For over 130 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is — reaching over 25,000 students and teachers — some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President, Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area
Dear Teachers~

We are so pleased to be able to partner with Nashville Opera to bring students to the invited dress rehearsal of Turandot.

We thank Nashville Opera for the use of their extensive study guide for adults. It will help you prepare your students for the performance with a synopsis, opera background, and musical information. Additional information and short explorations are included in this booklet for you to share with students.

Please look particularly at the opera rehearsal information, which will help students understand the special factors present in an invited dress rehearsal.

Enjoy!

TPAC Education

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Turandot is set in the ancient Chinese imperial palace of Peking. In modern times, that would be the Forbidden City in Beijing (partly pictured above.)

In 1949, the People’s Republic of China adapted a new translation system that altered the English spelling of Chinese names to more accurately mimic Chinese pronunciation. Thus Peking became Beijing.

Turandot was banned in China for most of the 20th century for perceived depictions of the Chinese people as barbarous. After long years of advocacy by members of the musical community, in 1998 a spectacular production was staged at the Forbidden City, under the baton of maestro conductor Zubin Mehta and featuring an epic Ming Dynasty setting dreamed up by filmmaker Zhang Yimou. Turandot has now become one of the most popular operas in China. In 2005 Hao Weiya, a Chinese composer trained in Italy, created a third version of the ending that was finished after Puccini died, employing more themes based on Chinese music.
Most final dress rehearsals are almost exactly like a performance. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. Like theatre, an opera dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

The Nashville Opera’s rehearsal schedule begins with two weeks at the opera rehearsal space in the new Noah Liff Opera Center. Stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director’s ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. The time period may seem short for such a large production. It only works because opera singers begin rehearsals knowing every bit of their music by heart and having rehearsed it themselves over a period of months, sometimes years. If they do not know the role on the first day, the director has the right to replace them immediately. The opera company will fly in a new singer to take over their part. Once opera singers learn a particular role, they keep it in their repertory and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

Four to five days before the first performance, the set is “loaded in” to the theater, and the lights are hung and focused. Students will notice a table in the middle of the orchestra level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers. This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew onstage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth. During the final dress rehearsal, students may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

Opera rehearsals use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the company moves into the theater, the performers will have a Sitzprobe rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The Sitzprobe is a “sing-thru” with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers put together the work that they have been doing in separate orchestra rehearsals and staging rehearsals.

A piano tech rehearsal is held without costumes to let the singers get used to the set and give the set crew their first chance to practice scene changes. The next rehearsal is a piano dress rehearsal that adds costumes. Finally, the orchestra dress rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, the orchestra, and the supertitles (the English translations of the lyrics, called the libretto.) The supertitles will be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

The final dress rehearsal allows the last polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the final important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, a singer may choose to “mark” on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve their voices for all the performances. “Marking” does not have the same meaning in opera as it does in theatre. In theatre, it means just going through the blocking and the words of the lines. In opera, it specifically means that the singer may choose not to sing at full volume, not pushing their voice to the utmost. All of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, however, with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. You will be their first audience; they are ready and excited to give you the story and the music.
Step 1~Know the story!

In opera, it is important to know as much as possible about what is going on beforehand, including the ending. By all means, read the synopsis and libretto; listen to a recording! Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be better able to fit all the elements seamlessly together into the plot. The plot then becomes the springboard for the real power of opera, the music.

Step 2~Experience the music!

Composers use many tools to communicate with music. They create melodies that evoke a variety of emotions. They use tempos (how slow or fast) and dynamics (how loud or soft) and rhythms (the frequency and pattern of beat). They choose particular instruments to add color to the music they have written. Think of instrument choice as a type of painting for your ears! The term “soundscape” is often used in describing the music of an opera, and it can set the atmosphere and give information about character and plot. What is it telling you?

Step 3~Understand the singers!

Opera singers are vocal athletes. They practice every day to exercise their vocal chords and their extensive breath control. The combinations of notes that they have to sing are very difficult, and the things that they can do with their voices are extreme. You can easily compare a regular singing voice and an opera singing voice to a weekend jogger and a gold-medal-winning Olympic track champion! BUT, the reason that their voices are prized is that they can express so much emotion on a grand scale.

