American Photo Studio, Habana, Cuba, praises the fast and quality work of C.G. Röder. Dated Nov. 30, 1928. From “Das Röderhaus” issue 18. Mentioned are postcards and Christmas cards for Cuba. Wonder if any of our readers has such a Christmas card?

Opera presents a combination of auditory and visual thrills, the latter a combination of acting and scenic design. Collecting opera cards is therefore a pleasant way to remember past pleasures and fill the gap until the next opera season is upon you. The collector of opera cards might specialize in opera houses or portraits of singers. I mainly collect two types of opera cards: artist rendered (fantasy) cards or pictures of actual stage settings, with or without singers.

The most desirable opera cards are, undoubtedly, artist rendered art nouveau cards. The firm of Riccioli, Milan published a number of these by various artists. Of those, two sets (of 12 cards each) were designed by Leonardo Mattoccia (1888-1940), painter, graphic artist and illustrator, “Madama Butterfly” (Illus. 1) and “Tosca” (Illus. 2). Highly varnished these color lithographs, present an almost three-dimensional aspect. Together with the outlining of clothing and body parts in black – especially in the “Butterfly” set – these cards are masterpieces of art nouveau. The “Butterfly” cards were first published with undivided backs to coincide with the premiere of the opera and later reprinted with divided backs. A third printing was used by the American theatrical entrepreneur Henry Savage; the verso of these cards advertising the dates, cities, and opera houses in which the opera was to be performed. This set appears to have been printed on inferior stock and without varnish and is somewhat lackluster. According to a surprising recent survey “Carmen” has been relegated to the back burner and Tosca is now one of most performed operas worldwide. But it must have enjoyed a measure of success even in the early 20th century judging from the number of cards dedicated to it. One set, original photographs by (to me) unidentified publisher with the letters PH in black on a white triangle (Ed note: PH was the printing plant in Berlin) issued cards for the German, as well as the French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

American Photo Studio, Habana, Cuba, praises the fast and quality work of C.G. Röder. Dated Nov. 30, 1928. From “Das Röderhaus” issue 18. Mentioned are postcards and Christmas cards for Cuba. Wonder if any of our readers has such a Christmas card?

The postcard craze of the early 20th century coincided with the Wagner cult that flourished during the composer’s later life and persisted after his death. Thus Wagner cards sampling. The most desirable Wagner cards might well be the identical set of color lithographs published by M. Munk, Vienna, and Faulkner, London, by artist Ferdinand Leeke, French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

The most desirable opera cards are, undoubtedly, artist rendered art nouveau cards. The firm of Riccioli, Milan published a number of these by various artists. Of those, two sets (of 12 cards each) were designed by Leonardo Mattoccia (1888-1940), painter, graphic artist and illustrator, “Madama Butterfly” (Illus. 1) and “Tosca” (Illus. 2). Highly varnished these color lithographs, present an almost three-dimensional aspect. Together with the outlining of clothing and body parts in black – especially in the “Butterfly” set – these cards are masterpieces of art nouveau. The “Butterfly” cards were first published with undivided backs to coincide with the premiere of the opera and later reprinted with divided backs. A third printing was used by the American theatrical entrepreneur Henry Savage; the verso of these cards advertising the dates, cities, and opera houses in which the opera was to be performed. This set appears to have been printed on inferior stock and without varnish and is somewhat lackluster. According to a surprising recent survey “Carmen” has been relegated to the back burner and Tosca is now one of most performed operas worldwide. But it must have enjoyed a measure of success even in the early 20th century judging from the number of cards dedicated to it. One set, original photographs by (to me) unidentified publisher with the letters PH in black on a white triangle (Ed note: PH was the printing plant in Berlin) issued cards for the German, as well as the French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

