Tosca
Giacomo Puccini
Welcome to Houston Grand Opera’s 2015 High School Night performance of Tosca by Giacomo Puccini. This quintessential Italian opera, featuring high-voltage emotions caught up in the intrigue of a tragic political love triangle, is a perfect first opera—gorgeous music, powerhouse singing, and intense drama. We will open HGO’s main-stage season with this production, and it will be presented in its entirety for the high school student audience on November 5.

We believe that the performing arts play an essential role in the education process. HGOco is Houston Grand Opera’s unique initiative designed to connect the company to our community; through this series of programming, HGO partners with schools, educators and parents to provide opportunities for students to experience the thrill of the performing arts in Houston. HGOco offers the following tools to enhance the opera-going experience:

**Tosca Study Guide:** This guide provides a more in-depth look at Tosca, and is intended to help prepare students and teachers for the performance they will be attending. (More information and materials can be found online at [www.HGO.org/community-programs/educators](http://www.HGO.org/community-programs/educators)).

**Tosca Docent Program:** HGOco offers in-school presentations for your students, designed to introduce them to the exciting art of opera and give an overview of the performance they will see on their visit to the Wortham Center. These multi-media presentations are hosted by HGO Guild members, whose enthusiasm and love for opera will excite your students about their upcoming visit to HGO. (For more information or to request a docent presentation, please email us at HGOco@hgo.org).

**Professional Development Workshop—Tosca:** Tuesday, October 20, 6 p.m. HGOco’s Professional Development Workshops are designed to help educators and their students connect with opera in exciting ways. Join us for dinner, an in-depth opera preview and discussion. Together we will brainstorm ways to incorporate themes and ideas into your curriculum before you attend a Houston Grand Opera dress rehearsal. May be eligible for TEA continuing education credit. (For more information or to book a ticket for this event, please visit [www.HGO.org/community-programs/hgoco-event/professional-development-workshops-tosca](http://www.HGO.org/community-programs/hgoco-event/professional-development-workshops-tosca)).

**Opera brings together the many forms of artistic expression:** instrumental music, drama, dance, visual arts, and of course the human voice. We hope your experience with Houston Grand Opera will be greatly rewarding and will provide the catalyst for a lifelong appreciation of the art form we celebrate.

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Attending the Opera

Welcome to the Brown Theater at the Wortham Theater Center.

We hope to make your experience at Houston Grand Opera one you will remember for years to come. Here are some tips for your High School Night at the Opera.

A common question is “What should I wear?” While you may imagine opera audiences decked out in ball gowns and tuxes, you will find that people wear all sorts of things to the opera—jeans, dress pants, cocktail dresses, suits. The important thing is to be comfortable and to wear something that makes you feel good. You may want to bring a sweater from home because it can be quite chilly inside the theater.

The performance starts promptly at 7 p.m., and there is no late seating. Please be sure to allow plenty of time for students to get off the bus and into their seats. If you and your students would like to take photos, please do so in the lobby or before the lights go down in the house. Photography and other recording devices are not allowed during the performance. Don’t forget to turn off your cell phones! The sound and light coming from a cell phone can be very distracting to performers and fellow audience members.

You may have heard that Tosca is sung entirely in Italian. Not to worry, because there is a horizontal screen above the stage where supertitles are projected. Supertitles are English translations of what is being sung. HGO was among the first opera companies to adopt this practice, which has revolutionized opera stages around the world and made opera more readily accessible.

You can show your appreciation for a performer by applauding after a well-sung aria. If you’re wondering when to applaud, there is no easy answer. The etiquette depends on the type of music being performed. When in doubt, just applaud when everyone else does. There are certain set arias or songs within almost every piece that audiences recognize, but often, since the music is continuous, there is no real spot for applause. You may even hear fellow audience members shouting “bravo!” for a man, “brava!” for a woman, or “bravi!” for a group of performers after a truly spectacular aria. Feel free to join in!

Opera 101

The word “opera” is an Italian form of the word for “work”—not work as in labor, but work as in a work of art. Today we accept the word “opera” as a reference to a theatrically based musical art form in which the drama is propelled by sung text accompanied by instrumental music.

