

= Tosca =

Tosca ( Italian pronunciation : [ ˈtoska ; ˈtɔska ] ) is an opera in three acts by Giacomo Puccini to an Italian libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa . It premiered at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome on 14 January 1900 . The work , based on Victorien Sardou 's 1887 French @-@ language dramatic play , La Tosca , is a melodramatic piece set in Rome in June 1800 , with the Kingdom of Naples 's control of Rome threatened by Napoleon 's invasion of Italy . It contains depictions of torture , murder and suicide , as well as some of Puccini 's best @-@ known lyrical arias .

Puccini saw Sardou 's play when it was touring Italy in 1889 and , after some vacillation , obtained the rights to turn the work into an opera in 1895 . Turning the wordy French play into a succinct Italian opera took four years , during which the composer repeatedly argued with his librettists and publisher . Tosca premiered at a time of unrest in Rome , and its first performance was delayed for a day for fear of disturbances . Despite indifferent reviews from the critics , the opera was an immediate success with the public .

Musically , Tosca is structured as a through @-@ composed work , with arias , recitative , choruses and other elements musically woven into a seamless whole . Puccini used Wagnerian leitmotifs ( short musical statements ) to identify characters , objects and ideas . While critics have frequently dismissed the opera as a facile melodrama with confusions of plot ? musicologist Joseph Kerman called it a " shabby little shocker " ? the power of its score and the inventiveness of its orchestration have been widely acknowledged . The dramatic force of Tosca and its characters continues to fascinate both performers and audiences , and the work remains one of the most frequently performed operas . Many recordings of the work have been issued , both of studio and live performances .

= = Background = =

The French playwright Victorien Sardou wrote more than 70 plays , almost all of them successful , and none of them performed today . In the early 1880s Sardou began a collaboration with actress Sarah Bernhardt , whom he provided with a series of historical melodramas . His third Bernhardt play , La Tosca , which premiered in Paris on 24 November 1887 , and in which she starred throughout Europe , was an outstanding success , with more than 3 @, @ 000 performances in France alone .

Puccini had seen La Tosca at least twice , in Milan and Turin . On 7 May 1889 he wrote to his publisher , Giulio Ricordi , begging him to get Sardou 's permission for the work to be made into an opera : " I see in this Tosca the opera I need , with no overblown proportions , no elaborate spectacle , nor will it call for the usual excessive amount of music . " Ricordi sent his agent in Paris , Emanuele Muzio , to negotiate with Sardou , who preferred that his play be adapted by a French composer . He complained about the reception La Tosca had received in Italy , particularly in Milan , and also warned that other composers were interested in the piece . Nonetheless , Ricordi reached terms with Sardou , and assigned the librettist Luigi Illica to write a scenario for an adaptation . In 1891 Illica advised Puccini against the project , most likely because he felt the play could not be successfully adapted to a musical form . When Sardou expressed his unease at entrusting his most successful work to a relatively new composer whose music he did not like , Puccini took offence . He withdrew from the agreement , which Ricordi then assigned to Alberto Franchetti .

Illica wrote a libretto for Franchetti who was never at ease with the assignment . There are several versions of how Ricordi got Franchetti to surrender the rights so he could recommission Puccini , who had again become interested . By some accounts , Ricordi convinced Franchetti that the work was too violent to be successfully staged . Franchetti family tradition holds that Franchetti gave the work back as a grand gesture , saying , " He has more talent than I do . " American scholar Deborah Burton contends that Franchetti gave it up simply because he saw little merit in it and could not feel the music in the play . Franchetti surrendered the rights in May 1895 , and in August Puccini signed a contract to resume control of the project .

= = Roles = =

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Historical context = = =

According to the libretto , the action of Tosca occurs in Rome in June 1800 . Sardou , in his play , dates it more precisely ; La Tosca takes place in the afternoon , evening , and early morning of 17 and 18 June 1800 .

Italy had long been divided into a number of small states , with the Pope in Rome ruling the Papal States in central Italy . Following the French Revolution , a French army under Napoleon invaded Italy in 1796 , entering Rome almost unopposed on 11 February 1798 and establishing a republic there . This republic was ruled by seven consuls ; in the opera this is the office formerly held by Angelotti , whose character may be based on the real @-@ life consul Libero Angelucci . In September 1799 the French , who had protected the republic , withdrew from Rome . As they left , troops of the Kingdom of Naples occupied the city .

In May 1800 Napoleon , by then the undisputed leader of France , brought his troops across the Alps to Italy once again . On 14 June his army met the Austrian forces at the Battle of Marengo ( near Alessandria ) . Austrian troops were initially successful ; by mid @-@ morning they were in control of the field of battle . Their commander , Michael von Melas , sent this news south towards Rome . However , fresh French troops arrived in late afternoon , and Napoleon attacked the tired Austrians . As Melas retreated in disarray with the remains of his army , he sent a second courier south with the revised message . The Neapolitans abandoned Rome , and the city spent the next fourteen years under French domination .

