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TOSCA

Music by

GIACOMO PUCCINI

Words by

LUIGI ILLICA & GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

First Performance

January 14, 1900

At the Teatro Costanzi, Rome, Italy

Runtime

2h25m including one 25m intermission

*Generally, opera singers and orchestra musicians perform without amplification.
What you experience at Calgary Opera is the natural power of human artistry.*

Sound Effects

We will be using digitally sampled sounds for the organ (act 1), church bells (act 1 and 3), cannon shots (act 1), shepherd bells (act 3).

Costumes

Owned by Cincinnati Opera, Detroit Opera, and l'Opéra de Montréal.

Designed by Robert Perdziola.

Support for costumes at Calgary Opera is provided in part by Andrea Brussa.

We acknowledge that we come together to create music and tell stories on land known by the Blackfoot name Moh-kins-tsis, which we also call Calgary. This land is on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Stoney Nakoda (Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations), and the Tsuut'ina First Nations, as well as the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 and 6. We honour this land and all those who share it in a spirit of peace, friendship, and respect.

ARTISTS

<i>Floria Tosca</i>	Maria Natale ‡
<i>Mario Cavaradossi</i>	David Esteban ‡
<i>Baron Scarpia</i>	Boaz Daniel
<i>Cesare Angelotti</i>	Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega ‡ *
<i>Sacristan</i>	Dion Mazerolle
<i>Spoletta</i>	Matthew Bermudez ‡ *
<i>Jailer & Sciarrone</i>	George Theodorakopoulos *
<i>Little Shepherd (14 & 18 Oct)</i>	Lillian Stewart ‡
<i>Little Shepherd (16 & 24 Oct)</i>	Georgia Noel-MacKay ‡

<i>Conductor</i>	Jonathan Brandani
<i>Stage Director</i>	Joshua Borths ‡
<i>Scenic Design</i>	Steven Kemp <i>(for Des Moines Metro Opera)</i>
<i>Costume Design</i>	Robert Perdziola
<i>Chorus Director</i>	Mark Morash
<i>Fight Director</i>	Brianna Johnston
<i>Head Coach & Continuo</i>	Emily Hamper
<i>Répétiteur</i>	Claire Stevens ‡
<i>Offstage Conductor</i>	Ilan Kumaranayake Mendel ‡
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Ken James Stewart ‡
<i>Assistant Stage Managers</i>	Kate Pallesen & Jennifer Yeung
<i>Head Of Props</i>	Autumn Adrian
<i>Head Of Wardrobe</i>	Heather Moore
<i>Head Of Hair & Wigs</i>	Franca Vaccaro
<i>Head Of Makeup</i>	Gail Kennedy
<i>Assistant Technical Director</i>	Dean Baker
<i>Sound Effect Designer</i>	Konrad Pluta
<i>Projected English Captions</i>	<i>provided by Stage Director</i> Joshua Borths
<i>Captions Operator</i>	Nicole Bergen

‡ Calgary Opera Debut

* Member of the McPhee Artist Development Program

UNDERSTUDIES

<i>Baron Scarpia</i>	Dion Mazerolle
<i>Sacristan</i>	George Theodorakopoulos *
<i>Jailer & Sciarrone</i>	Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega *

CALGARY OPERA CHORUS

Sopranos

Aly Carrigan
Naomi Derksen
Anna Draper
Alyssa D'Souza
Noelle Kuntz
Susan Lexa
Hannah Mitchell
Nicole Smithanik
Breanna Temple

Mezzos

Morgan
Magnús Melax
Eswina Ngai
Charlotte
Schmidtke
Ashley
Schneberger
Meaghan Schulz
Olena Simsek
Rosemary Van Dyk
Stephanie Vas
Bethany Wickens

Tenors

Akesh Aheer
Henry Ayeras
Don Edie
Herbert
Mielczarek
Stuart Miller
Oliver Munar
JT Steenkamp
Yannick
Tchouptang
Meyoupo
Alvaro Vazque