Opera began in Florence, Italy, in the late 16th century as a way to recreate ancient Greek drama. The first opera, Dafne, was composed by Jacopo Peri in 1597 and like many of the early operas, Dafne retold a classic Greek tragedy. Opera continued to evolve, reflecting the cultural shifts of society. At first, opera was only for the nobility, commissioned and performed for the special events of royal families. It wasn’t long, however, before theater owners in Venice realized that a great deal of money could be earned through this new form of entertainment. Public opera houses soon were built for the growing merchant class to attend. This change in the makeup of the audience brought about changes to the kinds of operas produced. In the 18th century, the most popular and prestigious form of opera was opera seria (serious opera). But soon, opera buffa (lighthearted and comedic opera) grew in popularity. Since then, operas have been written on a wide range of topics: cultural clashes (Madame Butterfly), young love (The Barber of Seville), politics (Nixon in China), and children’s stories (The Little Prince), just to name a few.
Characters and Synopsis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Voice Type</th>
<th>Performed by</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Floria Tosca</td>
<td>Famous singer. A true opera diva</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
<td>Kelly Kaduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario Cavaradossi</td>
<td>A painter. Tosca’s lover and political activist</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>Chad Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron Scarpia</td>
<td>Chief of police. Our opera villain!</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
<td>Weston Hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesare Angelotti</td>
<td>An escaped political prisoner whom Cavaradossi helps</td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Federico De Micheli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacristan</td>
<td>The official in charge of sacred objects at Sant’Andrea della Valle</td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Kyle Albertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoletta</td>
<td>Police agent and spy in Scarpia’s employ</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>David Cangelosi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciarrone</td>
<td>Soldier in Scarpia’s employ</td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Ben Edquist</td>
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Synopsis

June 1800. Italy has long been under the domination of the Hapsburg dynasty. Napoleon Bonaparte, however, has emerged as a threat to the status quo and Rome is in chaos, without a clear ruler. Baron Scarpia, the chief of police, has become the highest authority. Loyal to the king and queen of Naples, Scarpia seeks to eliminate any remaining trace of Napoleon’s attempts to establish a secular Roman Republic.

Act I
The Church of Sant’Andrea della Valle

Cesare Angelotti, a supporter of the Roman republic, has just escaped from the Castel Sant’Angelo where he had been imprisoned by Scarpia. Angelotti’s sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, has hidden a disguise for him in the church, where the painter Mario Cavaradossi is working on a painting of Mary Magdalene with the begrudging help of the Sacristan. Cavaradossi takes as his inspiration both the marchesa, whom he has recently seen at prayer, and his beloved Floria Tosca, a prominent opera singer. Cavaradossi recognizes Angelotti and promises to help him escape, but is surprised by a visit from Tosca. Angelotti hides while Cavaradossi attempts a quick conversation with Tosca. She is instantly suspicious of Cavaradossi’s cautious behavior and jealous of the woman she sees represented in his painting. Cavaradossi assuages her fears and they make plans to spend the evening together. No sooner has Tosca gone than a cannon shot signals that Angelotti’s escape has been discovered. Cavaradossi and Angelotti depart immediately for Cavaradossi’s villa.

Act II
Baron Scarpia’s apartment at the Palazzo Farnese

Scarpia relishes his plan to execute the traitors and seduce Tosca. When Cavaradossi is brought for questioning, the painter denies any knowledge of Angelotti’s location. At Scarpia’s request, Tosca arrives from the victory celebrations. Cavaradossi is then taken into an adjoining room and tortured. His agonized cries force Tosca to divulge Angelotti’s hiding place—the well in the garden of Cavaradossi’s villa. The tortures cease; Tosca and Cavaradossi are briefly reunited before Scarpia orders Spoletta to Angelotti’s hiding place. As Cavaradossi denounces Tosca for her betrayal, news arrives that Napoleon has actually defeated the Austrians at Marengo. Cavaradossi predicts greater and greater victory for the Republicans, and Scarpia orders him taken away for execution. When Tosca pleads for mercy, Scarpia makes his price clear: she can buy Cavaradossi’s life by giving herself to Scarpia. She agrees. Since Scarpia has ordered Cavaradossi’s death, a mock execution must be arranged, and Scarpia seems to give this order to Spoletta. Tosca makes one further request: a warrant of safe passage so that she and Cavaradossi can leave the country. This done, Scarpia advances to embrace her, and she stabs him to death.

