

## PRESS RELEASE

## Rare Verdi Opera *Stiffelio* Celebrates Its Berlin Premiere: Ricordi Archives Supported Reconstruction

- Bertelsmann sponsors production of rare musical gem by ‘Berliner Operngruppe’

Berlin, January 23, 2017 – The rare Verdi opera *Stiffelio* will be performed in Berlin for the first time on February 1, 2017 – partly thanks to decades of music-historical detective work involving, among others, the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan. The Bertelsmann-owned music archive, which houses a wealth of unique testimonies from the history of Italian opera, was able to contribute major fragments of the score and original correspondence to the reconstruction of the original version of *Stiffelio*, which was long believed to be lost. As a result, Verdi’s work can now be performed again in a version close to the original, based on the critical edition edited by Kathleen Hansell in 2005.

The special musical event will be performed to the audience in Berlin by the *Berliner Operngruppe*, which specializes in rare operas, conducted by Felix Krieger. With the support of Bertelsmann, the young ensemble will perform *Stiffelio* in semi-scenic form at the *Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt*. The soloists include two talents from the Berlin State Opera’s Opera Studio, which is sponsored by Liz Mohn.

*Stiffelio*, Verdi’s 16th opera, is regarded as a masterpiece by many critics. However, already its very premiere in 1850 brought the composer into conflict with the then influential political and religious censorship in Italy. The subject – adultery in a Protestant vicarage – broke a taboo at the time. Verdi had to repeatedly revise the libretto and musical pieces, and finally just withdrew the opera.

The original score of *Stiffelio* was long believed to have been lost, until significant portions of it turned up in a Vienna copy in 1985, and finally with Verdi’s heirs in St. Agata in 1992. Half of the score is preserved in the Archivio Storico Ricordi as part of Verdi’s later opera, *Aroldo*. The original form of *Stiffelio* was finally reconstructed based on these fragments and the exchange of letters documented in the Archivio. Conductor Felix Krieger recently travelled to the Ricordi archive in Milan specifically to research the surviving documents there for the upcoming *Berliner Operngruppe* performance.

The Archivio Storico Ricordi contains documents and artifacts from 200 years of Italian opera history, and is one of the world’s most valuable privately owned music collections. It has been part of Bertelsmann since 1994. The archive’s holdings include 7,800 original scores from more than 600 operas – including valuable original manuscripts by Giuseppe Verdi and

Giacomo Puccini – and around 10,000 libretti, close to 6,000 historical photographs, numerous costume drawings, as well as the entire business correspondence of the Casa Ricordi publishing house from 1888 to 1962. Bertelsmann is having the archival documents comprehensively indexed, digitized and in many cases, restored. Thousands of documents can already be digitally viewed and researched on the Collezione Digitale online platform (<http://digital.archivioricordi.com>).

#### **About Bertelsmann**

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