



2017-18

HOT Season for Young People

Teacher Guidebook

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Tosca

Nashville Opera



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

Jim Schmitz

Middle Tennessee Area President



**2017-18
HOT Season
for Young People**

perspectives



Dear Teachers~

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

This guidebook includes Nashville Opera's extensive study guide for adults with synopsis, background, and musical information. We have also added some additional material for you to use with students.

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

Enoy!

TPAC Education

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Nashville Opera Guidebook written by Stuart Holt
TPAC Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown

Photo of the inside of the real church of
Sant'Andrea della Valle where Act 1 of the opera is set.

Opera Dress Rehearsal

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.

In the Studio

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.

In the Theater

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.

Technical Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

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.



TPAC's Jackson Hall stage

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.

Final Dress

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.

Opera 101 ~ Hints to get the most out of opera

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. Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be able to fit all the elements seamlessly together into the plot which becomes the springboard for the real power of opera.

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, give information about characters, and the 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 enormous 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.



One of the most famous singers to play Tosca, Maria Callas ~

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!

Short Explorations

Go Back in Time

Floria Tosca is a singer and the man she loves, Mario Cavaradossi, is a painter. Think about the impact of these two professions during the time this opera is set (1800) as well as during the time Puccini was writing it (late 1890's.)

Think about how people heard music back then. They either made music or sang themselves, went to a live performance of some kind, or heard it in church. They did not have live streaming or YouTube or smart phones to listen to music; there were no recordings of music to buy and no way to download. Think about your favorite singer or band and imagine that the only chance to hear them was a performance.

In the 1800's, what kind of access did people have to visual art? True photography was not yet invented, there was no television, movies, magazines, or computers. Paintings were much more important and the people who could create them were highly revered.

ASK STUDENTS: Plan out your week in the 1800's (without television, phones, or computers.) How and where would you listen to music? How and where would you see cool art?

The facade of the real church of Sant'Andrea della Valle in Rome, where Act 1 takes place~



The real Palazzo Farnese in Rome, where Act 2 takes place~



The real Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, where Act 3 takes place~



Breathe like Singers

The power of opera singer's breath control is formidable. They must be able 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 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 under you hands.
- ☞ 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 "ahhh." If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscle and be able to make sound for longer periods of time.

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

A promotional poster for the opera 'Tosca'. The top half features a close-up of a woman's face, her eyes closed, with dramatic dark eye makeup and bright red lipstick. A dagger with an ornate hilt is positioned vertically on the right side, its tip resting near her mouth. The background is dark and textured. The bottom third of the poster shows a blurred, out-of-focus image of the Colosseum at night, illuminated with warm lights. The title 'TOSCA' is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the middle. In the bottom right corner, the 'Nashville Opera' logo is displayed, consisting of a large white 'O' followed by the words 'NASHVILLE' and 'OPERA' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

TOSCA

O NASHVILLE
OPERA



TOSCA

An opera in three acts by Giacomo Puccini
Text by Giacosa and Illica after the play by Sardou
Premiere on January 14, 1900, at the Teatro Constanzi, Rome

OCTOBER 5 & 7, 2017

Andrew Jackson Hall, TPAC
The Patricia and Rodes Hart Production



Directed by John Hoomes

Conducted by Dean Williamson
Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

CAST & CHARACTERS

Floria Tosca, <i>a celebrated singer</i>	Jennifer Rowley*
Mario Cavaradossi, <i>a painter</i>	John Pickle*
Baron Scarpia, <i>chief of police</i>	Weston Hurt*
Cesare Angelotti, <i>a political prisoner</i>	Jeffrey Williams†
Sacristan/Jailer	Rafael Porto*
Sciarrone, <i>a gendarme</i>	Mark Whatley†
Spoletta, <i>a police agent</i>	Thomas Leighton*

* Nashville Opera debut

† Former Mary Ragland Young Artist

TICKETS & INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit nashvilleopera.org.