Baritones

Mark Armstrong
Adam Arnold
Francisco Barrios
Anjo Escher
Oliver Peplowski
Joshua R Read
Kirk Schmidt
Jeff Smithanik
Tim Vollhoffer
Kurt Ward-Theisp

CANTARÉ CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Aili Argonza-
Oberhoffner
Gioele Brandani
Emilio Cabanillas-Rojas
Julianna Cabanillas-
Rojas
Kaitlyn Chan
Lienke Claassens
Meghan Eros

Beth Fidelack
Rachel Gerling
Katelyn Golinowski
Elise Hallett
Georgia Noel-MacKay
Karl le Van
Emily Pippus
Abigail Prichard-
McDougall

Micah Shiu
Elyse Smith
Lillian Stewart
Sadie Stewart
Sam Stewart
Evelyn Straatman
Audrey Zaluski

CALGARY PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The members of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra are members of The Calgary Musicians Association, Local 547 of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada.

ORCHESTRA CHAIR: Mary Rozsa de Coquet – *A legacy of music excellence*

VIOLIN 1

Diana Cohen
John Lowry
Hojean Yoo
Roberta Yee
Laura Reid
Olga Kotova
Eric Auerbach
Danielle Greene
Genevieve Micheletti
Maria van der Sloot

VIOLIN 2

Lorna Tsai
Elisa Milner
Steven Lubiarz
Erin Burkholder
Min-Kyung Kwon
Katrina Johnson
Sara Far
Eva Muranyi

VIOLA

Marcin Swoboda
Alisa Klebanov
Michael Bursey
Peter Blake
Alexander Beggs
Jeremy Bauman

CELLO

Arnold Choi
Josué Valdepeñas
Robyn Neidhold
Clare Bradford
Daniel Poceta
Thomas Megee

BASS

Patricia Reid
Matthew Heller
Patrick Staples
Sheila Garrett

FLUTE

Gwen Klassen
Emily Phernambucq
Jiajia Li

OBOE

David Sussman
Katrina Kwantes-Oliveira
Aura Pon

CLARINET

Laurie Blanchet
Natalia Peric
Stan Climie

BASSOON

Antoine St-Onge
Michael Hope
Jace Stearn

HORN

Nikollette Labonte
Peter Clark
Maxwell Stein
Andrew Warfield

TRUMPET

Adam Zinatelli
Miranda Cairns
Mark Scholz

TROMBONE

Gonçalo Nova
Kristofer Leslie
Dave Reid

TUBA (CIMBASSO)

Jay Uschold

TIMPANI

Alex Cohen

PERCUSSION

Chris Sies
Malcolm Lim

HARP

Emily Melendes

BANDA

Flute - Emily Phernambucq
Viola - Marcin Swoboda

ORGAN, PIANO

Emily Hamper

KEYBOARD (BELLS, CANNON)

Claire Stevens

*This list is correct at
the time of printing.*

Karen Kamensek conductor
Sydney Baedke soprano
Søren Pedersen baritone
Calgary Philharmonic Chorus
Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra



Arvo Pärt *Fratres*
Ralph Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem*
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6*

Tchaikovsky's Sixth: The Final Symphony

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MEET THE ARTISTS



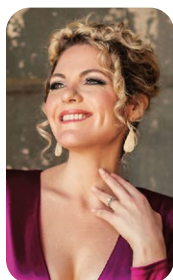
JONATHAN BRANDANI • CONDUCTOR

Jonathan Brandani has been Artistic Director of Calgary Opera since 2021. He has been Associate Conductor of Minnesota Opera (USA) and Principal Guest Conductor of Daegu Opera House (South Korea). In recent seasons he conducted at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf, Palau de les Arts in Valencia, Wexford Festival Opera, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Théâtre Royal de Wallonie-Liège, Bregenzer Festspiele, Donizetti Festival in Bergamo, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, Göteborg Opera, the Danish Royal Opera House Copenhagen, Staatstheater Meiningen, Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera. Upcoming engagements include productions at Opera Omaha and Pacific Opera Victoria. Jonathan is a graduate of the Universität für Musik in Vienna and of Yale University, as well as an alumnus of the Merola Opera Program of San Francisco Opera.



