



The New York Public Library Music Division

Guide to the

Cetra-Soria collection

1946-1954

JPB 88-1

Processed by Martha Grutchfield.

Summary

Title: Cetra-Soria collection

Date: 1946-1954

Source: The Cetra-Soria Collection was a gift of Dorle Soria in 1986.

Abstract: The Cetra-Soria Collection documents the growth of the Cetra-Soria label of opera recordings and their distribution.

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Preferred citation: The Cetra-Soria Collection, JPB 88-1, Music Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Martha Grutchfield; machine-readable finding aid created by Robert Kosovsky.

Creator History

The Cetra-Soria record label, founded by Dario Soria, was one of the first companies to issue complete operas on long-playing records and was responsible for the reevaluation of Verdi's works in the second half of the twentieth century.

Dario Soria was one of the prominent recording executive in the early days of the long-playing record. Born on May 21, 1912, he emigrated to the United States in 1939. During World War II he worked for the Office of War Information, becoming a United States citizen in 1945. From 1943 through 1948 he worked for the Columbia Broadcasting System as an assistant director and director of programs. In 1948 he joined the D'Arcy Advertising Agency where he was in charge of programs such as those of Edgar Bergen and Spike Jones.

While stationed in Italy during the war, Soria became interested in the Cetra catalog of recordings. In September 1946 he began to import them to the United States. Among the early issues were arias sung by Ferruccio Tagliavini and Italo Tajo, both of whom later went on to international careers. In 1948

Soria arranged to have the recording pressed in the United States under the Cetra-Soria label. He took advantage of the development of long-playing records, and in March 1949, Cetra-Soria records was one of the first companies to publish complete operas in that format. In addition to this marketing coup, Cetra-Soria issued many early Verdi operas that were virtually unknown at the time. The label's releases were an important factor in the rediscovery and reevaluation of Verdi after the war. In addition to Tagliavini, Cetra-Soria introduced the first recordings in the United States of singers such as Pia Tassinari, Ebe Stignani, Cloe Elmo, Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, Cesare Siepi, Giacinto Prandelli, and numerous others who would gain international renown.

By 1953, Cetra-Soria had the largest catalogue of recorded opera of any company. That year, Soria sold the label to Capitol Records, and went to work for EMI. He founded Angel Records as the American branch of EMI and worked for them for five years. In 1958 he helped Gian-Carlo Menotti organize the first Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, and also began the Soria series for RCA Victor Records. In 1961 he became vice president of the international department of RCA Victor Records. In 1970 he left RCA and became managing director of the Metropolitan Opera Guild. He held that position until 1977. He helped produce the Metropolitan Opera Association's issue of historical recordings.

Dario Soria died of a heart attack on March 28, 1980 while doing research in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. At the time of his death he was a member of the advisory board of the Metropolitan Opera Association and a board member of the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

Custodial History

Gift of Dorle Soria, 1986.

Scope and Content Note

The Cetra-Soria Collection encompasses material regarding the beginnings of its opera recording project, 1947-1953. A major portion is the correspondence between the Raxor Corporation (Dario Soria) in America and Cetra in Italy. This material includes information regarding artists, repertoire, and production, as well as legal and financial matters, such as production costs, royalties, and contracts between Cetra and Soria and other businesses and people involved. The collection also contains articles and full record catalogs for prospective years, annual reports, newsletters, record releases, financial reports, and reviews.

Arrangement: The Cetra-Soria Collection retains its original organization, and is arranged alphabetically by subject/genre. 103 numbered folders comprise the first three boxes, while boxes 4 and 5 each contain a scrapbook.

Container List

Advertising

- f. 1-2 Catalogs
- f. 3 Catalog information
- f. 4 Magazine articles and programs
- f. 5 Miscellaneous flyers
- f. 6 Opera flyers

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- f. 7 Artist and repertoire information

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Scrapbooks

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Contains publicity material and advertisements appearing in magazines and programs.
Includes a handful of letters.
b. 5 Scrapbook 1947-1949
Contains publicity material and advertisements appearing in magazines and programs.