



# ACADEMIA EUROPAEA

*The Academy of Europe*

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION APPLICATION

**Title:** Exploring Music History through Archival Narratives and Digital Access  
**MAE/YAE Investigator(s):** Emilio Sala (MAE), CLASS A1, Musicology and Art History Section  
**Other investigators:** Niccolò Galliano (University of Milan, Milan, Italy)  
**Category:** From Science to Society

**Problem (max. 50 words):**

While contemporary musicology engages with a wide range of culturally relevant issues, scholars face challenges in communicating their research to non-specialist audiences without compromising the complexity and nuance of their work. This leads to a persistent gap between academic knowledge and its reception in non-academic contexts.

**Unmet Need (max. 50 words):**

Institutions and archives are already expanding their audiences through online databases, blogs, podcasts, and social media content. However, they often fall short in providing (digital or non-digital) environments where the general public can meaningfully engage with complex historical research presented in an accessible manner.

**Project Description (max. 200 words):**

This project aims to develop an online platform to present musicological archival sources (scores, letters, periodicals, photographs) in an accessible format.

Stemming from a PhD project on the history of Casa Ricordi (Italy's leading music publishing house) in the early twentieth century, the platform will feature four case studies highlighting key industrial and political transformations in musical practices: these include tensions between opera and popular music businesses, the impact of sound film on historical music industries, the expansion of transnational markets between Europe and South America, and the influence of the fascist regime on the Italian operatic scene.

Archival materials, held at Archivio Storico Ricordi (Ricordi Historical Archive) in Milan, consist primarily of Ricordi's correspondence and offer access to the publisher's day-to-day communications. Via the Archivio's digital collections (<https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/en/>), the project will provide digitizations, transcriptions, and metadata tagging of the letters, linked to related documents already available online. Visualizations of Ricordi's epistolary network, based on historical address books, will also be developed. Users will be encouraged to engage with the sources independently, within a historically grounded environment that fosters critical reflection through digital transmedia storytelling.

**Hypothesis (25 words):**

Musicologically curated, source-based platforms may prove significantly accessible and engaging for non-academic users, bridging the gap between scholarly publications and generalist content.

**Implication for Practice (50 words):**

Research is often presented to non-academic audiences as a set of results. Instead, our goal is to provide users with the tools to explore musicological sources independently, allowing them to create their own paths through history and take a closer look at how scholarly inquiry unfolds.

**Implication for Research (50 words):**

Inspired by the principles of public musicology, the project experiments with a form of "scalable research": rather than translating pure scientific knowledge into simplified online content, it aims to conceive and articulate research outputs that can address both specialist and non-specialist audiences.