JOSHUA BORTHS • STAGE DIRECTOR ‡

A nationally recognized stage director, writer, and dramaturg. Known for his creative, emotional, and insightful productions, Borths's work has been lauded as "beautiful, even poetic" by Opera Today. Recently, Borths premiered a critically acclaimed production of *Tosca* at Des Moines Metro Opera. Borths's 2026/27 season includes his international debut at Calgary Opera directing *Tosca* alongside productions of *La traviata* (Arizona Opera), *Carmen* (Madison Opera), and *The Magic Flute* (James Madison University). In 2025, Borths directed *The Flying Dutchman* at Des Moines Metro Opera (DMMO), and recent credits include new productions of *Hansel and Gretel* (Opera Montana), *Three Decembers* (Pensacola Opera), *La traviata* (Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera), and *Béatrice et Bénédict* and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* for James Madison University. Borths is currently the Director of Opera Theatre at James Madison University (JMU) and Company Dramaturg at DMMO.



MARIA NATALE • FLORIA TOSCA ‡

Praised by *The New York Times* for her "plummy, penetrating voice," and "unequivocal Italian sound" (New Outpost) Italian-American soprano Maria Natale is establishing herself in the Italian verismo repertoire. In 2025, Ms. Natale made her European debut at the Immling Festival as Manon Lescaut in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. She returned in 2026 as Tosca in Puccini's *Tosca* and as soprano soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Verdi's *Requiem*. Recent engagements include Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Tosca with Opera San José and Opera Cedar Rapids, *Manon Lescaut* with Opera Festival of Chicago, as well as Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly* with Tulsa Opera. Previous highlights include Violetta in *La Traviata* with Opera Maine, praised by *Opera News* for her "powerful soprano that effortlessly filled the house." A recipient of numerous awards and grants, Natale has been recognized by the Gerda Lissner Foundation, James Collier Foundation, and Loren L. Zachary Competition, among others.


DAVID ESTEBAN • MARIO CAVARADOSSI ‡

David Esteban is an Italo-Ecuadorian lyric tenor with a strong international profile, known for his vocal clarity, musical intelligence, and expressive range across the Italian and French repertoire. He is particularly recognized for his interpretations of Don José and Cavaradossi. In the 2026/27 season, Mr. Esteban makes his house debut as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at Teatro Comunale di Bologna and covers Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at The Metropolitan Opera. Recent engagements include Don José in *Carmen* with Gunma Symphony in Japan, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Teatr Wielki Łódź, Macduff in *Macbeth* at Opernfestspiele Heidenheim, Alfredo in *La Traviata* with the Hungarian State Opera Budapest, Peter Grimes with Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landestheater, the Prince in *Rusalka* at Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, and Toronto's Bravissimo – New Year's Concert at Roy Thomson Hall.


BOAZ DANIEL • BARON SCARPIA

Tel Aviv born baritone, Boaz graduated from the Rubin Academy of Music in Tel Aviv in 1996 and completed a second degree at the Vienna Conservatory. Since 1998 he has had close ties to the Vienna State Opera. Boaz regularly appears under renowned conductors in opera houses and concert halls around the world. Following his successful role debut in *Rheingold* with Calgary Opera, he was then also engaged for this role at the Staatstheater Meiningen for its new production of *Rheingold* in 25/26. Among the important engagements of the past seasons are Pizarro in *Fidelio* (Teatro Sao Carlos Lisbon), Orest in *Elektra* (Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música), Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* (Berlin State Opera), Gunther in *Götterdämmerung* (Berlin State Opera), Heerrufer in *Lohengrin* (Covent Garden London), Escamillo in *Carmen* (Tokyo), Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Semperoper Dresden).