Step 4~Plunge in!

This is the most important step. Everything about opera is over-the-top, on the edge, enormous in every way. It’s an art form that thrives on its intensity and passion. Opera stories portray people at their most extreme, and the singers and the music communicate in ways that words alone cannot. You have to let go, allow yourself to stop thinking and analyzing and simply FEEL THE EMOTION!

(with acknowledgements to Opera 101 by Fred Plotkin for idea organization above)
Tests in Turandot

The plot for Turandot comes from many sources, one of which is The Thousand and One Days, the companion collection of stories from Persia (modern-day Iran) to Tales of One Thousand and One Nights (often called Arabian Nights.) The story of Calàf and Turandot belongs with the many tales from around the world with plot versions that include tests for a suitor. It is a familiar device, that extends to bride tests, tests of character, cleverness, and authenticity. Many stories use questions, but many set out tasks that must be completed by the protagonist to prove worthiness. Often there is an element of unfairness in the questions or the tasks, or an outsize punishment for failing.

**ASK STUDENTS:**
- What kind of modern-day questions are most like the “test” questions in some folktales?
- What kind of questions might you devise today for a “suitor” to answer to prove his or her worth?
- The questions in the 1857 version of The Thousand and One Days are different than the ones Puccini chose for his opera. Can you answer them? See below; you must think metaphorically. Answers can be found at Project Gutenberg, where the book is recorded in its entirety.

**The Questions**
1. Tell me what creature is that which belongs to every land, is a friend to the whole world, and will not brook an equal?
2. What is that mother, who, after having brought her children into the world, devours them when they are grown up?
3. What tree is that whose leaves are white on one side and black on the other?

Breathe like Singers

The power of opera singer’s breath control is formidable. They must be able to sing very complicated musical passages, to sustain long notes, and to project their voices without microphones. They work all the time on their abdominal muscles, particularly the diaphragm muscle which runs along the bottom of the ribcage.

- Pay attention to your breathing. What part of your body is moving? Place your hands on your stomach just below your ribcage and try to push them out slightly as you breathe in.
- Keep your hands in place, take a breath in, and say “ha!” You should feel your diaphragm jump.
- Try to fill your lungs with the biggest breath you can, and let it out as slowly as you can with a hissing sound.
- Try it again and while you are hissing have a partner count how long you can make the hissing sound or (harder) how long you can make the sound “ahhn.” If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscle and be able to make sound for longer periods of time, as opera singers can.

Every once in a while during the performance, try to pay attention to which passages seem to require the most breath control.
presents

TURANDOT

Music by Giacomo Puccini • Libretto by Adami and Simoni based on Gozzi’s fable
First performance April 25, 1926, at la Scala, Milan

Thursday, October 8, 2015, 7 p.m. • Saturday, October 10, 2015, 8 p.m.
Andrew Jackson Hall, Tennessee Performing Arts Center

Directed by John Hoomes
Conducted by Joseph Mechavich*

Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

CAST & CHARACTERS

Princess Turandot         Othalie Graham, soprano    The Bovender Principal Artist
Prince Calàf             Jonathan Burton, tenor*
Liù                       Danielle Pastin, soprano
Timur                     Benjamin LeClair, bass*
Ping                      Wes Mason, baritone*
Pang                      Jonathan Blalock, tenor*
Pong                      Ian McEuen, tenor*
The Mandarin             Jeffrey Williams, baritone
Emperor Altoum           Ted D. Wylie, tenor

* Nashville Opera debut

TICKETS

Nashville Opera, 615.832.5242, nashvilleopera.org
Available at all Ticketmaster outlets or at 615.255.ARTS

MORE INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit nashvilleopera.org.

Study Guide Contributors
Anna Young, Education Director
Cara Schneider, Art Director
ACT I

In a public square, a Mandarin reads the official law to the people: Any prince who seeks to marry Princess Turandot must answer three riddles. If he fails, he will be put to death. Her latest suitor is to be executed when the moon rises.

The bloodthirsty citizens riot and, in the tumult, a slave girl, Liù, calls out for help when her aged master is thrown to the ground. A handsome young man, Prince Calàf, recognizes the old man as his long-lost father, Timur. When the old man tells his son that only Liù’s kindness has kept him alive in his exile, the youth asks her why. She replies it is because once, long ago, Calàf smiled at her.