= = = Act 1 = = =

Inside the church of Sant 'Andrea della Valle

Cesare Angelotti , former consul of the Roman Republic and now an escaped political prisoner , runs into the church and hides in the Attavanti private chapel ? his sister , the Marchesa Attavanti , has left a key to the chapel hidden at the feet of the statue of the Madonna . The elderly Sacristan enters and begins cleaning . The Sacristan kneels in prayer as the Angelus sounds . The painter Mario Cavaradossi arrives to continue work on his picture of Mary Magdalene . The Sacristan identifies a likeness between the portrait and a blonde @-@ haired woman who has been visiting the church recently ( unknown to him , it is Angelotti 's sister the Marchesa ) . Cavaradossi describes the " hidden harmony " ( " Recondita armonia " ) in the contrast between the blonde beauty of his painting and his dark @-@ haired lover , the singer Floria Tosca . The Sacristan mumbles his disapproval before leaving .

Angelotti emerges and tells Cavaradossi , an old friend who has republican sympathies , that he is being pursued by the Chief of Police , Baron Scarpia . Cavaradossi promises to assist him after nightfall . Tosca 's voice is heard , calling to Cavaradossi . Cavaradossi gives Angelotti his basket of food and Angelotti hurriedly returns to his hiding place . Tosca enters and suspiciously asks Cavaradossi what he has been doing ? she thinks that he has been talking to another woman . Cavaradossi reassures her and Tosca tries to persuade him to take her to his villa that evening : " Non la sospiri , la nostra casetta " ( " Do you not long for our little cottage " ) . She then expresses jealousy over the woman in the painting , whom she recognises as the Marchesa Attavanti . Cavaradossi explains the likeness ; he has merely observed the Marchesa at prayer in the church . He reassures Tosca of his fidelity and asks her what eyes could be more beautiful than her own : " Qual 'occhio al mondo " ( " What eyes in the world " ) . After Tosca has left , Angelotti reappears and discusses with the painter his plan to flee disguised as a woman , using clothes left in the chapel by his sister . Cavaradossi gives Angelotti a key to his villa , suggesting that he hide in a disused well in

the garden .

The sound of a cannon signals that Angelotti 's escape has been discovered . He and Cavaradossi hasten out of the church . The Sacristan re @-@ enters with choristers , celebrating the news that Napoleon has apparently been defeated at Marengo . The celebrations cease abruptly with the entry of Scarpia , his henchman Spoletta and several police agents . They have heard that Angelotti has sought refuge in the church . Scarpia orders a search , and the empty food basket and a fan bearing the Attavanti coat of arms are found in the chapel . Scarpia questions the Sacristan , and his suspicions are aroused further when he learns that Cavaradossi has been in the church ; Scarpia mistrusts the painter , and believes him complicit in Angelotti 's escape . When Tosca arrives looking for her lover , Scarpia artfully arouses her jealous instincts by implying a relationship between the painter and the Marchesa Attavanti . He draws Tosca 's attention to the fan and suggests that someone must have surprised the lovers in the chapel . Tosca falls for his deceit ; enraged , she rushes off to confront Cavaradossi . Scarpia orders Spoletta and his agents to follow her , assuming she will lead them to Cavaradossi and Angelotti . He privately gloats as he reveals his intentions to possess Tosca and execute Cavaradossi . A procession enters the church singing the Te Deum ; exclaiming ' Tosca , you make me forget even God ! ' , Scarpia joins the chorus in the prayer .

= = = Act 2 = = =

Scarpia 's apartment in the Palazzo Farnese , that evening

Scarpia , at supper , sends a note to Tosca asking her to come to his apartment . He has been unable to find Angelotti , but has arrested Cavaradossi . As Cavaradossi is brought in and questioned , the voice of Tosca , singing a celebratory cantata in another room in the Palace , can be heard . Cavaradossi denies knowing anything about Angelotti 's escape . Tosca arrives , just in time to see her lover taken to an antechamber to be tortured . He is able to speak briefly with her , telling her to say nothing . Tosca is told by Scarpia that she can save her lover from indescribable pain if she reveals Angelotti 's hiding place . She resists , but hearing Cavaradossi 's cries of pain , eventually tells Scarpia that Angelotti is in the well in the garden of Cavaradossi 's villa .