GABRIEL SANCHEZ-ORTEGA • CESARE ANGELOTTI ‡*

Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega is a bass in his first year of Calgary Opera's McPhee Artist Development Program. He holds a Performance Diploma in voice from The Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music, studying primarily under Joel Katz. While studying at the GGS, he was the recipient of the Ihnatowycz Emerging Artist Scholarship. In the summer of 2016, he attended the Aspen Music Festival and School and had the privilege of studying under W. Stephen Smith. In the 2026/27 season, he will be performing the role of Cesare Angelotti (*Tosca*), The King (*Cinderella*), Lodovico (*Otello*), and the title role of a double-cast production of *The Pied Piper* with Calgary Opera.

‡ Calgary Opera Debut

* Member of the McPhee Artist Development Program

MEET THE ARTISTS



DION MAZEROLLE • SACRISTAN

Acadian baritone Dion Mazerolle has forged a solid reputation in Canada and Europe as an artist of the highest calibre. A former member of the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, he is acclaimed for his musical finesse and strong stage presence, both in opera and in concert. Dion triumphed in his debut last season as Dr. Bartolo in Calgary Opera's *The Barber of Seville* and sang Alberich in Edmonton Opera's *Siegfried*. European engagements include Golaud in *Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Teatri di Piacenza in Italy, and le Roi de Trèfle in *Prokofiev's L'Amour des trois oranges* with Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy, France. In Canada, Dion sang Zuniga in *Carmen* with Montreal's Festival Classica and Polyphemus in *Acis in Galatea* at Lamèque International Baroque Festival.



MATTHEW BERMUDEZ • SPOLETTA †*

Filipino-Canadian tenor, Matthew Bermudez, is entering his first year as a member of the McPhee Artist Development Program, and will make his Calgary Opera debut as Spoletta in Puccini's *Tosca*. Born and raised in London, Ontario, he holds both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Music from Western University. Matthew has also previously been featured as a finalist at the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio Competition, and Opéra de Montréal's Talent Gala in 2023, having been described as a "lyric tenor [who] has a nice timbre..." (Ludwig van Toronto). In the 2026/27 season, Matthew will play the role of the Dean in Massenet's *Cinderella*, Roderigo and covering Cassio in Verdi's *Otello*, and the Mayor in Seymour Barab's *The Pied Piper*.



GEORGE THEODORAKOPOULOS • JAILER & SCIARRONE *

Described as having a "powerful stage presence and a rich baritone voice" (Opera Canada), George Theodorakopoulos is a Greek-Canadian baritone from Toronto, Ontario. In the 2026/27 season, George is looking forward to his second year in the Calgary Opera McPhee program, where he will be singing Sciarrone, Jailer, and Sacristan (c) in *Tosca*, Prime Minister, Superintendent, and Pandolfe (c) in *Cinderella*, Montano and a Herald in *Otello*, as well as Piper in *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Recent operatic highlights include Marcello (*La Bohème*), Dr. Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), Danilo (*The Merry Widow*), Moralès & Le Dancaïre (*Carmen*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Sacristan (*Tosca*), Pandolfe (*Cendrillon*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*), Officer (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Yakusidé (*Madama Butterfly*), Dr. Pangloss (*Candide*). He holds a BMus in Voice Performance and a MMus in Opera from the University of Toronto.


GEORGIA NOEL-MACKAY • *LITTLE SHEPHERD* ‡

Georgia Noel-Mackay is a Grade 8 student at an arts-centered school. She has extensive performance experience from her five years in Cantaré Children's Choir. Georgia especially cherishes having been part of Calgary Opera's productions of Das Rheingold and Hansel and Gretel. She has gained additional skills through drama/theatre camps. In Georgia's words: "I absolutely love to sing because I feel it just brings everyone closer, especially singing in a group, and being in community. Being in an opera (and a part of something this big) is just such an exciting experience."