Study Guide Contributors

Anna Young, Education Director
Cara Schneider, Creative Director

THE STORY

SETTING: Rome, 1800

ACT I - The church of Sant'Andrea della Valle

A political prisoner, Cesare Angelotti, has just escaped and seeks refuge in the church, Sant'Andrea della Valle. His sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, has often prayed for his release in the very same chapel. During these visits, she has been observed by Mario Cavaradossi, the painter. Cavaradossi has been working on a portrait of Mary Magdalene and the very likeness of the marchesa has been transferred into his work, though the two have never met.

Cavaradossi enters the chapel, assisted by the sacristan and begins work on the painting. He pauses to take out a small medallion from his pocket which contains a miniature portrait of his lover and celebrated singer, Floria Tosca ("Recondita armonia"). He compares the fair beauty of the Marchesa Attavanti to the striking dark hair and eyes of Tosca. The sacristan leaves Cavaradossi alone to paint. Angelotti quickly comes out of hiding to speak to Cavaradossi, his friend and political ally. He tells of his escape from the Castel Sant'Angelo but is interrupted by the arrival of Tosca. The conversation ceases and Cavaradossi

quickly helps to conceal Angelotti once more.

Tosca is immediately suspicious and accuses Cavaradossi of being unfaithful, having heard a conversation cease as she entered. After seeing the portrait, she notices the similarities between the depiction of Mary Magdalene and the blonde hair and blue eyes of the Marchesa Attavanti. Tosca, who is often unreasonably jealous, feels her fears are confirmed at the sight of the painting. Cavaradossi eventually assuages her suspicions and the two plan to meet after she sings in a concert that evening. Before she leaves, she playfully insists that Cavaradossi change the blue eyes in the painting to dark brown, to match her own.

Angelotti reappears and the two plan his escape. Angelotti will don woman's attire (a costume his sister had hidden in the altar) and flee to Cavaradossi's villa. If necessary, Angelotti will hide in the painter's well. Cavaradossi swears, even if it costs him his life, he will save Angelotti from the authorities. A cannon shot from the Castel Sant'Angelo warns that the dissident's escape has been discovered and compels him to flee; the painter exits the church with him. The sacristan reenters followed by a noisy group of choir



Erika Sunnegårdh as Tosca and William Joyner as Cavaradossi
in Nashville Opera's last production of TOSCA, 2009

boys, as they prepare a Te Deum for the upcoming mass celebrating a victory against Napoleon. All is silenced at the arrival of Scarpia, chief of police, who is searching for Angelotti, his escaped prisoner. Tosca returns seeking Cavaradossi and is devastated when Scarpia shows her the crested fan he found bearing the mark of Marchesa Attavanti's family. Tosca bursts into tears thinking once again Cavaradossi as unfaithful. Vowing vengeance, she leaves the church as the worshippers fill the sanctuary. Scarpia sends his men to follow her, thinking she will lead them back to Cavaradossi whom he suspects is hiding Angelotti. ("Tre sbirri... Una carozza...") As the congregation sings the Te Deum, Scarpia, who has separated himself from the crowd reveals his terrible plan and two goals: the first, to send Cavaradossi to the gallows and the second, to send Tosca to his arms. He obsessively bellows, "Tosca—you make me forget God!"

ACT II - The Palazzo Farnese

Scarpia is alone in the Palazzo Farnese, his palace. He cynically sings of his impending power over Tosca and anticipates Angelotti's recapture ("Ha più forte sapore"). After his spy, Spoletta, arrives, he finds that instead of Angelotti, they have found Cavaradossi. Scarpia interrogates the painter as Tosca is heard singing at a royal gala in the same building. Cavaradossi is soon sent away to be tortured and Scarpia sends for Tosca. He pressures her for information all the while Cavaradossi screams in anguish in the distance. Frightened, she mistakenly gives the location of Angelotti. Soon after, the wounded Cavaradossi is led back to the