Scarpia orders the torture of Cavaradossi to cease and the wounded painter is brought back in . He recovers consciousness and , learning of Tosca 's betrayal , is furious with her . Sciarrone , a police agent , enters with news of Napoleon 's victory at Marengo ; Cavaradossi gloats , telling Scarpia that his rule of terror will soon be at an end , before being dragged away by Scarpia 's men . Scarpia , left with Tosca , proposes a bargain : if she gives herself to him , Cavaradossi will be freed . She is revolted , and repeatedly rejects his advances . Outside she hears the drums that announce an execution ; as Scarpia awaits her decision , she prays to God for help , asking why He has abandoned her : " Vissi d 'arte " ( " I lived for art " ) . Scarpia remains adamant despite her pleas . When Spoletta brings news that Angelotti has killed himself , and that everything is in place for Cavaradossi 's execution , Tosca , in despair , agrees to submit to Scarpia in return for Cavaradossi 's freedom . Scarpia tells his deputy Spoletta to arrange a mock execution , both recalling that it will be " as we did with Count Palmieri " .

Following Spoletta 's departure , Tosca imposes the further condition that Scarpia provide a safe @-@ conduct out of Rome for herself and her lover . While he is signing the document , Tosca quietly takes a knife from the supper table . As Scarpia triumphantly embraces her , she stabs him , crying " this is Tosca 's kiss ! " . As Scarpia falls dead , she declares that she now forgives him . She removes the safe @-@ conduct from his pocket , lights candles in a gesture of piety and places a crucifix on the body before leaving .

= = = Act 3 = = =

The upper parts of the Castel Sant 'Angelo , early the following morning

A shepherd boy sings ( in Romanesco dialect ) " Io de ' sospiri " ( " I give you sighs " ) as church bells sound for matins . Cavaradossi is led in by guards and informed that he has one hour to live . He refuses to see a priest , but asks permission to write a letter to Tosca . He begins to write , but is

soon overwhelmed by memories : " E lucevan le stelle " ( " And the stars shone " ) . Tosca enters and shows him the safe @-@ conduct . She tells him that she has killed Scarpia and that the imminent execution is a sham : Cavaradossi must feign death , but afterwards they can leave Rome together , before Scarpia 's body is discovered . Cavaradossi is amazed at the courage shown by one so gentle and tender : " O dolci mani " ( " Oh sweet hands " ) . The pair ecstatically plan the life they will live away from Rome . Tosca then anxiously instructs Cavaradossi on how to play his part in the mock execution convincingly . She tells him that he will be shot with blanks by the firing squad and instructs him to fall down as if dead . He agrees to act " like Tosca in the theatre " .

Cavaradossi is led away , and Tosca watches with increasing impatience as the execution is prepared . The men fire , Cavaradossi falls , and Tosca exclaims " Ecco un artista ! " ( " What an actor ! " ) . When the soldiers have all left , she hurries towards Cavaradossi , only to find that he is really dead ; Scarpia has betrayed her . Heartbroken , she clasps his lifeless body and weeps . The voices of Spoletta , Sciarrone and soldiers are heard , indicating that Scarpia 's body has been found , and that Tosca is known to have killed him . As Spoletta , Sciarrone and the soldiers rush in , Tosca rises , evades their clutches , and runs to the parapet . Crying " O Scarpia , Avanti a Dio ! " ( " O Scarpia , we meet before God ! " ) , she hurls herself over the edge to her death .

= = Adaptation and writing = =

Sardou 's five @-@ act play La Tosca contains a large amount of dialogue and exposition . While the broad details of the play are present in the opera 's plot , the original work contains many more characters and much detail not present in the opera . In the play the lovers are portrayed as though they were French : the character Floria Tosca is closely modelled on Bernhardt 's personality , while her lover Cavaradossi , of Roman descent , is born in Paris . Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa , the playwright who joined the project to polish the verses , needed not only to cut back the play drastically , but to make the characters ' motivations and actions suitable for Italian opera . Giacosa and Puccini repeatedly clashed over the condensation , with Giacosa feeling that Puccini did not really want to complete the project .

The first draft libretto that Illica produced for Puccini resurfaced in 2000 after being lost for many years . It contains considerable differences from the final libretto , relatively minor in the first two acts but much more appreciable in the third , where the description of the Roman dawn that opens the third act is much longer , and Cavaradossi 's tragic aria , the eventual " E lucevan le stelle " , has different words . The 1896 libretto also offers a different ending , in which Tosca does not die but instead goes mad . In the final scene , she cradles her lover 's head in her lap and hallucinates that she and her Mario are on a gondola , and that she is asking the gondolier for silence . Sardou refused to consider this change , insisting that as in the play , Tosca must throw herself from the parapet to her death . Puccini agreed with Sardou , telling him that the mad scene would have the audiences anticipate the ending and start moving towards the cloakrooms . Puccini pressed his librettists hard , and Giacosa issued a series of melodramatic threats to abandon the work . The two librettists were finally able to give Puccini what they hoped was a final version of the libretto in 1898 .