The enraged mob again cries for blood, and the executioner sharpens his death sword. The doomed Prince of Persia is led by on the way to his death. The onlookers beg Turandot to spare him.

Turandot appears and, with a curt gesture, bids the execution continue. The funeral procession heads off, and soon the Prince’s death cry is heard in the distance.

Calàf, enraptured by his glimpse of Turandot’s beauty, declares that he will win her as his bride. As he attempts to strike the gong that proclaims the arrival of each new suitor, Turandot’s ministers Ping, Pang, and Pong suddenly appear and stop him. Despite their warnings and the tearful pleas of Liù and his father, Calàf strikes the gong and calls out Turandot’s name, sealing his fate. He accepts the challenge of the riddles.

ACT II, scene 1

In their quarters, Ping, Pang, and Pong lament Turandot’s bloody reign. They pray that maybe this time love will conquer her icy heart so peace can return to China. As the population gathers to hear Turandot question the new challenger, the ministers take their places at the trial.

ACT II, scene 2

The aged Emperor Altoum, seated on a high throne in the Imperial Palace, begs Calàf to give up his quest. Calàf refuses. Turandot enters and tells the story of her ancestor Princess Lo-u-Ling, who was brutalized and slain by soldiers. In revenge, Turandot has turned against all men, declaring that none shall possess her.

She poses her first question: “What is born each night and dies each dawn?”

“Hope,” Calàf answers correctly.

Annoyed, Turandot continues: “What flickers red and warm like a flame, yet is not fire?”

“Blood,” replies Calàf after a moment.

Shaken, Turandot delivers her third riddle: “What is like ice but burns?”

A tense silence prevails until Calàf triumphantly cries “Turandot!” The crowd roars out in celebration. The reign of Turandot is over.

Turandot begs her father not to abandon her to this brutal stranger, but the Emperor replies that his oath is sacred. Calàf then generously offers Turandot his own riddle: “Tell me my name before dawn, and I will surrender my life.” Turandot accepts the challenge.

ACT III, scene 1

In a palace garden, Calàf hears the people lamenting in the distance: “No one in Peking shall sleep until Turandot learns the stranger’s name.” The prince muses on his impending victory in the famous aria “Nessun dorma” (No one is sleeping).

Ping, Pang, and Pong try unsuccessfully to bribe Calàf to withdraw. The fearful mob threatens Calàf to reveal his name. Suddenly, soldiers drag in Liù and Timur. Horrified, Calàf tries to convince the mob that neither knows his secret.

Turandot appears, commanding the dazed Timur to speak. Liù steps in and cries out that she alone knows the stranger’s identity. Though tortured by the guards, Liù remains silent. Impressed by such courage, Turandot asks Liù’s secret. “Love,” the girl replies. When the princess signals the soldiers to intensify the torture, Liù snatches a dagger and kills herself. The grieving Timur follows her little body as it is carried away.

ACT III, scene 2

Turandot remains alone. Calàf roughly takes her in his arms and kisses her. Knowing physical passion for the first time, Turandot weeps. The prince, now sure of his victory, tells her his name. Turandot commands Calàf to appear before the people with her.

After the people of China hail the Emperor, Turandot approaches his throne and announces that she knows the stranger’s name. His name is Love.
Act I

Popolo di Pechino!
“People of Peking!” A Mandarin explains that any man who attempts to solve Turandot’s riddles and fails, will face a brutal beheading.

Indietro, cani!
The guards yell, “Stand back, dogs!” at the bloodthirsty crowds who rush toward them in anticipation of the beheading of the Prince of Persia.

O giovinetto!
“Have pity upon this youth,” implores the chorus as the Prince of Persia approaches the scaffold. The fury of the crowd has turned to pity.

Fermo, che fai?
Calàf falls deeply in love at the sight of Turandot, illuminated by the silvery moon. Ping, Pang, and Pong warn Calàf that butchery and torture await him if proceeds through the gates.

Signore, ascolta!
Secretly in love with the prince, Liù, pleads “Sir, listen!,” as she tries to dissuade her master, Prince Calàf, from pursuing the riddles.