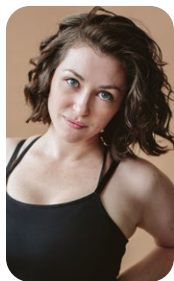

LILLIAN STEWART • *LITTLE SHEPHERD* ‡

Lillian Stewart is a Grade 7 student and performer with seven years in Cantaré Children's Choir. Last season, Lilly was part of Calgary Opera's production of Hansel and Gretel. In her school musical productions, Lilly was chosen to play the title roles of both Finding Nemo and Matilda. She studies piano and competitive dance. Lilly says, "I love singing because it lets me express emotions in another form and I love Opera because it is an amazing opportunity to sing my heart out and to perform in front of an audience."


JASON HAND • *LIGHTING DESIGNER*

Jason Hand is a Lighting Designer from Toronto, Canada. Selected opera credits include productions for the Los Angeles Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Minnesota Opera, Against the Grain, Banff Centre, Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera, and Tapestry Opera. Theatrical designs include Young People's Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, Grand Theatre, Canadian Stage, the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, and the Soulepepper Theatre Company. Immersive experiences such as the Disney Animated Immersive Experience (Singapore, Las Vegas, Montreal, Toronto and 14 more cities across North America), the Original Immersive Van Gogh (Las Vegas, Nashville, New York, and 13 more cities across the US), Jamie Allan's Magic Immersive (Chicago). JasonHandLighting.com Instagram @JH_Lighting

MEET THE ARTISTS



BRIANNA JOHNSTON • FIGHT DIRECTOR

Brianna is thrilled to be joining the Tosca team! Favourite credits include: Fight Director: *Evil Dead*; *The Lion, the Witch...* (ATP); *Dial M for Murder*; *Awoowakii*; *Blithe Spirit* (TC), *Peril in the Alps* (Vertigo), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Betty Mitchell Award), *Richard III* (2023), *The Tempest* (TSC), *Canadian Badlands Passion Play* (Badlands Amp - 2022-26), *All I Want for Christmas* (Lunchbox), *GIANT* (GRT), *A Dinner Party* (Bad Knaps Collective). Fight & Intimacy Director: *Botticelli in the Fire* (Downstage), *Romeo and Juliet* (CYPT/TSC), *The Extractionist*, *...Jekyll and Hyde* (Vertigo), *The Mousetrap* (TC), *The Ministry of Grace* (MT7); Intimacy Director: *Kisapmata* (Lunchbox). Brianna is also an actor and has appeared on many stages across Calgary. Love to Logan for all his support! @bricmae



MARK MORASH • CHORUS DIRECTOR

Mark Morash is a conductor and pianist originally from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and is Calgary Opera's Chorus Director. For Calgary Opera, he most recently conducted *Carmen*. He was Director of Musical Studies for the Opera Center of San Francisco Opera where he conducted for the Merola Opera Program, the Adler Fellow Showcase, and Western Opera Theatre. Other conducting appearances include Hawaii Opera Theatre, Opera Colorado and Opera Santa Barbara. San Francisco Opera Center performances include *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Gianni Schicchi*, Argento's *Postcard From Morocco*, *The Barber of Seville*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Albert Herring*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Pasatieri's *The Seagull*.



EMILY HAMPER • HEAD COACH

Head Coach at Calgary Opera since 2022, Emily Hamper is one of Canada's most highly regarded vocal coaches. Her career as opera coach, assistant conductor, and répétiteur has taken her across Canada, to the USA, and Europe, including the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and the Slovak National Theatre. As a collaborator for voice recitals, she has partnered many of Canada's finest singers for presenters such as the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Opera Company, L'Opéra National de Paris, and the Queensland Music Festival in Australia. She is an alumna of UBC, University of Toronto, the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, and winner of the Best Collaborative Pianist Prize at the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition. In the summer of 2026 Emily returned to NUOVA Vocal Arts in Edmonton as head coach for *Così fan tutte*, and made her Yukon debut with performances in Whitehorse and Dawson City.