chamber and quickly learns of Tosca's mistake just as the officer, Sciarrone, charges in to announce Napoleon's victory at the Battle of Marengo, a win for Scarpia's side. Cavaradossi shouts rebelliously and is taken away to be executed. Tosca pleads for the release of her lover and Scarpia calmly offers to let him go on the condition that she give herself to him. She fights off the advances. At the peak of her struggle she thinks of her fate, how the life of her beloved is at the mercy of Scarpia, and asks why God has seemingly abandoned her saying, "I lived for my art, I lived for love, and always with true faith I gave flowers to the altar. Why, God, in my hour of grief would you forsake me?" ("Vissi d'arte") Scarpia draws near to Tosca, ready to retrieve his prize when Spoletta interrupts with the news that Angelotti had killed himself upon his capture. Tosca then agrees to Scarpia's conditions to save Cavaradossi and is assured that his execution would be staged; that the actions would be carried out but with blank bullets so that soon after, Cavaradossi would be able to escape. Scarpia writes a safe-conduct for the two lovers. Tosca, who had concealed a knife in the folds of her gown, brutally stabs Scarpia as she declares, "This is the kiss of Tosca!" She wrenches the document from his hands and quietly leaves the room.

ACT III - Castel Sant'Angelo

Cavaradossi awaits his execution and is overcome with despair. Reflecting on his love of Tosca, he bids her farewell in a letter ("E lucevan le stelle"). Tosca finds Cavaradossi and quickly informs him of the plan to fake his execution and death. She urges him to die convincingly so they may flee together and begin a happy future of freedom. The firing squad appears and the execution is carried out. After the soldiers leave, Tosca goes to Cavaradossi and asks him to hurry so they may begin their escape. When he doesn't move, she discovers that Scarpia had deceived her and the bullets were real. Spoletta furiously attempts to arrest Tosca for murder as she curses Scarpia and leaps off the ramparts of the castle, falling to her death.

The Castel Sant'Angelo

Once the tallest building in Rome (thus a great place to stage an operatic exit!) this distinctive round structure on the left bank of the Tiber was originally built as a mausoleum for the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Later popes came to use it as a fortress and castle. Its name comes from a flashy legend that has the Archangel Michael appearing on the top in 590 to announce the end of the plague. You can visit the Castel today, plague-free, as it is one of Italy's national museums.



LISTEN FOR THIS!

Recondita armonia (aria)

Cavaradossi compares the fair beauty of the Marchesa Attavanti to the striking dark hair and eyes of Tosca, his lover.

Tre sbirri, una carrozza (aria and ensemble)

As the congregation sings the Te Deum, Scarpia, who has separated himself from the crowd, reveals his terrible plan and two goals: the first, to send Cavaradossi to the gallows and the second, to send Tosca to his arms. He obsessively bellows,

“Tosca—you make me forget God!”

Ha più forte sapore (aria)

Scarpia is alone in the Palazzo Farnese, his palace. He cynically sings of his impending power over Tosca and anticipates Angelotti's recapture.

Vissi d'arte (aria)

Tosca, at the peak of her struggle, thinks of her fate and knows the life of her beloved is at the mercy of Scarpia. She asks why God

has seemingly abandoned her saying, “I lived for my art, I lived for love and always with true faith I gave flowers to the altar. Why, God, in my hour of grief would you forsake me?”

E lucevan le stelle (aria)

Cavaradossi awaits his execution, overcome with despair. Reflecting on his love of Tosca, he bids her farewell in a letter.