Little work was done on the score during 1897 , which Puccini devoted mostly to performances of La bohème . The opening page of the autograph Tosca score , containing the motif that would be associated with Scarpia , is dated January 1898 . At Puccini 's request , Giacosa irritably provided new lyrics for the act 1 love duet . In August , Puccini removed several numbers from the opera , according to his biographer , Mary Jane Phillips @-@ Matz , " cut [ ting ] Tosca to the bone , leaving three strong characters trapped in an airless , violent , tightly wound melodrama that had little room for lyricism " . At the end of the year , Puccini wrote that he was " busting his balls " on the opera .

Puccini asked clerical friends for words for the congregation to mutter at the start of the act 1 Te Deum ; when nothing they provided satisfied him , he supplied the words himself . For the Te Deum music , he investigated the melodies to which the hymn was set in Roman churches , and sought to reproduce the cardinal 's procession authentically , even to the uniforms of the Swiss Guards . He adapted the music to the exact pitch of the great bell of St. Peter 's Basilica , and was equally

diligent when writing the music that opens act 3 , in which Rome awakens to the sounds of church bells . He journeyed to Rome and went to the Castel Sant 'Angelo to measure the sound of matins bells there , as they would be heard from its ramparts . Puccini had bells for the Roman dawn cast to order by four different foundries . This apparently did not have its desired effect , as Illica wrote to Ricordi on the day after the premiere , " the great fuss and the large amount of money for the bells have constituted an additional folly , because it passes completely unnoticed " . Nevertheless , the bells provide a source of trouble and expense to opera companies performing Tosca to this day .

In act 2 , when Tosca sings offstage the cantata that celebrates the supposed defeat of Napoleon , Puccini was tempted to follow the text of Sardou 's play and use the music of Giovanni Paisiello , before finally writing his own imitation of Paisello 's style . It was not until 29 September 1899 that Puccini was able to mark the final page of the score as completed . Despite the notation , there was additional work to be done , such as the shepherd boy 's song at the start of act 3 . Puccini , who always sought to put local colour in his works , wanted that song to be in Roman dialect . The composer asked a friend to have a " good romanesco poet " write some words ; eventually the poet and folklorist Luigi " Giggi " Zanazzo wrote the verse which , after slight modification , was placed in the opera .

In October 1899 , Ricordi realized that some of the music for Cavaradossi 's act 3 aria , " O dolci mani " was borrowed from music Puccini had cut from his early opera , Edgar and demanded changes . Puccini defended his music as expressive of what Cavaradossi must be feeling at that point , and offered to come to Milan to play and sing act 3 for the publisher . Ricordi was overwhelmed by the completed act 3 prelude , which he received in early November , and softened his views , though he was still not completely happy with the music for " O dolci mani " . In any event time was too short before the scheduled January 1900 premiere to make any further changes .

= = Reception and performance history = =

= = = Premiere = = =

By December 1899 , Tosca was in rehearsal at the Teatro Costanzi . Because of the Roman setting , Ricordi arranged a Roman premiere for the opera , even though this meant that Arturo Toscanini could not conduct it as Puccini had hoped ? Toscanini was fully engaged at La Scala in Milan . Leopoldo Mugnone was appointed to conduct . The accomplished ( but temperamental ) soprano Hariclea Darclée was selected for the title role ; Eugenio Giraldoni , whose father had originated multiple Verdi roles , became the first Scarpia . The young Enrico Caruso had hoped to create Cavaradossi , but was passed over in favour of the more experienced Emilio De Marchi . The performance was to be directed by Nino Vignuzzi , with stage designs by Adolfo Hohenstein .

At the time of the premiere , Italy had experienced political and social unrest for several years . The start of the Holy Year in December 1899 attracted the religious to the city , but also brought threats from anarchists and other anticlericals . Police received warnings of an anarchist bombing of the theatre , and instructed Mugnone ( who had survived a theatre bombing in Barcelona ) , that in an emergency he was to strike up the royal march . The unrest caused the premiere to be postponed by one day , to 14 January .

By 1900 , the premiere of a Puccini opera was a national event . Many Roman dignitaries attended , as did Queen Margherita , though she arrived late , after the first act . The Prime Minister of Italy , Luigi Pelloux was present , with several members of his cabinet . A number of Puccini 's operatic rivals were there , including Franchetti , Pietro Mascagni , Francesco Cilea and Ildebrando Pizzetti . Shortly after the curtain was raised there was a disturbance in the back of the theatre , caused by latecomers attempting to enter the auditorium , and a shout of " Bring down the curtain ! " , at which Mugnone stopped the orchestra . A few moments later the opera began again , and proceeded without further disruption .

The performance , while not quite the triumph that Puccini had hoped for , was generally successful , with numerous encores . Much of the critical and press reaction was lukewarm , often blaming Illica

's libretto . In response , Illica condemned Puccini for treating his librettists " like stagehands " and reducing the text to a shadow of its original form . Nevertheless , any public doubts about Tosca soon vanished ; the premiere was followed by twenty performances , all given to packed houses .