Non piangere, Liù
“Do not cry, Liù,” Calàf answers immediately. He then asks Liù to take care of his aging father if he meets an untimely end.

Ah! Per l’ultima volta!
Timur pleads to Calàf not to follow his desire to answer the riddles. If Calàf is to die, surely Liù and Timur will be executed as well.

Act II

Ola, Pang!
Calàf has sounded the gong, waking the city. Pang calls for his companions and tells them to ready themselves, uncertain of a wedding or Calàf’s funeral.

Ho una casa nell’Honan
Ping laments that he should be at his “house in Honan” rather than pouring over sacred Chinese writings and wasting his life.

Un giuramento atroce
The Emperor explains to Calàf that an “atrocious oath,” keeps him steadfast in carrying out the will of Turandot. He wishes fervently not to witness the slaying of yet another of Turandot’s victims.

In questa reggia
“In this kingdom,” begins Turandot as she unfolds the story and origin of the riddles. Her ancestor, Lo-u-Ling, married a foreign prince against her will, who later tortured and killed her. Turandot vows never to meet the same fate.

Guizza al pari di fiamma
Turandot asks the second riddle, “Like a flame it is flaring, but instead of a flame, it is delirium and fever. What rises in ardor and retreats in languish?” Calàf answers correctly, “It is blood!”

Gelo che ti da foco
Turandot’s final riddle asks, “What is the ice that turns to fire?” Calàf answers that his love is the fire that will ignite Turandot, who embodies ice. So in fact, Turandot herself is the correct answer to the final question.

Figlio del cielo
“Son of heaven!” the horrified Turandot shouts. She resolves to find a way to keep her freedom and chastity.

Act III

Nessun dorma
“No one shall sleep tonight,” proclaims Prince Calàf. The people of China first declare this as they desperately seek the identity of Turandot’s beloved and Calàf’s aria begins with the repetition of the text. The climatic “Vincerò,” is repeated as Calàf victoriously declares, “I will win! I will win!”

Tu che guardi le stele
Ping, Pang and Pong request of Calàf to “turn away from the stars” and listen to reason. The three offer Calàf many riches in the hopes that he will finally forfeit the quest.

Tu che di gel sei cinta
Liù accuses Turandot of being “surrounded by ice.” She is tortured soon after in the hopes that she will divulge Calàf’s name. Rather than betray her beloved prince, Liù takes her own life.

Principessa di morte
Calàf calls Turandot the “Princess of Death,” and asks that she look upon the body of Liù.

Del primo pianto
After succumbing to a passionate embrace and kiss, Turandot is transcended. Tenderly, she admits to Calàf that “her first tears have fallen.”

O sole! Vita! Eternità
“Only love! Life! Eternally!” The triumphant chorus declares that love is the light of the world. They sing in celebration of Calàf and Turandot’s union.
RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS & VIDEO

Label: RCA Victor (1959)
Conductor: Erich Leinsdorf
Performers: Birgit Nilsson, Renata Tebaldi, Jussi Björling, Giorgio Tozzi
Rome Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Label: The Decca Recording Company Limited, London (1973)
Conductor: Zubin Mehta
Performers: Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Montserrat Caballé, Nicolai Ghiaurov, Sir Peter Pears
London Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra

Label: Warner Classics, remastering (2014)
Conductor: Tullio Serafin
Performers: Maria Callas, Giuseppe Nesi, Elizabeth Schwartzkopf, Nicola Zaccaria, Eugenio Fernandi
La Scala Orchestra and Chorus

Label: EMI Records LTD Hayes, Middlesex England (1978)
Conductor: Alain Lombard
Performers: Montserrat Caballé, Mirella Freni, José Carreras, Paul Plishka, Michel Sénéchal
Strasburg Philharmonic and Chorus

Deutsche Grammophon DVD/Video (1988)
The Metropolitan Opera Association
Conductor: James Levine
Performers: Eva Marton, Leona Mitchell, Plácido Domingo
Metropolitan Opera Association DVD/Video (2009)
Franco Zeffirelli Production
Conductor: Andris Nelsons
Performers: Maria Guleghina, Marina Poplavskaya, Samuel Ramey


Photo Martin O’Connor
LIFE AND CAREER

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was born in the city of Lucca, Italy. Known for being the most important composer of Italian opera with the exception of Verdi, Puccini came from a long lineage of musicians, many employed by the church. In fact, the Cathedral of San Martins in Lucca employed members of the Puccini family for 124 years. Unfortunately, Giacomo became an orphan at the age of five, ending this tradition. The municipality of Lucca provided a pension for the Puccini family after the death of his father and even held the position of organist open until Giacomo came of age.