The most desirable opera cards are, undoubtedly, artist rendered art nouveau cards. The firm of Riccioli, Milan published a number of these by various artists. Of those, two sets (of 12 cards each) were designed by Leonardo Mattoccia (1888-1940), painter, graphic artist and illustrator, “Madama Butterfly” (Illus. 1) and “Tosca” (Illus. 2). Highly varnished these color lithographs, present an almost three-dimensional aspect. Together with the outlining of clothing and body parts in black – especially in the “Butterfly” set – these cards are masterpieces of art nouveau. The “Butterfly” cards were first published with undivided backs to coincide with the premiere of the opera and later reprinted with divided backs. A third printing was used by the American theatrical entrepreneur Henry Savage; the verso of these cards advertising the dates, cities, and opera houses in which the opera was to be performed. This set appears to have been printed on inferior stock and without varnish and is somewhat lackluster. According to a surprising recent survey “Carmen” has been relegated to the back burner and Tosca is now one of most performed operas worldwide. But it must have enjoyed a measure of success even in the early 20th century judging from the number of cards dedicated to it. One set, original photographs by (to me) unidentified publisher with the letters PH in black on a white triangle (Ed note: PH was the printing plant in Berlin) issued cards for the German, as well as the French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

According to a surprising recent survey “Carmen” has been relegated to the back burner and Tosca is now one of most performed operas worldwide. But it must have enjoyed a measure of success even in the early 20th century judging from the number of cards dedicated to it. One set, original photographs by (to me) unidentified publisher with the letters PH in black on a white triangle (Ed note: PH was the printing plant in Berlin) issued cards for the German, as well as the French market. The German set contained a line of text but not the French (Illus. 3). Both sets were hand tinted, the German less elaborately than the French. The same publisher did a “Boheme” featuring a singularly unattractive Mimi leaving one to wonder who would want to hold her “ice cold little hand.” Other Tosca cards were issued by Alterocci and “Tosca” (illus. 4) – mailed from Cologne to Winschoten, Holland. Röder name imprinted, no (batch) card number at all. Printed by litho process in 4 colours.

NEW Röder Batch Numbers discovered?

No, not really – but it proves that the Röder employees were working thoroughly. The imprint illustrated below is found in the book “Die graphischen Künste” by Prof. Dr. E. Goldberg, published by “Walter de Gruyter & Co”, Berlin and Leipzig, in 1927. Does “9885/928” stand for book printing job 9885 in (19)26 ?? Haven’t found similar nos in other Röder printed books/publications.
Other artist rendered sets are unsigned cards by Franz Stassern for publisher E.S.D. numbered 8157-1864 (illus. 9 - p.19 color). Each number comprises six cards per opera, making this a 48 card set! Tuck reprinted the identical cards with English titles, numbered 960 and up.

Joseph Hoffman, a Viennese landscape artist and friend of Wagner, produced drawings for the stage settings of "The Ring". They proved to be too detailed and underwent modification through the years. However, they were printed twice by unknown publishers as postcards. Both sets are unsigned; one is numbered, the other has titles in three languages (illus. 11). Sets of all Wagner’s operas 10-12 cards per opera, show the modified Hoffman designs. They were published simultaneously by Schwalb, Berlin and, with English subtitles, by the music publisher Breitkopf und Hartel, London. These cards are based on real photographs of the stage settings with the singers (or understudies) added, sometimes obviously pasted in (illus. 11). As indoor photography was not well developed most of these cards are darkish, although they are of great historical value for the style of the setting as are later cards of Bayreuth productions which show the stage in an expressionistic mode; a place, any place, anywhere.

By the time "Passival" was composed Wagner had at his command an opera house built after his own specifications (Bayreuth) and he could demand that this opera would not be performed elsewhere. Wagner lovers unable to attend, had to console themselves with postcards. But soon concert versions of the opera were produced and an unauthorized version was performed in New York by Henry W. Savage who issued a set of cards, half tone, printed in Berlin (illus. 12). A "silked" rarity is a "Tannhäuser" no publisher, undivided, artist name given as Eugene Klimisch, Tannhäuser’s skirt and vest are added in silk on a very heavily lacquered card (illus. 13 - p.19 color).

French opera cards lead with a surfeit of Carmen. One set even shows the opera performed by puppets. A pretty set, gold framed, comes from the American Post Card Co. of New York, undivided color lithography, series 1570. An undivided, colored halftone "Adriana Lecouvreur" by Cilea brings us to operas which, although greatly appreciated at the beginning of the 20th century, have gone out of the repertoire, even of summer stock. Among them must be counted Thomas’ "Mignon", now only remembered for the aria "Connaiss-tu le pays?..." (Kennst du das Land...?). I have cards from 4 different sets, both German and French. This is understandable, considering the music was composed by a Frenchman, the story based on Goethe’s "Wilhelm Meister." (illus. 14 - p.19 color).