CLAIRE STEVENS • REPETITEUR ‡

British-Canadian pianist Claire Stevens is noted for the quality of her collaborations, which range widely from chamber music with members of Calgary Philharmonic and faculty at University of Calgary and Mount Royal Conservatory, to performing with Red Deer and Calgary Civic Symphony Orchestras. Following studies at Royal Northern College of Music, she became Principal Keyboard Player for Kantanti Ensemble (a chamber orchestra of young professional musicians based in southern England). Claire partnered with CBC's Julie Nesrallah in fundraising recitals for Honens International Piano Competition and has frequently appeared in ProArts concert series. She is also an experienced vocal coach, recently leading a voice & piano collaboration course at the University of Calgary. Claire is delighted to live near the mountains where she first fell in love with Canada!


ILAN KUMARANAYAKE MENDEL • OFFSTAGE CONDUCTOR ‡

In the 2026/27 season, Ilan Kumaranayake Mendel joins the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra as their Resident Conductor. He has previously served as the inaugural Assistant Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Artistic Director of the Bloor-Annex Brass Ensemble, and the Managing Artistic Director of the Toronto Chamber Symphony. In summer of 2026 Ilan served as an Assistant Conductor for the Brott Music Festival, and has previously participated in the Young Conductors Residency at the Jack Long National Honour Band. Active as a trombonist, Ilan has performed with the Hamilton Philharmonic and the Windsor Symphony. He holds an Artist Diploma from The Glenn Gould School and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto.


KEN JAMES STEWART • STAGE MANAGER ‡

Ken is thrilled to make his Calgary Opera debut as stage manager for *Tosca*. With 20 years as a performer and stage manager, he's excited to dive deeper into opera. Selected stage management credits include *Kohkom's Babushka* (Punctuate!/Banff Centre); *Hansel & Gretel*, *The Nutcracker*, *Botero*, *Giselle* (Alberta Ballet); *All the Little Animals I Have Eaten*, *Lo (or Dear Mr. Wells)* (Nightwood Theatre). Selected assistant stage management credits include *The Tao of the World*, *As You Like It*, *Salesman in China*, *Frankenstein Revived*, *1939* (Stratford); *Casey and Diana* (ATP/Citadel); *Legally Blonde*, *A Christmas Carol* (Citadel Theatre). He has also spent eight seasons with the Shaw Festival. In his free time, Ken turns butter, sugar, and magic into the best butter tarts you'll ever eat. Find him at @KennyJ and @ThatButterTartGuy.

MEET THE ARTISTS



KATE PALLESEN • ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Kate is thrilled to be back with Calgary Opera for *Tosca* and again for *Cinderella* later this season! Select credits include: *Hansel & Gretel*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Don Pasquale*, *Don Giovanni*, *Das Rheingold*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Macbeth*, *La traviata*, *La bohème*, *The Witty Squirrel*, *Béatrice et Bénédict*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Calgary Opera), *THE END*, *Ghost Opera* (Old Trout Puppet Workshop), *Legally Blonde* (Theatre Calgary), *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon*, *The Jungle Book* (Alberta Theatre Projects), *A Killing Snow*, *The Thin Man*, *The Drowning Girls* (Vertigo Theatre), *Pochsy IV* (Keep Frozen), *STRUCK* (Ghost River Theatre), *bliss: the birthday party play* (Verb Theatre). Kate would like to thank her family and husband Derek for all their support.



JENNIFER YEUNG • ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Jennifer is thrilled to return to Calgary Opera for *Tosca*. For Calgary Opera: *The Barber of Seville*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Don Pasquale*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Norma*, *Everest*, *Amahl & the Night Visitors*. Elsewhere: *Murder On the Links* (Vertigo); *Static* (Chromatic Theatre co.pro Inside Out Theatre); *Naughty But Nice 8 & 9* (Forte); *Come From Away*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Selma Burke*, *Jimmy Buffet's Escape to Margaritaville*, *Steel Magnolias* (Theatre Calgary); *Kisapmata* (Lunchbox Co.pro Chromatic Theatre); *Undressed* (ATP). In her free time, you will see her spending time at local events, hanging out with chickadees, or playing video games. She is grateful for her parents, her fur baby Max, and her partner Lowell, for their immense love and continued support.