Act III
The Roof of the Castel Sant’Angelo

The distant song of a passing young shepherd and church bells signal the approaching dawn. Cavaradossi is brought into the castle yard to prepare for his death and his thoughts turn to Tosca. He is attempting to write a final letter to her when she appears. She shows him the warrant of safe passage, explains the mock execution, and describes how she killed Scarpia. Tosca and Cavaradossi dream of their future happiness together. As the soldiers assemble for the execution, Tosca instructs Cavaradossi to feign his death and remain motionless until she can confirm it is safe to leave. After the soldiers depart, she discovers she has been betrayed: Cavaradossi is dead. Spoletta and his men try to arrest Tosca for the murder of Scarpia, but she is too quick for them. Vowing to confront Scarpia before God, she takes her own life.

The performance will last approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes including two intermissions.
High School Night Cast and Creative Team

Cast
Floria Tosca          Kelly Kaduce
Mario Cavaradossi    Chad Shelton
Baron Scarpia         Weston Hurt
Angelotti            Federico De Michelis
Sacristan             Kyle Albertson
Spoletta              David Cangelosi
Sciarrone             Ben Edquist
Jailer                Said Henry Pressley
A Young Shepherd      Jacquelyn Hickman

Creative Team
Conductor              Bradley Moore
Director               John Caird
Set and Costume Designer Bunny Christie
Lighting Designer      Duane Schuler
Fight Director         Leraldo Anzaldúa
Chorus Master          Richard Bado
Children’s Chorus Director Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, Chorus, and Children’s Chorus

Fast and Fun Facts
The opera Tosca is based on a play titled La Tosca by French playwright Victorien Sardou. The title role was written for the most famous actress of the time, Sarah Bernhardt.

Tosca takes place in Rome over two days in June of 1800. The setting for each act is a very real location that can still be visited in Rome today. In 1992, Plácido Domingo and Catherine Malfitano starred in a live televised broadcast of Tosca that was performed in the Roman locations and at the same times of day that Puccini had written into his score.

Act I: The Church of Sant’Andrea della Valle
Act II: Palazzo Farnese
Act III: Castel Sant’Angelo

There is an often-told anecdote related to the staging of Tosca’s death. In an early production, instead of placing a mattress behind the set to catch the falling soprano, they placed a trampoline. Thus, the audience saw Tosca leap from the roof of the Castel Sant’Angelo, and bounce back up, and fall again, and bounce again.

Tosca premiered in Rome at Teatro Costanzi (now the Teatro dell’Opera di Roma) during a time of political unrest in Italy. Yet, despite a bomb threat and menacing letters sent to the cast and producers, the show went on. One can only imagine everyone’s relief when the opera was well received by the public.
**Historical Context**

The French Revolution brought great social and political change to Europe from 1789 to 1799. In 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte and his French armies invaded Italy, entering Rome in 1798. Former rulers, including the pope, were stripped of their power and a French republic was established. The city of Rome became the Roman republic. This new republic was ruled by seven consuls. In the opera, Cesare Angelotti is a former consul of the Roman republic and Mario Cavaradossi is an advocate for the republic.

In 1799, the French withdrew from Rome and the republic was quickly overthrown by the kingdom of Naples. Much like Angelotti in the opera, leaders of the republic were jailed and anyone who supported French rule and the republic were eliminated. Those loyal to the crown and the monarchy were put into power. In Tosca, this is reflected in Scarpia, the power-hungry chief of police for the monarchy.

In May 1800, Napoleon brought his troops across the Alps and into Italy once again. On June 14, Napoleon and his army met the Austrian forces, led by commander Michael von Melas, at the Battle of Marengo. The Austrians were initially successful and news of their triumph was sent south towards Rome. In Act I of Tosca, this news is reported by the Sacristan, who believes it to be "joyful news." He calls Napoleon a "scoundrel" and revels in his downfall: "He was plucked and quartered and thrown to Beelzebub!" The act ends with a Te Deum (a hymn of praise) to celebrate the apparent victory over Napoleon and the republic.

But the Battle of Marengo was not over. Napoleon sent for help and by late afternoon fresh French troops arrived to attack the exhausted Austrians. Melas retreated and sent a revised message of his defeat. In Act II of the opera, Sciarrone brings news that, in fact, Napoleon won at the Battle of Marengo and Melas has fled. Cavaradossi rejoices at the victory for the republic, singing "Victory! Victory! The avenging dawn now rises to make the wicked tremble! And liberty returns, the scourge of tyrants!" This angers Scarpia further and he orders Cavaradossi to be dragged off to prison. This dramatic event illustrates the divide in Rome between those loyal to the crown and those who hoped for new freedoms under the republic.