= = = Subsequent productions = = =

The Milan premiere at La Scala took place under Toscanini on 17 March 1900 . Darclée and Giraldoni reprised their roles ; the prominent tenor Giuseppe Borgatti replaced De Marchi as Cavaradossi . The opera was a great success at La Scala , and played to full houses . Puccini travelled to London for the British premiere at the Royal Opera House , Covent Garden , on 12 July , with Milka Ternina and Fernando De Lucia as the doomed lovers and Antonio Scotti as Scarpia . Puccini wrote that Tosca was " [ a ] complete triumph " , and Ricordi 's London representative quickly signed a contract to take Tosca to New York . The premiere at the Metropolitan Opera ( the " Met " ) was on 4 February 1901 , with De Lucia 's replacement by Giuseppe Cremonini the only change from the London cast . For its French premiere at the Opéra @-@ Comique on 13 October 1903 , the 72 @-@ year @-@ old Sardou took charge of all the action on the stage . Puccini was delighted with the public 's reception of the work in Paris , despite adverse comments from critics . The opera was subsequently premiered at venues throughout Europe , the Americas , Australia and the Far East ; by the outbreak of war in 1914 it had been performed in more than 50 cities worldwide .

Among the prominent early Toscas was Emmy Destinn , who sang the role regularly in a long @-@ standing partnership with the tenor Enrico Caruso . Maria Jeritza , over many years at the Met and in Vienna , brought her own distinctive style to the role , and was said to be Puccini 's ideal Tosca . Jeritza was the first to deliver " Vissi d 'arte " from a prone position , having fallen to the stage while eluding the grasp of Scarpia . This was a great success , and Jeritza sang the aria lying down thereafter . Of her successors , opera enthusiasts tend to consider Maria Callas as the supreme interpreter of the role , largely on the basis of her performances at the Royal Opera House in 1964 , with Tito Gobbi as Scarpia . This production , by Franco Zeffirelli , remained in continuous use at Covent Garden for more than 40 years until replaced in 2006 by a new staging , which premiered with Angela Gheorghiu . Callas had first sung Tosca at age 18 in a performance given in Greek , in Athens on 27 August 1942 . Tosca was also her last on @-@ stage operatic role , in a special charity performance at the Royal Opera House on 7 May 1965 .

Among non @-@ traditional productions , in 1996 at La Scala Luca Ronconi used distorted and fractured scenery to represent the twists of fate reflected in the plot . Jonathan Miller , in a 1986 production for the 49th Maggio Musicale Fiorentino , transferred the action to Nazi @-@ occupied Rome in 1944 , with Scarpia as head of the fascist police . In Philipp Himmelfmann 's production on the Lake Stage at the Bregenz Festival in 2007 the act 1 set , designed by Johannes Leiacker , was dominated by a huge Orwellian " Big Brother " eye . The iris opens and closes to reveal surreal scenes beyond the action . This production updates the story to a modern Mafia scenario , with special effects " worthy of a Bond film " .

In 1992 a television version of the opera was filmed at the locations prescribed by Puccini , at the times of day at which each act takes place . Featuring Catherine Malfitano , Plácido Domingo and Ruggero Raimondi , the performance was broadcast live throughout Europe . Luciano Pavarotti , who sang Cavaradossi from the late 1970s , appeared in a special performance in Rome on 14 January 2000 , to celebrate the opera 's centenary with Domingo as conductor . Pavarotti 's last stage performance was as Cavaradossi at the Met , on 13 March 2004 .

Early Cavaradossis played the part as if the painter believed that he was reprieved , and would survive the " mock " execution . Beniamino Gigli , who performed the role many times in his forty @-@ year operatic career , was one of the first to assume that the painter knows , or strongly suspects , that he will be shot . Gigli wrote in his autobiography : " he is certain that these are their last moments together on earth , and that he is about to die " . Domingo , the dominant Cavaradossi of the 1970s and 1980s , concurred , stating in a 1985 interview that he had long played the part that way . Gobbi , who in his later years often directed the opera , commented , " Unlike Floria ,

Cavaradossi knows that Scarpia never yields , though he pretends to believe in order to delay the pain for Tosca . "

= = = Critical reception = = =

The enduring popularity of Tosca has not been matched by consistent critical enthusiasm . After the premiere , Ippolito Valetta of Nueva antologia wrote , " [ Puccini ] finds in his palette all colours , all shades ; in his hands , the instrumental texture becomes completely supple , the gradations of sonority are innumerable , the blend unfailingly grateful to the ear . " However , one critic described act 2 as overly long and wordy ; another echoed Illica and Giacosa in stating that the rush of action did not permit enough lyricism , to the great detriment of the music . A third called the opera " three hours of noise " .