Toward the end of the Romantic era, a new style of dramatic language appeared among opera composers: *verismo*, meaning “realism” from the Italian word “vero,” meaning “true.” Verismo focused on the gritty underbelly of human action—obsession, corruption, and violence—in a new musical context that shed many formal operatic conventions of the preceding centuries. Arias were shorter, recitatives (patter-like sung dialogue) were replaced by impassioned, soaring phrases conveying ardent emotion, and the overlapping of lived experiences was conveyed by regular offstage singing and naturalistic effects like church bells ringing. Verismo allowed tragic stories to be told in as realistic a way as opera might allow.

Tosca has strong links to the musical style of verismo. Musically, composer Giacomo Puccini places destructive human behaviour and its consequences front and center: the opera begins not with *Tosca*’s musical theme, but with that of Baron Scarpia, Rome’s sadistic chief of police. The first thundering chords that open the opera reappear as Scarpia enters the church, and in the tremendous Act I finale, which juxtaposes Scarpia’s lustful madness with the chorus’s calls of adulation to God—one of the most chilling moments of the opera. Scarpia’s music also appears in other guises, similar to film composers who use a particular idea to musically connect one character’s actions to another’s, suggesting his influence seeps beyond even his physical presence.

Verismo was also a response to the ideals of Romanticism and captured a growing interest in the very real world around the listener. The character development of *Tosca* mirrors this trajectory: in her confrontation with Scarpia in Act II, she finally sees through Scarpia’s facade of civility—and beyond her own innocent personal concerns—and realizes to her horror that her beloved is being tortured in a political interrogation room nearby.

Tosca also differs in important ways from the verismo tradition. The principal characters are not from the working class, like other verismo operas, and the opera is also not confined to the interpersonal tension between individuals, but is set against a backdrop of historical events with political repercussions that ripple across the Italian peninsula. Both these characteristics help Puccini raise the private events of *Tosca* and Cavaradossi to a more universal level, where the characters’ aspirations to happiness are crushed by politics and higher-level events beyond anyone’s control.

Ultimately, the pathos of *Tosca*’s final moments rings out like any great Shakespearian tragedy, demonstrating the devastating consequences of a society where power is misused and leaders believe they may simply take what they want. Puccini as well as the librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa amplify not the victimhood of *Tosca*—as some historians may mistakenly argue—but her determination to resist it. They call for us to awaken to the moral decay in *Tosca*’s Rome and challenge us to prevent these circumstances in our own world.

STORY HIGHS (AND LOWS)

ACT I

Rome, June 17, 1800. The Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle.

Rome is gripped by political unrest. Revolutionary Cesare Angelotti has escaped from the notorious Castel Sant'Angelo prison and seeks refuge in a nearby church. There, the painter Mario Cavaradossi is at work on a portrait while quietly supporting the revolutionary cause. When Angelotti appears, Cavaradossi promises to help him escape. Their plans are interrupted by the arrival of Cavaradossi's lover, the celebrated singer Floria Tosca. Passionate and fiercely devoted, Tosca quickly becomes suspicious after hearing voices behind locked doors. Her jealousy deepens when she notices that the woman in Cavaradossi's painting bears little resemblance to her. Though Cavaradossi reassures Tosca of his love, doubt lingers as she departs. Once alone again, Cavaradossi and Angelotti prepare their escape. Angelotti reveals that his sister has hidden a disguise for him inside the church, and Cavaradossi offers a hiding place at his villa outside the city. Their plans are soon threatened by the arrival of Baron Scarpia, Rome's ruthless chief of police. Cunning and power-hungry, Scarpia suspects Cavaradossi has aided Angelotti's escape. Discovering a fan belonging to Angelotti's sister, he manipulates Tosca's jealousy, implying that Cavaradossi has been unfaithful. Furious and heartbroken, Tosca rushes off to confront her lover while Scarpia orders his men to follow her. As celebrations erupt across Rome following false reports of Napoleon's defeat, Scarpia revels in the chaos he has unleashed. Determined to possess Tosca and destroy Cavaradossi, he sets his plans into motion.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Later that evening, the Palazzo Farnese.