Puccini later graduated from the Milan Conservatory in 1883 and during the same year wrote his first opera, Le Villi, to little acclaim. Thankfully, a good friend, Arrigo Boito, along with other supporters, helped to get the work premiered at Milan’s Verme Theater. This opera proved a great success and caught the attention of music publisher Giulio Ricordi, whose friendship lasted throughout the rest of Puccini's life.

Inspired by a multitude of composers, Puccini’s writing encompass a large spectrum of styles, yet all contain the careful touch and innovative quality that distinguish them as his own. Out of these influences, Puccini finds his voice, leaving a lasting impression on the world of opera. Famous for the beauty of the musical line and grand orchestration, you hear the influence of Wagner. Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and even Schoenberg add to a kind of contemporary freshness, keeping Puccini's compositions firmly set as the favorite operatic repertoire of audiences today.

Adding to Puccini’s style, it is important to note the prominent musical movement known as exoticism. A fascination with cultures different from the European way of life, namely the Far East, inspired many composers during this time. They incorporated folk tunes and special scales or modes to achieve a specific country’s flare. Madame Butterfly, set in Japan, and Turandot, set in China, pay homage to the European ideal of these perspective heritages.

During the turn of the century, another style developed among the contemporaries of Puccini. Impressionism left its mark on visual art and music alike; valuing atmospheric qualities and orchestral color over form. Impressionism gives one just enough information to understand the intent, but leaves much to the perspective of the listener. Turandot is Puccini’s only impressionistic opera, which not only adds to the beauty but makes it extremely important to operatic history.

Turandot upholds many of Puccini’s ideals. Text plays an important role, mirroring Puccini’s belief that “music always emerges from the words.” Like most of Puccini’s operas, Turandot’s storyline centers on a strong female lead. With lush orchestration, the instrumental portion plays an active role although the bel canto style of Italian opera remains the central focus. Beautiful themes rise and fall throughout the texture of Puccini’s writings; often pairing sweetness with intense sadness. These two emotions working simultaneously evoke great response from the listener.

With such passionate compositions, it is easy to imagine much came from Puccini’s own life experience. Many affairs and scandals left a lasting impression on the composer. Puccini’s only wife was Elvira Gemignani, an already married woman at the time of their courtship. The two marry once Elvira’s husband, Marciso Gemignani (an “unrepentant womanizer”), is murdered by his mistress’s husband. The Puccini’s have a tumultuous marriage and Elvira often accused Puccini of being unfaithful. Another great scandal occurred when Elvira publicly accused Giacomo of having an affair with their maid, Doria Manfredi. Because of this shame, Doria took her own life. Later, an autopsy was performed on the girl proving that she died a virgin. Elvira was sentenced to time in prison for slander, but after Puccini paid a great deal of money to the Manfredi family, never served time. It is believed that the role of Liù from Turandot was written to pay homage to Doria Manfredi and this tragic occurrence.

Giacomo Puccini chain smoked Toscano Cigars and in 1923 complained of a chronic sore throat. In 1924, he was diagnosed with throat cancer and died later that year in Brussels, Belgium. There are disputes as to the cause of Puccini’s death, but most sources believe he died of a heart attack during an emergency surgical treatment of the cancer. The news of his death spread to Rome, Italy during a performance of his beloved opera, La Boheme. The opera immediately ceased and Chopin’s Funeral March was played in his honor. Puccini’s final opera, Turandot was left unfinished at the time of his death. The two final scenes of the opera were finished by composer, Franco Alfano.
Giuseppe Adami (1878-1946) was born in Verona and became a well-known Italian librettist whose most famous contribution was that of co-librettist of Puccini’s final opera Turandot. After befriending the famous publisher Giulio Ricordi, Adami also contributed to Puccini’s La Rondine, crafting the Italian text from the full-length libretto and German operetta by Willner and Reichert. Although Giuseppe Adami acquired a law degree, his life’s work was that of a writer, playwright and music critic. Notably, he published a collection of Giacomo Puccini’s letters, Epistolario, and later wrote one of the earliest biographies based on his own personal reflections of the great operatic composer. In the final stages of his career, Adami worked as a publisher for Casa Ricordi.