The critics gave the work a generally kinder reception in London , where The Times called Puccini " a master in the art of poignant expression " , and praised the " wonderful skill and sustained power " of the music . In The Musical Times , Puccini 's score was admired for its sincerity and " strength of utterance . " After the 1903 Paris opening , the composer Paul Dukas thought the work lacked cohesion and style , while Gabriel Fauré was offended by " disconcerting vulgarities " . In the 1950s , the young musicologist Joseph Kerman described Tosca as a " shabby little shocker . " ; in response the conductor Thomas Beecham remarked that anything Kerman says about Puccini " can safely be ignored " . Writing half a century after the premiere , the veteran critic Ernest Newman , while acknowledging the " enormously difficult business of boiling [ Sardou 's ] play down for operatic purposes , " thought that the subtleties of Sardou 's original plot are handled " very lamely " , so that " much of what happens , and why , is unintelligible to the spectator " . Overall , however , Newman delivered a more positive judgement : " [ Puccini 's ] operas are to some extent a mere bundle of tricks , but no one else has performed the same tricks nearly as well " . Opera scholar Julian Budden remarks on Puccini 's " inept handling of the political element " , but still hails the work as " a triumph of pure theatre " . Music critic Charles Osborne ascribes Tosca 's immense popularity with audiences to the taut effectiveness of its melodramatic plot , the opportunities given to its three leading characters to shine vocally and dramatically , and the presence of two great arias in " Vissi d 'arte " and " E lucevan le stelle " . The work remains popular today : according to Operabase , it ranks as fifth in the world with 540 performances given in the five seasons 2009 / 10 to 2013 / 14 .

= = Music = =

= = = General style = = =

By the end of the 19th century the classic form of opera structure , in which arias , duets and other set @-@ piece vocal numbers are interspersed with passages of recitative or dialogue , had been largely abandoned , even in Italy . Operas were " through @-@ composed " , with a continuous stream of music which in some cases eliminated all identifiable set @-@ pieces . In what critic Edward Greenfield calls the " Grand Tune " concept , Puccini retains a limited number of set @-@ pieces , distinguished from their musical surroundings by their memorable melodies . Even in the passages linking these " Grand Tunes " , Puccini maintains a strong degree of lyricism and only rarely resorts to recitative .

Budden describes Tosca as the most Wagnerian of Puccini 's scores , in its use of musical leitmotifs . Unlike Wagner , Puccini does not develop or modify his motifs , nor weave them into the music symphonically , but uses them to refer to characters , objects and ideas , and as reminders within the narrative . The most potent of these motifs is the sequence of three very loud and strident chords which open the opera and which represent the evil character of Scarpia ? or perhaps , Charles Osborne proposes , the violent atmosphere that pervades the entire opera . Budden has suggested that Scarpia 's tyranny , lechery and lust form " the dynamic engine that ignites the drama

" . Other motifs identify Tosca herself , the love of Tosca and Cavaradossi , the fugitive Angelotti , the semi @-@ comical character of the sacristan in act 1 and the theme of torture in act 2 .

== = Act 1 == =

The opera begins without any prelude ; the opening chords of the Scarpia motif lead immediately to the agitated appearance of Angelotti and the enunciation of the " fugitive " motif . The sacristan 's entry , accompanied by his sprightly buffo theme , lifts the mood , as does the generally light @-@ hearted colloquy with Cavaradossi which follows after the latter 's entrance . This leads to the first of the " Grand Tunes " , Cavaradossi 's " Recondita armonia " with its sustained high B flat , accompanied by the sacristan 's grumbling counter @-@ melody . The domination , in that aria , of themes which will be repeated in the love duet make it clear that though the painting may incorporate the Marchesa 's features , Tosca is the ultimate inspiration of his work . Cavaradossi 's dialogue with Angelotti is interrupted by Tosca 's arrival , signalled by her motif which incorporates , in Newman 's words , " the feline , caressing cadence so characteristic of her . " Though Tosca enters violently and suspiciously , the music paints her devotion and serenity . According to Budden , there is no contradiction : Tosca 's jealousy is largely a matter of habit , which her lover does not take too seriously .

After Tosca 's " Non la sospiri " and the subsequent argument inspired by her jealousy , the sensuous character of the love duet " Qual 'occhio " provides what opera writer Burton Fisher describes as " an almost erotic lyricism that has been called pornophony " . The brief scene in which the sacristan returns with the choristers to celebrate Napoleon 's supposed defeat provides almost the last carefree moments in the opera ; after the entrance of Scarpia to his menacing theme , the mood becomes sombre , then steadily darker . As the police chief interrogates the sacristan , the " fugitive " motif recurs three more times , each time more emphatically , signalling Scarpia 's success in his investigation . In Scarpia 's exchanges with Tosca the sound of tolling bells , interwoven with the orchestra , creates an almost religious atmosphere , for which Puccini draws on music from his then unpublished Mass of 1880 . The final scene in the act is a juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane , as Scarpia 's lustful reverie is sung alongside the swelling Te Deum chorus . He joins with the chorus in the final statement " Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur " ( " Everlasting Father , all the earth worships thee " ) , before the act ends with a thunderous restatement of the Scarpia motif .