Stefan Szkaforowsky as the
Sacristan in Nashville Opera's
TOSCA, 2009



RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

AUDIO

EMI, 1953

Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, Tito Gobbi
Orchestra and chorus of La Scala, Milan
Victor de Sabata, conductor

Decca Records, 1959

Renata Tebaldi, Mario del Monaco, George London
Orchestra e coro dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Roma
Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, conductor

Decca Records, 1962

Leontyne Price, Fernando Corena, Giuseppe Taddei
Wiener Philharmoniker
Herbert von Karajan, conductor

VIDEO

Puccini: Tosca - Live in Rome, 1993

Plácido Domingo, Catherine Malfitano, Ruggero Raimondi
Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Rome Rai
Zubin Mehta, conductor

Tosca DVD Team Marketing, 2005

Angela Gheorghiu, Robert Alagna, Ruggero Raimondi
A film by Benoit Jacquat

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

GIACOMO PUCCINI | 1858–1924

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was born Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini 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. *Madama Butterfly*, set in Japan, and *Turandot*, set in China, pay homage to the European ideal of these perspective heritages. When writing *Tosca*, Puccini went to great lengths to ensure the music in the opera was realistic. He contacted a priest in Rome for

the correct version of the *Te Deum* plainchant used in Act I, an expert in church bells to find out which bells were rung for early services at St. Peter's Basilica, and found an appropriate folk song for the shepherd heard in the distance in Act III.

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. 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

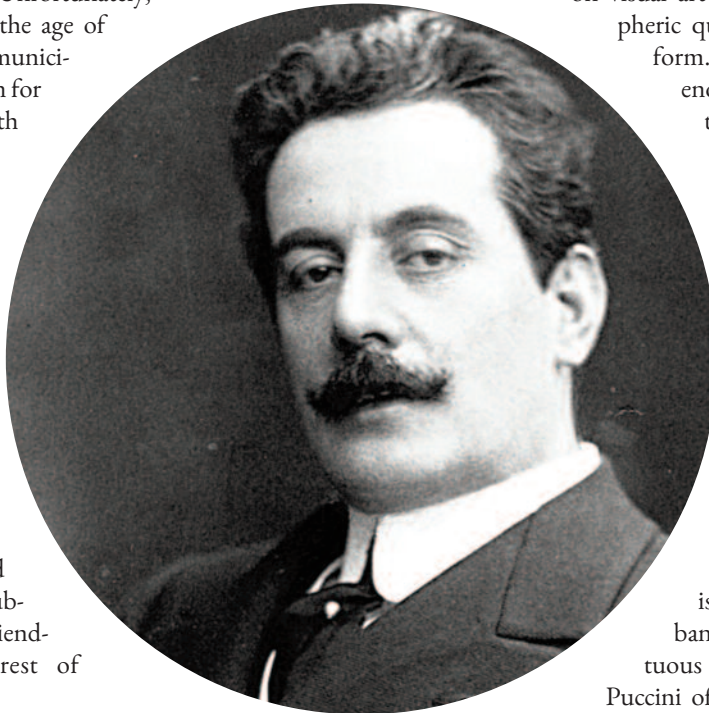
Elvira Gemignani, an already married woman at the time of their courtship. The two marry once Elvira's husband, Marciso Gemignani (an "unrepentant womanizer"),

is murdered by his mistress's husband. The Puccinis have a tumultuous marriage and Elvira often accused Puccini of being unfaithful. This attitude

may remind one of Floria Tosca! 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.

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 Bohème*. 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.



OTHER OPERAS BY PUCCINI

Le Villi, 1884

Edgar, 1889

Manon Lescaut, 1893

La bohème, 1896

Tosca, 1900

Madama Butterfly, 1904

La fanciulla del West, 1910

La rondine, 1917

Il trittico, 1918

Il tabarro

Suor Angelica

Gianni Schicchi

Turandot, 1926

TRIVIA

Puccini was one of nine children!

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

Puccini's full name is Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini!

Every central character in *Tosca* dies, making it one of the most lethal operas.

Tosca is based on a French play which premiered in Paris in 1887 and starred the great actress Sarah Bernhardt. It was a roaring success and with more than 3,000 performances in France alone.

Tosca took four years to complete, largely because of disagreements between the composer, librettists, and publisher.

Puccini loved modern technology and was good friends with inventor Thomas Edison.