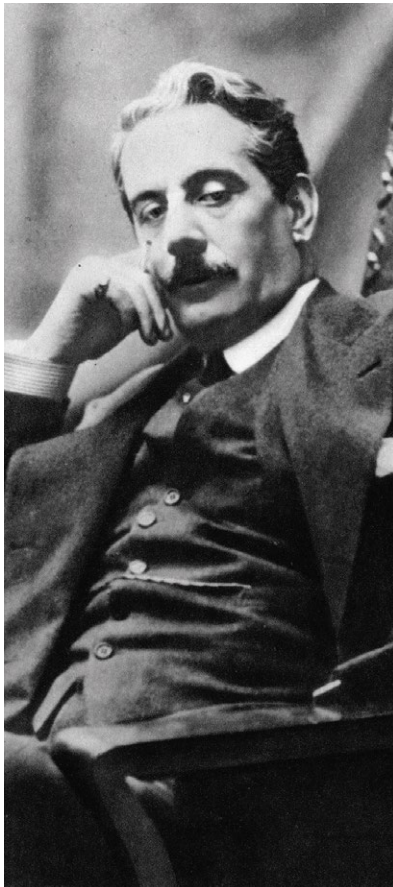
Scarpia waits in his chambers while a lavish celebration unfolds elsewhere in the palace. Spoletta, his loyal agent, arrives with troubling news: Angelotti has escaped capture, but Cavaradossi has been arrested. Tosca is summoned to Scarpia's apartments just as Cavaradossi is dragged away for interrogation. As his cries echo from the torture chamber, Tosca becomes increasingly desperate. Scarpia offers her a terrible bargain: reveal Angelotti's hiding place and spare Cavaradossi further suffering. Unable to endure his torture, Tosca finally gives in and reveals Angelotti's location. When Cavaradossi is brought back, bloodied but defiant, he is devastated by Tosca's betrayal. In the midst of the confrontation, news suddenly arrives that Napoleon has in fact won a major victory at Marengo. Overjoyed, Cavaradossi openly celebrates the triumph of the revolution before being sentenced to death. Left alone with Tosca, Scarpia reveals his true intentions. He promises to spare Cavaradossi—but only if Tosca submits to him. Horrified and trapped, Tosca resists as long as she can before ultimately taking matters into her own hands.

ACT III

The following morning, the Castel Sant'Angelo.

Awaiting execution, Cavaradossi prepares to say goodbye to life and to Tosca. But Tosca arrives with astonishing news: she has secured papers for their escape, and Scarpia has arranged a mock execution. Once the soldiers fire their rifles, Cavaradossi must simply pretend to die. Afterward, the lovers will flee Rome together. Hopeful for the first time, the two dream of the future that awaits them beyond the city walls. The firing squad assembles. Shots ring out. Cavaradossi falls to the ground exactly as Tosca instructed him to do. Certain the danger has passed, she rushes to him—only to discover the devastating truth.

Giacomo Puccini, c. 1900.



<https://cdn.britannica.com/52/127652-050-BB7DBF27/Giacomo-Puccini-1900.jpg>

1906 Tosca Poster by
Adolfo Hohenstein.



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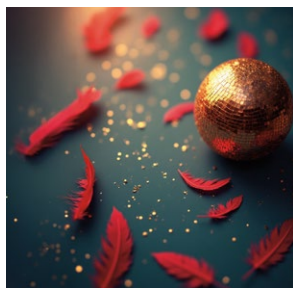


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