== = Act 2 == =

Fisher has observed that Puccini 's was a tragic muse ; in the second act of Tosca , according to Newman , he rises to his greatest height as a master of the musical macabre . The act begins quietly , with Scarpia musing on the forthcoming downfall of Angelotti and Cavaradossi , while in the background a gavotte is played in a distant quarter of the Farnese Palace . For this music Puccini adapted a fifteen @-@ year @-@ old student exercise by his late brother , Michele , stating that in this way his brother could live again through him . In the dialogue with Spoletta , the " torture " motif ? an " ideogram of suffering " , according to Budden ? is heard for the first time as a foretaste of what is to come . As Cavaradossi is brought in for interrogation , Tosca 's voice is heard with the offstage chorus singing a cantata , " [ its ] suave strains contrast [ ing ] dramatically with the increasing tension and ever @-@ darkening colour of the stage action " . The cantata is most likely the Cantata a Giove , in the literature referred to as a lost work of Puccini 's from 1897 .

Osborne describes the scenes that follow ? Cavaradossi 's interrogation , his torture , Scarpia 's sadistic tormenting of Tosca ? as Puccini 's musical equivalent of grand guignol to which Cavaradossi 's brief " Vittoria ! Vittoria ! " on the news of Napoleon 's victory gives only partial relief . Scarpia 's aria " Già , mi dicon venal " ( " Yes , they say I am venal " ) is closely followed by Tosca 's " Vissi d 'arte " . A lyrical andante based on Tosca 's act 1 motif , this is perhaps the opera 's best @-@ known aria , yet was regarded by Puccini as a mistake ; he considered eliminating it since it held up the action . Fisher calls it " a Job @-@ like prayer questioning God for punishing a woman



who has lived unselfishly and righteously " . In the act 's finale , Newman likens the orchestral turmoil which follows Tosca 's stabbing of Scarpia to the sudden outburst after the slow movement of Beethoven 's Ninth Symphony . After Tosca 's contemptuous " E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma ! " ( " All Rome trembled before him " ) , sung on a middle C ? monotone ( sometimes spoken ) , the music gradually fades , ending what Newman calls " the most impressively macabre scene in all opera . " The final notes in the act are those of the Scarpia motif , softly , in a minor key .

= = = Act 3 = = =

The third act 's tranquil beginning provides a brief respite from the drama . An introductory 16 @-@ bar theme for the horns will later be sung by Cavaradossi and Tosca in their final duet . The orchestral prelude which follows portrays the Roman dawn ; the pastoral aura is accentuated by the shepherd boy 's song , and the sounds of sheep bells and church bells , the authenticity of the latter validated by Puccini 's early morning visits to Rome . Themes reminiscent of Scarpia , Tosca and Cavaradossi emerge in the music , which changes tone as the drama resumes with Cavaradossi 's entrance , to an orchestral statement of what becomes the melody of his aria " E lucevan le stelle " .

This is a farewell to love and life , " an anguished lament and grief built around the words ' muoio disperato ' ( I die in despair ) " . Puccini insisted on the inclusion of these words , and later stated that admirers of the aria had treble cause to be grateful to him : for composing the music , for having the lyrics written , and " for declining expert advice to throw the result in the waste @-@ paper basket " . The lovers ' final duet " Amaro sol per te " , which concludes with the act 's opening horn music , did not equate with Ricordi 's idea of a transcendental love duet which would be a fitting climax to the opera . Puccini justified his musical treatment by citing Tosca 's preoccupation with teaching Cavaradossi to feign death .

In the execution scene which follows , a theme emerges , the incessant repetition of which reminded Newman of the Transformation Music which separates the two parts of act 1 in Wagner 's Parsifal . In the final bars , as Tosca evades Spoletta and leaps to her death , the theme of " E lucevan le stelle " is played tutta forze ( as loudly as possible ) . This choice of ending has been strongly criticised by analysts , mainly because of its specific association with Cavaradossi rather than Tosca . Joseph Kerman mocked the final music , " Tosca leaps , and the orchestra screams the first thing that comes into its head . " Budden , however , argues that it is entirely logical to end this dark opera on its blackest theme . According to historian and former opera singer Susan Vandiver Nicassio : " The conflict between the verbal and the musical clues gives the end of the opera a twist of controversy that , barring some unexpected discovery among Puccini 's papers , can never truly be resolved . "