Renato Simoni (1875-1952) devoted his entire career to theater and worked as a critic. Also an Italian journalist, playwright, and writer, Simoni edited for L’Adige, a Veronese newspaper company. Later, he worked as author and critic for the paper Corriere della sera. He also wrote the play on which the 1939 Italian film La vedova (The Widow) was based; it tells the tale of an overly possessive mother who treats her daughter-in-law cruelly after the death of her beloved son. In 1952, Simoni donated 40,000 volumes of his writings and reviews to the Museum of La Scala, dedicating them to his mother, Livia, after which the library was named.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

“Nessun dorma,” remains one of the most beloved arias and melodies of all time. So influential, it has left its mark on popular culture, film and television.

The emotional pull captivates audiences of every genre. A famous example of this is when the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, stepped in to perform the piece during the 40th annual GRAMMY Awards show after legendary tenor Luciano Pavarotti dropped out due to sickness.

Previously, Pavarotti helped sky rocket “Nessun dorma” to the top of the UK Singles Chart, reaching #2, after his 1972 recording was used as the theme song of BBC television’s coverage of the 1990 FIFA World Cup in Italy. The aria officially achieved pop status, and became Pavarotti’s signature piece. He last sang the aria during the finale of the Opening Ceremony of the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics, which proved to be his final performance.

So influential, this aria has surfaced in many television programs and films including The Sum of All Fears, The Mirror Has Two Faces, Bend it Like Beckham, and Chasing Liberty. It was even used during the climax of the Netflix series Daredevil.

OTHER OPERAS

BY PUCCINI

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ABOUT THE LIBRETTISTS

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The first to sing “Nessun dorma” is not the tenor but the chorus as they search to uncover the identity of the prince. Later, Prince Calàf repeats the words in his famous aria.

Turandot was left unfinished at the time of Puccini’s death. It was later finished by composer Franco Alfano and premiered in 1926, two years after Puccini died.

Although the opera is set in China, it is indeed sung in Italian! Exoticism or the fascination with far-away places, became very popular during this time period. Other examples include Madame Butterfly (Italian) and Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Mikado (English), both set in Japan.

Puccini often reveals his most famous arias one after the other and near the beginning of the opera! In this case, we first hear Liù sing “Signore, ascolta,” which is then followed by Calàf’s aria “Non piangere, Liù.” Think of La Bohème: Rodolfo sings “Che gelida mannina,” which is then followed by Mimi’s aria, “Mi chiamano Mimi.”

Puccini was one of nine children!

The popular musical Rent by Jonathan Larson is based on Puccini’s opera La Bohème.

Aretha Franklin performed the great tenor aria “Nessun dorma” during the 40th year of the GRAMMY awards after Luciano Pavarotti canceled due to illness.

Puccini’s full name is Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini!
OPERA ETIQUETTE

ALWAYS BE EARLY!
Please arrive early to ensure you are able to find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!
Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

WHAT TO WEAR
Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. For dress rehearsals, the casual attire that students wear to school is perfectly acceptable. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

USE THE RESTROOM
Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...
to everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone’s experience at the opera. Remember that unlike many staged performances, opera singers do not use microphones. This makes it essential to wait until intermission to unwrap gum/candy, talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others. Be sure to turn off cell phone and pagers.

APPLAUSE WELCOME!
There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers. The first opportunity to applaud takes place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and when he/she returns to the podium following intermission(s). It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria in the middle of a performance. Applaud when the performance moves you. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting “Bravo!” for a male performer, “Brava!” for a female performer, or “Bravi!” for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, singers who performed principal roles in the opera will take their “curtain call.” It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause. Sometimes, audience members are so impressed with the overall performance of the opera, they will stand and applaud the entire ensemble. This is called a “standing ovation.”

NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED
There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all—and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

**THE OVERTURE**

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900’s as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

**ARIAS**

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

**RECITATIVES**

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

**ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)**

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in Carmen: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

**CHORUS**

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

**ORCHESTRAL MUSIC**

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.
ON OPERATIC VOICES

Every voice is unique and no singer gets to choose the category in which they sing but must work with the vocal attributes with which they were born. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

Women

SOPRANO
This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the prima donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue, and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. The roles of Turandot and Liù are sung by sopranos.

MEZZO-SOPRANO
Also called a mezzo, this is the middle female voice with a range similar to an oboe. A mezzo’s sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano’s. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano’s normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. There is no featured mezzo-soprano in Turandot, however there are mezzos who sing in the chorus.

CONTRALTO
This is the lowest female voice and has a voice similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare—some believe they don’t exist at all! There is no featured contralto in Turandot.

Men

COUNTER-TENOR
This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano’s voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare. There are no counter-tenors in Turandot.

TENOR
This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest. The role of Prince Calàf is sung by a tenor. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above.

BARITONE
This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. In Turandot, the role of Ping is sung by a baritone. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above.

BASS
This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In Turandot, the role of Timur is a bass. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fourth below.

In Nashville Opera’s production of Turandot, Ping, Pang, and Pong will be sung by two tenors and a baritone.
### THE ARTISTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Operas and Other Credits</th>
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| Princess Turandot | OTHALIE GRAHAM  | soprano  
The Bovender Principal Artist  
Nashville Opera:  
The Girl of the Golden West  
Arizona Opera  
Michigan Opera Theatre  
Opera Carolina  
Utah Festival Opera |
| Prince Calàf  | JONATHAN BURTON*  | tenor  
Central City Opera  
Kentucky Opera  
Tulsa Opera  
Utah Opera |
| Liù          | DANIELLE PASTIN  | soprano  
Nashville Opera:  
La Bohème, 2014  
Metropolitan Opera  
Dallas Opera  
Austin Lyric Opera  
Santa Fe Opera |
| Timur        | BENJAMIN LECLAIR*  | bass  
Austin Lyric Opera  
Des Moines Metro Opera  
Florentine Opera  
Santa Fe Opera |
| Ping         | WES MASON*  | baritone  
Kentucky Opera  
Fort Worth Opera  
Opera Philadelphia  
Glimmerglass |
| Pang         | JONATHAN BLALOCK*  | tenor  
Des Moines Metro Opera  
San Antonio Opera  
Washington National Opera  
Santa Fe Opera |

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| Pong         | IAN MCEUEN*  | tenor  
Washington National Opera  
Glimmerglass  
Metropolitan Opera  
Arizona Opera |
| The Mandarin | JEFFREY WILLIAMS  | baritone  
Nashville Opera:  
The Barber of Seville  
Otello  
2014 Mary Ragland Young Artist  
Theater an der Wien, Austria  
Virginia Arts Festival Academy of Vocal Arts  
Young Victorian Theatre Company |
| Emperor Altoum | TED D. WYLIE  | tenor  
Nashville Opera:  
Turandot, 2001, 2006  
Professor of Music & Coordinator of International Studies in Music  
Belmont University School of Music |
| Accompanist & Chorusmaster | AMY TATE WILLIAMS | Nashville Opera:  
Accompanist, 1998–present  
Nashville Opera:  
Elmer Gantry  
Romeo and Juliet  
Don Giovanni  
Tosca  
Rigoletto  
Andrea Chénier  
The Girl of the Golden West  
The Difficulty of Crossing a Field  
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat |
| Stage Director | JOHN HOOMES | Nashville Opera:  
General & Artistic Director, 1995–present  
Nashville Opera:  
Elmer Gantry  
Samson and Delilah  
Salome  
The Fall of the House of Usher  
Andrea Chénier  
The Girl of the Golden West  
The Difficulty of Crossing a Field  
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat  
Florentine Opera  
Opera Colorado  
Calgary Opera |
| Conductor | JOSEPH MECHAVICH*  | Music Director,  
Kentucky Opera  
San Diego Opera  
Florentine Opera  
Opera Colorado  
Calgary Opera |

* Nashville Opera Debut
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