

PRESS RELEASE

Braidense National Library – Sala Maria Teresa,
21 March – 28 April 2018

“THE MUSIC OF INK”

Calligraphies by Luo Qi and Silvio Ferragina in dialogue with
the Chinese archive collection of the Braidense Library

The exhibition *The Music of Ink* at the Braidense National Library is a journey to discover the ancient and fascinating **art of Chinese calligraphy** and its intimate **connection with music**. The protagonists of this unique experience are two eminent contemporary calligraphers, the Chinese master Luo Qi and the Italian master Silvio Ferragina. Chinese Calligraphy is usually defined “silent but having musical harmony”. Inspired by this musical harmony, these two artists have transformed their calligraphies into astonishing ink scores by means of their rhythmic traces of brush.

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In this exhibition, Luo Qi and Silvio Ferragina present **new series** of calligraphic artworks in the form of long panels that cover the whole gallery of Sala Maria Teresa with an enveloping and captivating melody of signs.

Luo Qi (Hangzhou, 1960) is an internationally renowned artist and the leading figure of the most important Chinese post-modern calligraphy movement. For the exhibition, he created a series entitled *The music of Ink – Silent Melodies*. In this series, he translated some of the most famous Italian songs (e.g. “O sole mio” and “Volare”) and arias of operas (e.g. “Rigoletto” and “La traviata”) into concatenations of calligraphic signs inspired by the oldest Chinese musical notation system. This system dates back to the seventh century and consists of some of the most ancient Chinese characters.

Silvio Ferragina (Milan 1962) is an Italian calligrapher and is actively involved in the calligraphic modernization movement. In his series entitled *Ink – CHING: Musically Divinations*, he took inspiration from the I-Ching, an *ancient* Chinese divination text and the *oldest* of the Chinese Classics. He translated eight of its hexagrams into musical notes in pentagrams. A *hexagram* is a figure composed of six stacked horizontal lines (continuous or broken) obtained by throwing coins. Using a sophisticated mathematical system designed by himself, he transformed the strokes of the characters of each hexagram into musical notations. Thus, he passed from hexagrams to characters and, finally, to real music.

In their “calligraphic ink symphonies”, Luo Qi and Silvio Ferragina

embody the **harmonious encounter between East and West**, dialoguing in a prestigious space, the National Braidense Library, that is "resonant with worldwide culture".

A precious selection of documents and books from the **Chinese archive collection of the Library** will be exhibit together with the calligraphy series. In the showcases, will be shown some important works that testify the interest for China starting with the Gesuits. Among them, there is a rare example of the *Planisphere* developed by the Jesuit **Giulio Aleni** (1582-1649), who received the name "Confucius from the West". This map was commissioned by the Emperor Wan Li and published in 1623, and it is one of the first maps of the Chinese Empire. Another important document stored in the Library is the imperial diploma of the Jesuit astronomer **Johann Adam Schall von Bell** (1591-1666) awarded by the Imperial court for the publication of his new calendar in 1630. Next to these two important documents, will be also exhibited seventeenth-century grammars and manuals for teaching Chinese language to missionaries.

In addition to the Chinese manuscripts, will be shown important works written by **Giuseppe Hager** (1757-1819), an Italian-German theologian and scholar of oriental languages who was appointed as librarian in the Braidense in 1806. These texts prove his strong interest in the Far East. Among them, the most precious are: "Memory on the Eastern Compass" (1809-1810), "Memory on the Arabic figures attributed to the Indians, but invented in a country [China] that is more remote than India" (1813) and "Chinese Inscriptions in Quàng-ceu, the city commonly called 'Canton' by the Europeans "(1816).

The more recent **collection of Edoarda Masi** will juxtapose with these ancient archives. This collection was donated to Braidense Library in 2012 and it has never been shown to the public until today. Edoarda Masi (1927-2011) was one of the most important Italian sinologists of the XX century: she was Professor of Chinese Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and Professor of Italian Language at the University of Foreign Languages in Shanghai; she worked as a librarian in the National Libraries of Florence, Rome and Milan; she wrote several books on China and translated lots of Chinese literary books. Many significant texts from her collection have been selected for the exhibition, like for example the "Dream of the Red Chamber" (*Honglou meng*), one of China's Four Great Classical Novels that she translated in 1964, a copy of *Mao's Little Red Book autographed by Lin Biao* (1907-1971), essays, dictionaries and other important materials for her study and research.

Some rare documents of the **Ricordi Historical Archive** housed in the Braidense Library will be also part of the exhibition. From this noteworthy private music collection, a precious selection of documents relating to "**Turandot**" by Giacomo Puccini will be displayed because of its setting in China. Among them, the visitors will admire Puccini's autograph score, the original figurines designed by Umberto Brunelleschi as requested by Puccini, a copy of the limited edition printed score of the opera with a cover hand-painted by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, and the *Turandot* libretto and magazine published for the world premiere on 25 April 1926. All these documents prove the great work of research and reinterpretation of Chinese culture merged into the opera of the Tuscan Master.

The exhibition is curated by **Adriana Iezzi**, and it owes its origin to an idea of **Silvio Ferragina**. The selection of the Chinese documents and books is curated by Aldo Coletto e Marina Zetti of the **Braidense Library**. The production is by **Tadaam** in collaboration with the Braidense Library.

The exhibition will open at the Sala Maria Teresa of the Braidense Library on **Wednesday, March 21 at 18.30**. Luo Qi and Silvio Ferragina will take part in the opening ceremony and, in that occasion, they will create together a “musicalligraphy performance”.

An animated work on paper by the young artist **Guido Ballatori** (Ascoli Piceno, 1983) will be part of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be also enriched by an **exciting calendar of exhibition-inspired events and collateral activities**. In particular, every week famous international artists and musicians will join in musicalligraphy performances inspired by different Chinese calligraphic styles and musical genres. Among them, the most important are **Sainkho Namtchylak**, a voice full of light, space and time with tonal characteristics that make it unique; **Aisha**, alias Andrea Dulbecco and Luca Gusella, who are two virtuosos of vibraphone and five-octave marimba and also well-rounded percussionists; **Ares Tavalazzi** and **Alessandro Cerrino**, a formidable and unmissable contemporary Jazz duo; and **Giulio Casale** and **Michele Rabbia**, voice and music in which you can find a safe house. The organization of these events is by **Tadaam**.

The exhibition will continue through April 28 at the Sala Maria Teresa of the National Braidense Library. During the *finissage* the famous London-based Chinese artist **Chloe NiLi** (Shanghai, 1989) will create an extraordinary performance of calligraphy and body painting.

Exhibition open: Monday to Friday: 9.30 - 17.30. Saturday: 9:30-13:00. Sunday closed.

Free entry.

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