= = List of arias and set numbers = =

= = Recordings = =

The first complete Tosca recording was made in 1918 , using the pre @-@ microphone acoustic process . The conductor , Carlo Sabajno , had been the Gramophone Company 's house conductor since 1904 ; he had made recordings of several operas , including Verdi 's La traviata and Rigoletto , before tackling Tosca with a largely unknown cast , featuring the Italian soprano Lya Remondini in the title role . The next year , in 1919 , Sabajno recorded Tosca again , this time with more well @-@ known singers , including Valentina Bartolomasi and Attilio Salvaneschi as Tosca and Cavaradossi . Ten years later , in 1929 , Sabajno returned to the opera for the third time , recording it with the orchestra and chorus of the Teatro alla Scala and with stars Carmen Melis and Apollo Granforte in the roles of Tosca and Scarpia . In 1938 HMV secured the services of the renowned tenor Beniamino Gigli , together with the soprano Maria Caniglia as Tosca and conductor Oliviero De Fabritiis , for a " practically complete " recording that extended over 14 double @-@ sided shellac discs .

In the post @-@ war period , following the invention of long @-@ playing records , Tosca recordings were dominated by Maria Callas . In 1953 , with conductor Victor de Sabata and the La Scala forces , she made the recording for EMI which for decades has been considered the best of all the recorded performances of the opera . She recorded the role again for EMI in stereo in 1964 . A number of Callas 's live stage performances of Tosca were also preserved . The earliest were two performances in Mexico City , in 1950 and 1952 , and the last was in London in 1965 . The first stereo recording of the opera was made in 1957 by RCA Victor . Erich Leinsdorf conducted the Rome Opera House orchestra and chorus with Zinka Milanov as Tosca , Jussi Bjorling as Cavaradossi and Leonard Warren as Scarpia . Herbert von Karajan 's acclaimed performance with the Vienna State Opera was in 1963 , with Leontyne Price , Giuseppe Di Stefano and Giuseppe Taddei in the leading roles .

The 1970s and 1980s saw a proliferation of recordings , many of live performances . Plácido Domingo first recorded Cavaradossi in 1973 , and continued to do so at regular intervals until 1994 . In 1976 he was joined by his son , Plácido Domingo Jr . , who sang the shepherd boy 's song in a British recording with the New Philharmonia Orchestra . More recent commended recordings have included Antonio Pappano 's 2000 Royal Opera House version with Angela Gheorghiu , Roberto Alagna and Ruggero Raimondi . Recordings of Tosca in languages other than Italian are rare but not unknown ; over the years versions in French , German , Spanish , Hungarian and Russian have been issued . An admired English language version was released in 1995 in which David Parry led the Philharmonia Orchestra and a largely British cast . Since the late 1990s numerous video recordings of the opera have been issued on DVD and Blu @-@ ray disc ( BD ) . These include recent productions and remastered versions of historic performances .

= = Editions and amendments = =

The orchestral score of Tosca was published in late 1899 by Casa Ricordi . Despite some dissatisfaction expressed by Ricordi concerning the final act , the score remained relatively unchanged in the 1909 edition . An unamended edition was published by Dover Press in 1991 .

The 1909 score contains a number of minor changes from the autograph score . Some are changes of phrase : Cavaradossi 's reply to the sacristan when he asks if the painter is doing penance is changed from " Pranzai " ( " I have eaten . " ) to " Fame non ho " ( " I am not hungry . " ) , which William Ashbrook states , in his study of Puccini 's operas , accentuates the class distinction between the two . When Tosca comforts Cavaradossi after the torture scene , she now tells him , " Ma il giusto Iddio lo punirà " ( " But a just God will punish him " [ Scarpia ] ) ; formerly she stated , " Ma il sozzo sbirro lo pagherà " ( " But the filthy cop will pay for it . " ) . Other changes are in the music ; when Tosca demands the price for Cavaradossi 's freedom ( " Il prezzo ! " ) , her music is changed to eliminate an octave leap , allowing her more opportunity to express her contempt and loathing of Scarpia in a passage which is now near the middle of the soprano vocal range . A remnant of a " Latin Hymn " sung by Tosca and Cavaradossi in act 3 survived into the first published score and libretto , but is not in later versions . According to Ashbrook , the most surprising change is where , after Tosca discovers the truth about the " mock " execution and exclaims " Finire così ? Finire così ? " ( " To end like this ? To end like this ? " ) , she was to sing a five @-@ bar fragment to the melody of " E lucevan le stelle " . Ashbrook applauds Puccini for deleting the section from a point in the work where delay is almost unendurable as events rush to their conclusion , but points out that the orchestra 's recalling " E lucevan le stelle " in the final notes would seem less incongruous if it was meant to underscore Tosca 's and Cavaradossi 's love for each other , rather than being simply a melody which Tosca never hears .