**Historical Timeline**

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>January 8</td>
<td>The first soup kitchens open in London.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Alessandro Volta creates the first modern battery by demonstrating that an electrical current is generated when metals and chemicals come into contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 in C major is performed for the first time.</td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>The U.S. Library of Congress is established as the research library of the United States Congress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>King George III survives a second assassination attempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14</td>
<td>The Battle of Marengo was fought.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>Indiana Territory is formed by an Act of Congress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>John Adams becomes the first U.S. president to live in the White House.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>Washington D.C. is established as the capital of the United States.</td>
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Director John Caird on the Power of Tosca

An excerpt from the article ‘Floria Tosca and the Freedom of the Artist’ written in 2010 by John Caird for Opera Cues, HGO’s house program and magazine.

Tosca is one of the greatest works of music theater ever written and its importance is undiminished more than a century after Puccini wrote it. Its narrative is deceptively simple, involving the lives of three principal characters. Cavaradossi is a talented young painter who earns his living creating ecclesiastical art in Roman churches. Floria Tosca, his lover, is a well-known classical singer adored by her public. Baron Scarpia is the chief of police in a military state that is cracking down on all opposition—including the artistic freedom that both sanctions and draws support from it.

The reason for the great popularity of Tosca is enshrined in its overwhelming musical, human, moral, and religious powers. Puccini’s score is utterly masterful. Its tightness of musical conception combined with the intimacy of its subject matter make for extraordinary intensity in orchestral color and sung line—in short, it is a musical masterwork.

The human drama that Puccini and his librettists have adapted from Sardou’s original play constitutes a timeless plea for artistic and political freedom. In a world of fundamentalist philosophies, religious intolerance, and political tyranny, Tosca stands as a beacon of enlightenment, a passionate plea for freedom of speech, thought, and artistic expression. In a country that values its political freedoms, Tosca reminds us of what we have to lose, and the terrible price in human suffering if we cease to value what we truly believe in.

The moral and religious aspects of the story are far harder to pin down. At the beginning of the opera, the painted image that Cavaradossi is working on is that of a Mary Magdalene—a complex woman whose sexuality and experience seem to be in conflict with the teachings of her Master and therefore the teachings of the Church. She is also, at least in part, an image of Tosca herself—and in this production, the Magdalene’s face has been fractured by the effects of war on the structure of the building in which she is to be installed. In this respect the image takes on dramatic irony. Tosca becomes a fractured character in the drama—as does the man who has imagined her as a redeemed Magdalene. The picture will never be completed, just as Tosca’s and Cavaradossi’s lives will never be completed.

Scarpia envies the aspiration contained within the beauty of Cavaradossi’s ecclesiastical art and his envy turns into a collector’s ambition. The palace from which he works is crammed with banned and stolen art. But his ambition goes beyond objects to include people. He has Tosca, too, in his sights. His inability to understand her beauty and artistry makes him want to control it and, if he can’t control it, destroy it. He wants to add her to his collection.

Floria Tosca’s decision not to be controlled by Scarpia, that her integrity as a woman and an artist is more important to her than life itself, leads her and Cavaradossi to their deaths. But even in the hopeless confines of the Castel Sant’Angelo, in spite of everything he has seen, Cavaradossi still manages to believe in a future life of freedom and happiness for himself and his lover. The fact that he believes against all the odds and all the evidence is what makes his belief so moving. The same belief fuels the artistic passion that breathes life into his painted canvas characters.

After Cavaradossi’s execution, Floria Tosca goes willingly to her death. Willingly because she cannot imagine living on after the man she has betrayed but also because in killing Scarpia she knows, or fears, that she has become no better than he. She will meet him again before God. The God of her childhood faith will make the judgment, not they. In that sense she has become the Magdalene, trusting in the very faith from which she has never really drawn a benefit. Perhaps that is the meaning of true faith. And perhaps Puccini’s understanding of it can help us with our own faith in limitless moral powers or artistic freedom.
Passionate Opera: An interview with HGO Dramaturg Paul Hopper

Tosca has been performed countless times all over the world. This season alone, opera lovers can see Tosca at eight different opera companies throughout the United States. What do you think is the reason for its popularity?