Another opera, now forgotten is Flotow’s "Martha", known for "The Last Rose of Summer", lots of cards around though! Serious opera collectors will certainly want to add recent cards to their collection. Russian opera cards which were almost impossible to find have suddenly surfaced as reprints of cards from the 30’s and 40’s. And who can resist picking up chromes at present day opera festivals which show the stage in an expressionistic mode; a place, any place, anywhere.

Back in TPA #4 George Webber told us a little bit on the life of the founder Carl Gottfried Röder and how his (music note) business prospered over the decades. The information George used was taken from "Deutsche Buchmäher – Deutsche Buchdrucker" by Rudolf Schmidt 1902-08. In TPA #13 not only was I able to add some more (technical) data on Röder works but illustrated the Leipzig parent company as well as Röder factories in London and Paris which both were established in the mid/late 1890’s. The info and images came from a special edition on Leipzig by "Reclams Universum" in 1913. The recent purchase of almost all published issues of Röder’s own promotional publication "Das Röderhaus" from the late 1920’s provided me with a great amount of information on the firm’s history inc. some fine pictures. Most “Das Röderhaus” issues are nice to look at but provide little useful information for research. A detailed article on C.G. Röder history might follow in the near future using the now available sources.

"Das Röderhaus" issue 1 published in January 1927 however, is filled with information on the company history. For example the development and steady growth of the company building which is shown here. From 1873 on C.G. Röder is found at Geitshweg location and the name (and what was left of the building complex after WW2) remained until the late 1950’s. On opposite page you see an aerial view of the impressive Röder printing works dating from late 1920’s.

The matter with Röder’s branches in London and Paris and whether postcards were ever printed (or understudies) added, sometimes obviously pasted in (illus. 11). As indoor photography was not well developed most of these cards are darkish, although they are of great historical value for the style of the poster style for the event. A similar major firm was their local competitor Emil Pinkau & Co. employed 120 workers and was not only specialized in music printing but high quality reproductions, poster and multi-colour printing. So, in the 1920’s Röder had printing facilities at three different locations in Germany.

Has this much to do with Röder postcard printing research found in previous TPA issues? Not really. I just want to give you an idea what stood behind the name C.G. Röder mentioned often in TPA. A really big printing house – let’s better say the remains – was taken over by Pinkau in the late 1920’s. Already mentioned "Mundrad" employed 120 workers in the nearby neighbourhood. Already mentioned E. Pinkau & Co. had 8 large format collotype presses running although they favoured their own developed "litho" process for postcard printing. Not to forget Louis Lauber & Glas & Tucher but, Röder’s direct competitor in Leipzig was Dr. Trenkler & Co. This big printing house – let’s better say the remains – was taken over by Pinkau in the late 1920’s. What fascinates me is that Röder continued to print good quality cards for customers in Germany and worldwide after the ppc boom had faded. Their consecutive batch number system is unique. With the research work of George Webber (TPA #11; reprint updated?) in TPA #20 it is possible to date most not pnc cards. I appreciate the work of Louis Lauber & Glas & Tucher but, Röder’s direct competitor in Leipzig was Dr. Trenkler & Co. This big printing house – let’s better say the remains – was taken over by Pinkau in the late 1920’s. What fascinates me is that Röder continued to print good quality cards for customers in Germany and worldwide after the ppc boom had faded. Their consecutive batch number system is unique.
Röder in Leipzig, Germany.}

**C.G. RÖDER - LEIPZIG**

Röder's postcard printing process sample cards. Röder printed mostly everything, using all modern printing processes (except real photos). Their numerous postcard printing processes (which are described later) were done generally by collotype, with or without line or color engravings. Mostly, they are rare to find today. Some of these cards are available in 3 to 4 variations (with or without border frame, depicted). All cards from the collection of Chris Allgaier, Canada.

---

**Collecting Opera Cards**

Illustrations 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 14 illustrate examples of Röder's postcard printing processes. These processes include, but are not limited to, collotype, line engraving, and color printing. Each process has its unique characteristics and limitations. For instance, collotype printing is known for its soft, rich colors, while line engraving is ideal for sharp, detailed images. Röder's postcard printing processes are highly sought after by collectors around the world, due to their rarity and historical significance.