We would like to thank the Institutions and private collectors who have contributed to the realization of the exhibit:

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Archivio storico del Comune, Lucca (ASCLU)
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We would like to thank the Institutions and private collectors who have contributed to the realization of the exhibit:
Exhibit: Puccini e Lucca a Chicago

Tue, Jan 15-Sun, Feb 17, 2013
Upper and Lower Gidwitz Lobby
Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts

Giacomo Puccini and Lucca

This exhibit highlights the untold story of Giacomo Puccini’s strong attachment to his home town of Lucca. The exhibit (in printed panels and rotating digital slides) presents never-before-seen photographs of Puccini and the places where he grew up and was formed into one of the best loved names in opera.

The exhibit supports a hypothesis, which gradually emerged during the research, that the bond between Puccini and his native city had never been broken. In the exhibit there are many testimonials of how Giacomo Puccini continued to be interested in the life, the news, the culture of Lucca, often placing his name and his authority in support of civic institutions. On the part of the city, as a sign of reciprocity, there are many proofs of how the city and its citizens felt and demonstrated legitimate pride in the fact that Lucca gave birth to Giacomo Puccini. This recognition became particularly evident starting with the success of Edgar at the Teatro del Giglio in 1891. During his formative years, critical evaluations greeted the presentation of some of his works, such as the Mottetto per San Paolino and the Mass for 4 voices.

However, in using the old saying “the cats’ sons catch the mice”, the review of the first of the two works just mentioned expressed a local point of view: the young Giacomo was seen following in the glorious and familiar tradition of four generations of dominant composers in the city. The review of the second work urged Giacomo to study the classics and his ancestors, seeming to predict a civic destiny. Instead, with the success of Edgar, even his fellow-citizens finally placed Puccini in a different light. Their pride in having given birth to the composer would produce some very significant claims in subsequent years, even if awkward, such as: “Puccini is the most world-famous of all living musicians.”

Today, Puccini’s operas are performed in theaters all over the world, but it should be remembered that the roots of this widespread diffusion can be traced to the massive and constant promotion conducted by the editor Ricordi, with the active involvement of the composer. It was with the composer’s diligent and loving care that the premieres of his operas were made possible, while the choice of the theaters and of the cities where the operas were to be performed was strategized by the publishing house. Puccini was happy to accept and, in some cases to solicit, the practice of overseeing his operas in the most important performances, both in and outside Italy. His involvement in the preparation and staging was always reported by the press to emphasize the quality and the authenticity of the performance. Thus, Puccini was also a traveler. Even though he often felt homesick, he profited from his travels and took advantage of the opportunity to learn about other places and cultures.

He did not lose the opportunity to attend opera performances and concerts, always motivated by the desire to learn. Among Puccini’s travels are to be noted those in the USA in 1907 and 1910, the first in conjunction with a Puccini festival organized by the Metropolitan Opera of New York, the second on the occasion of the world premiere of La fanciulla del west (December 10, 1910). In 1907 the Met presented Manon Lescaut, Madama Butterfly, Tosca and La bohème, that is, the masterpieces that had established the international fame of the composer. Particular attention was paid to the “First Italian Performance in America” of Madama Butterfly, performed in what today is considered the definitive version. From his 1907 stay in America, there remains the only audio soundtrack of the composer’s voice, recorded in the Columbia studio: “America forever” which was his farewell prior to departure.

Message from the Mayor of Lucca

Puccini e Lucca nel mondo is a project designed by the Giacomo Puccini Foundation in collaboration with the City of Lucca. After the great success of the exhibit, Puccini and Lucca: “When I shall feel the sweet nostalgia of my native land”, realized in 2008 at Palazzo Guinigi for the 150th anniversary of the birth of the composer, we thought it appropriate to bring the message of that initiative, that is, the inseparable union between Giacomo Puccini and his native city, to the rest of the world. Among the goals of Puccini e Lucca nel mondo, there is also the promotion of the City of Lucca and its historical and artistic treasures.

The exhibit’s format, designed and produced by Bonuccelli Adpower, is flexible and amenable to a variety of presentations. The first actual exhibit took place in November 2009 at the Municipal Museum of Nanking with a very gratifying result: the exhibit became part of the permanent collection of the Museum, which immediately put it on tour throughout China. Argentina responded in like manner, where the tour that began on May 26, 2010 at the Colon Theater of Buenos Aires, moved subsequently to La Plata, Mar Del Plata, Tandil and Rosario, and finally concluded at the end of 2010. The exhibit was also well received at other locations: the Museum of Canal Interoceanico of Panama (May, 2010) and the Université der Künste of Berlin (November, 2010). The support and the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made it possible to bring the exhibit to Tirana (National Theater of Opera and Ballet, September, 2010), Belgrade (Italy Palace, November, 2010), Bucharest (Italian Institute of Culture, January, 2011) and Sophia (National Theater of Opera and Ballet, March, 2011).

The tour of the exhibit in the United States of America has been realized thanks to the critical collaboration with the Associazione Lucchesi nel mondo (headquarters and local chapters). It started May 22, 2011 in Boston at the Dante Alighieri Society, and then continued to San Francisco (September 2011, Italian Institute of Culture) and Pittsburgh (March 2012, Pittsburgh Opera).

It was a great honor for us to accept the invitation of the University of Chicago, and we thank them for their hospitality. We hope that also on this occasion the exhibit and its contents will be appreciated, and that the message that the exhibit brings with it, the inseparable union between Giacomo Puccini and his home town, will be spread further. Finally I want to express the pride I feel as the Mayor of the City of Lucca to participate in international initiatives focused on Giacomo Puccini, certainly the most famous son of our city.

Prof. Alessandro Tambellini
Mayor of Lucca
President of the Fondazione Giacomo Puccini