There’s something about Tosca that just grabs you by the throat and doesn’t let go until the final curtain falls. I like to call this the “Puccini Effect.” You can feel it in all of his works— in La bohème and Madame Butterfly the heightened emotion is love, but in Tosca the emotions are much more fiery. Tosca deals with jealousy, lust, and revenge so the Puccini Effect is even more palpable.

What do you believe set Puccini apart from his contemporaries?

Puccini found a way of writing the music that people wanted to hear. Critics accused Puccini of recycling music, and complain that all of it sounds the same. While there are similarities in his pieces, I would argue that he actually discovered the quickest route to an audience’s heart, which elicits strong emotional reactions from the audience—they just might not be ready to experience those emotions!

Do you have a favorite aria from Tosca? If so, can you tell us about it and why you enjoy it?

Don’t make me pick just one! Cavaradossi’s Act III aria “E lucevan le stelle” really gets me every time. It’s preceded by a rich, warm cello quartet that’s practically dripping in tragedy. But if I could only take one on a desert island, it would be “Vissi d’arte,” which Tosca sings towards the end of Act II. She sings of how she has devoted her life to singing and worshipping God. She cries to God asking why she is being punished after being so good, but moments later she has a knife in her hands and kills Scarpia.

What must a singer possess to be able to sing the role of Floria Tosca?

Floria Tosca is an incredibly challenging role, both vocally and dramatically. The soprano must be able to handle Tosca’s passionate outbursts on very high notes, but also have the control to finesse her more introspective moments. Dramatically, she must summon the strength to stab the man who gets between her and her lover, only to watch her lover be killed in front of her eyes. It’s no small feat!

How does Tosca relate to modern audiences?

Tosca’s plot is very easy to follow—it’s a love triangle. If you get lost, just find Tosca, Scarpia, or Cavaradossi and you’ll get back on track. Thematically, it deals with very real emotions: jealousy, betrayal, love, and power. This is not an opera about kings and queens or magical powers. It’s about real people and real emotions.
Behind the Music with Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers

This is an excerpt from the article “Songs for the Stars in Heaven,” written by HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers for Opera Cues, HGO’s house program and magazine.

I offered gifts to the Madonna
And sang to the moon and stars,
Which became more beautiful because of it.
—from “Vissi d’arte,” Act II, Tosca

Giacomo Puccini’s searing Tosca holds a unique place in the repertoire, not solely because it is both a perennial favorite of opera fans as well as being a perfect “first” opera. It stretches the boundaries of a type of melodrama audiences love about our art form, so much so that when a 21st-century composer brings me a scenario for a new opera and says his or her idea is particularly “operatic,” I can almost tell without reading it that it will share certain plot points with Tosca: murder (Tosca has two), suicide (also two), torture, doomed love, and other high-calorie events.

Tosca is an easy opera to love, as it has been by the public since its 1900 premiere. It has the most loathsome of villains, yet he’s alluring. It has the most ardent of lovers, plus he’s a freedom fighter willing to die for his beliefs. And above all, it has the magnificent title character, ennobled by her chosen profession (she is a celebrated opera singer, of course!) and by her deep faith. Yes, Tosca contains some questionable dramaturgy: how does a complicated papal procession get spontaneously arranged in about 10 minutes at the end of Act I? How do Scarpia’s minions get to the outskirts of the Roman walls and back to the Farnese Palace, to report on Angelotti’s suicide in such a short time? And executions by firing squad were not carried out at dawn, as we see in Tosca’s third act, nor were they performed atop the Castel Sant’Angelo.

Tosca has become so real to its fans that operatically inclined tourists to Rome regularly visit the beautiful Sant’Andrea della Valle to see the fictional Attavanti Chapel. I once witnessed a set of American tourists absolutely insisting that the first chapel to the right had been mislabeled by the church officials. Visitors also flock to the scene of Tosca’s final act, the Castel Sant’Angelo, the second-century mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian. Its famous Passetto di Borgo figured prominently in the denouement of Dan Brown’s hit novel and subsequent film Angels and Demons.

