 42 (*Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*). The user does not receive originals but photocopies of the selected documents for consultation only, which confirms the usefulness of the description of the original document offered in the database.

The publication of a part or the whole of a transcript is subject to approval from the copyright owners. This also applies to the publication of photographic reproductions.

FIGURE 5. <http://www.luiginono.it/en/catalogues>



In actual fact, it was Nono himself who promoted and allowed the consultation and even the publication of his letters while he was still alive.⁷ This article attempts to summarise what has been done to collect, preserve, and catalogue his correspondences and make them available after his death, particularly since the creation of the Archivio Luigi Nono. Far from aiming to discuss this state of the art in light of the standards for archival description, I have preferred to keep a user's perspective, considering that the research carried out at the Associazione/Fondazione ALN through its catalogues has given rise to a number of events (master classes, symposia, concerts, exhibitions) and hundreds of publications (articles in journals and chapters in books, monographs, theses). Some of these provide the reader with important documentary sections with letter transcriptions or are specifically dedicated to Nono's correspondence, as the selective list below shows (editions promoted by the Fondazione ALN are marked with an asterisk).

1995. Carla Henius and Luigi Nono, *Carla Carissima. Briefe, Tagebücher, Notizen. Mit einem Vorwort von Carla Henius und mit einem Essay und Materialien von Jürg Stenzl*, Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1995.

1999–2000. Angela Ida De Benedictis and Ute Schomerus, 'La lotta "con le armi dell'arte": Erwin Piscator e Luigi Nono. Riflessioni e documenti' (I), *MusicalRealtà*, 20/60, November 1999, pp. 189–205 and (II), *MusicalRealtà*, 21/61, March 2000, pp. 151–181 (the Nono-Piscator correspondence is published in Italian translation on pages 169–184).

2008.* Luigi Nono. *Carteggi concernenti politica, cultura e partito comunista italiano*, ed. by Antonio Trudu, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki (Fondazione Giorgio Cini. Studi di musica veneta. Archivio Luigi Nono. Studi, III), 2008.

2010.* Massimo Mila and Luigi Nono, *Nulla di oscuro tra di noi. Lettere 1952-1988*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, Milano: il Saggiatore (La Cultura, 709), 2010.

2011.* *Intolleranza 1960. A cinquant'anni dalla prima assoluta*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Giorgio Mastinu, Venezia: Marsilio, 2011 (a selection of letters from the genesis of *Intolleranza 1960* is published on pages 57–111).

2012. Nina Jozefowicz, *Das alltägliche Drama. Luigi Nonos Vokalkompositionen mit Tonband »La fabbrica illuminata« und »A floresta é jovem e cheja de vida« im Kontext der unvollendeten Musiktheaterprojekte*, Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2012 (a selection of letters from the genesis of Nono's studied works is published on pages 272–328).⁸

2012.* *Alla ricerca di luce e chiarezza. L'epistolario Helmut Lachenmann – Luigi Nono (1957-1990)*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Ulrich Mosch, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki (Fondazione Giorgio Cini. Studi di musica veneta. Archivio Luigi Nono. Studi, IV), 2012.

2013. Rainer Nonnenmann, *Der Gang durch die Klippen. Helmut Lachenmanns Begegnungen mit Luigi Nono anhand ihres Briefwechsels und anderer Quellen 1957-1990*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 2013.

2016.* Luigi Nono and Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Per un sospiro fuoco. Lettere 1950-1969*, ed. by Paolo Dal Molin and Maria Carla Papini, Milano: il Saggiatore (La Cultura, 978), 2016.

Only a small part of Nono's correspondence has thus been published. However, studies abound with references to his unpublished letters, which of course depends much on the Fondazione ALN's archival policy. Indeed, these documents are fundamental for dating events, checking the quality of existing information or providing new interpretations and research perspectives. And above all they play an essential part in tracking the artistic and cultural processes in which Nono and his correspondents were involved.

I am indebted to Claudia Vincis, Director of the Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, for generously providing me with the necessary information for this article.

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Erika Schaller, 'Das Archivio Luigi Nono', in: *Schoenberg & Nono. A Birthday Offering to Nuria on May 7, 2002*, ed. by Anna Maria Morazzoni, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2002, pp. 345–353.

Erika Schaller, 'The classification of musical sketches exemplified in the catalogue of the Archivio Luigi Nono', in: *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches*, ed. by Patricia Hall and Friedemann Sallis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 59–73.

Claudia Vincis, 'Problemi di archiviazione e di conservazione I: l'Archivio Luigi Nono di Venezia', paper presented at the conference *Giacimenti culturali e tecnologia. Problemi di gestione e conservazione* held in Rome: Istituto Centrale per i Beni Sonori ed Audiovisivi, 10–11 November 2011.

www.luiginono.it, internet site of the Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono ONLUS.

Notes

- 1 Cf. ALN, letter from Werner Pilz dated 24 February 1956 and printed scores ALN mus FC 7 and mus FC 9.
- 2 'Caro Gigi, eccoti l'uomo', 'eccoti la roba', 'eccoti la folle', 'ecco il coro III e IV – e le donne della figura II d'oppressione'. These letters are transcribed in a Master's Thesis: Giulia Mirandola, *Lettura e analisi di Un diario italiano (1963-64) di Luigi Nono e Giuliano Scabia. Genesi del testo ed esiti drammaturgici*, Università degli Studi di Parma, 2006–2007, n.p. (annex 9).
- 3 Massimo Mila and Luigi Nono, *Nulla di oscuro tra di noi. Lettere 1952-1988*, ed. by Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi, Milano: il Saggiatore, 2010, p. 157: 'Carissimo Gigi, vogliamo provare a imbastirla per corrispondenza, questa benedetta intervista? Ti mando in visione quella con Petrassi [...]'.
 4 Mila and Nono, *Nulla di oscuro tra di noi*, p. 155: 'Non so se ti ho già accennato che *La Stampa* vuole un giro d'interviste sull'avanguardia musicale in Italia [...]. Comincio con Petrassi, per ovvie ragioni di anzianità, poi sotto a chi tocca [...]'.
- 5 Due to privacy reasons, data in the 'Schedatore' ['Cataloguer'] field have been removed in FIGURE 4.
- 6 The attachment is probably missing, because in the same letter Mila asked Nono to send him back the interview. See Mila and Nono, *Nulla di oscuro tra di noi*, p. 157.
- 7 See, for example, Luigi Nono, Hermann Scherchen and Karl Amadeus Hartmann, 'Correspondance', ed. by and trans. Dominique Rosset and Jurg Stenzl, in: *Luigi Nono, Festival d'automne à Paris*, Paris: Festival d'automne and Contrechamps, 1987, pp. 35–53.
- 8 Nono's letters concerning the text of *La fabbrica illuminata* has been previously published by Giuliano Scabia himself. See Giuliano Scabia, 'Composizione de *La fabbrica illuminata* di Luigi Nono e lettere del 1964', *Musica/Realtà*, 11/33, December 1990, pp. 43–68.