After its premiere, Tosca quickly became one of the plum roles of the soprano repertoire. The character is a composite of several real women: the soprano Giuseppina Grassini, perhaps more renowned at the time as Napoleon’s mistress than as a singer, as well as sopranos Angelica Catalani and Teresa Bertinotti. Tosca is a religiously pious woman, and Puccini provides her with beautifully devoted entrance music that later returns as the main theme of Tosca’s Act II aria “Vissi d’arte,” the most famous aria in the opera.

Curiously, “Vissi d’arte” has long been the most contentious moment in the opera. Puccini ultimately felt it stopped the action and should be cut, but it proved so popular that removing it became unthinkable. A famous later interpreter of the role, Maria Callas, agreed with Puccini, and often lobbied for its excision. But time is a great dramaturg; it is clear now that the opera needs the aria because it fully explains Tosca’s religious and artistic devotion, establishing her as a woman who stands for the most beautiful and lasting qualities in life.

For me, Tosca will always be indelibly linked to a production I conducted at the Shanghai Opera House—the first Tosca produced in Asia—in 1988, as part of an exchange program between San Francisco Opera and the Shanghai Conservatory and Shanghai Opera. These were still the very lean years in China, just over a decade following the Cultural Revolution. In performances, each of the climactic moments of the work—the passionate intensity of the first duet, the fervor of the Te Deum, Scarpia’s murder, and particularly Tosca’s suicide—was met with audible gasps or even screaming, like in a horror movie. This was an audience that was riveted and thrilled simply by the newness of it all. The Chinese Tosca experience has undeniably affected the way I view the work, and it stands as a reminder of our duties as performers to shape words into phrases, phrases into sentences, sentences into acts, and to make it as fresh for every audience as it was for Puccini in 1900 and the Shanghai public in 1988.

Houston Grand Opera Tosca Study Guide

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Houston Grand Opera Tosca Study Guide

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Listen to Major Arias

Puccini created one of the most beautiful and memorable scores in history when he wrote Tosca. In this study guide alone our experts have referred to his score as “a musical masterwork,” “miraculous,” and the “greatest work of music theater ever written.”

Have your students listen to these arias before coming to the opera to better appreciate the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sung by</th>
<th>In the story</th>
<th>Link to listen</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Va, Tosca!“ (Te Deum)</td>
<td>Baron Scarpia</td>
<td>Scarpia reveals his plan to destroy Cavaradossi and possess Tosca.</td>
<td>Bryn Terfel sings “Va, Tosca!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vissi d’arte“</td>
<td>Floria Tosca</td>
<td>Tosca wonders why her life is filled with such suffering when she has devoted herself to art, love, and God.</td>
<td>Leontyne Price performs “Vissi d’arte”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“E lucevan le stelle“</td>
<td>Mario Cavaradossi</td>
<td>Cavaradossi thinks of his love for Tosca and their time spent together just before he faces execution</td>
<td>Luciano Pavarotti sings “E lucevan le stelle”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vocabulary

ACCOMPANIMENT—The musical background provided for a principal part

ARIA—A musical piece for solo voice focusing on emotional expression

BARITONE—The middle-range male voice

BASS—The lowest male voice

CHORUS—A group of singers who sing and act in a group, never as soloists

COMPOSER—The person who wrote the music

CONDUCTOR—The person who leads the orchestra

DUET—A musical piece for two performers

FINALE—The last musical number of an act or show. It usually involves most of the cast and often repeats musical themes from the show

LIBRETTIST—The person who wrote the words for an opera

LIBRETTO—Literally “little book” of the text or words of an opera

MEZZO-SOPRANO—The middle female voice, usually darker and fuller than a soprano’s

OPERA—A story told through words and music, often accompanied by instruments. Many grand operas have heavy themes and dramatic music.

OVERTURE/PRELUDE—Introductory orchestral music used to set the theme or mood for the story. Historically, the overture was simply used to quiet the audience.

PROPS—Objects placed on the stage and used by the actors; an abbreviation of the word “properties”

QUARTET—A piece written for four performers, or a name for the performers themselves

SCORE—The printed page upon which all the vocal and instrumental music of an opera is written

SET—The scenery used on the stage to show location

SOPRANO—The highest female voice

STAGE DIRECTOR—The person who decides how the singers will move on stage and how they will act while they are singing their parts

TENOR—The highest male voice

TRIO—A name for a group of three performers or a piece written for three instruments or singers
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