THE LIBRETTISTS

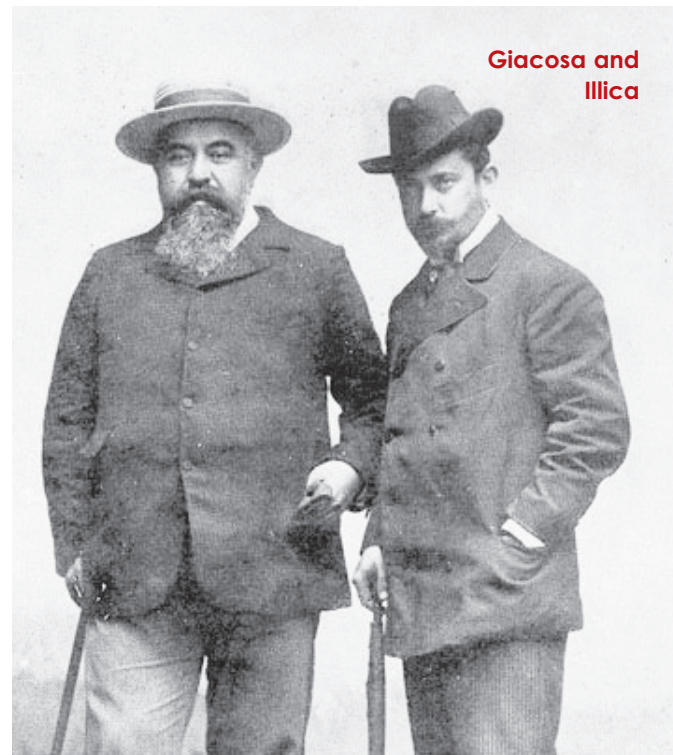
GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

Giuseppe Giacosa was born on October 21, 1847, in Colletterto Parella, Italy. The son of a magistrate, he obtained a law degree from the University of Turin but did not pursue a career in law. In 1871 his successful play *Una Partita a Scacchi* (*A Game of Chess*) won him enough recognition to become a full-time writer.

Giacosa wrote poetry, plays, and libretti, but is most highly regarded as a playwright. He wrote in a variety of styles including comedy and historical drama. His partnership with Giacomo Puccini and Luigi Illica was orchestrated in 1893 by Giulio Ricordi, an influential 19th-century Italian publisher. They worked together to create several successful operas including *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *La Bohème*. When developing these works, Illica first wrote the plot and dialogue, Giacosa refined it into poetic verse, and finally Puccini wrote music to fit the text. The three continued collaborating until Giacosa's death in 1906.

LUIGI ILLICA

Luigi Illica lived a dramatic and interesting life. He was born May 9, 1857, in Castell'Arquato, Italy, and ran away to sea at a young age. After several years, he settled in Milan where he began his writing career as a journalist. While living there, Illica lost part of his right ear in a duel over a woman and afterwards was always photographed with his head slightly tilted. Illica began writing works for theater in 1875 and libretti in 1889. In addition to his successful collaboration with Puccini, he wrote libretti for other well-known composers such as Pietro Mascagni and Umberto Giordano, including *Andrea Chénier*. His most fruitful period of writing came to an end with the death of his writing partner Giuseppe Giacosa in 1906. He enlisted in the military in 1915 at the age of 58, just four years before his death in 1919.



Illica is held in high regard in Italy and is honored now through the Luigi Illica International Prize. Founded in 1961, this award is presented to famous opera singers, directors, conductors, and authors. It is awarded every other year, alternating with the Illica Opera Stage International Competition which awards young singers.

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



A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

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. In *Tosca*, the role of Floria Tosca is sung by a soprano. The role of Shepherd Boy can be cast with a soprano or, as is often the case, with a boy soprano.

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 are no featured mezzos in *Tosca*! There are mezzos 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 *Tosca*.

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 *Tosca*.

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. In *Tosca*, the roles of Mario Cavaradossi and Spoletta are for tenors. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above.

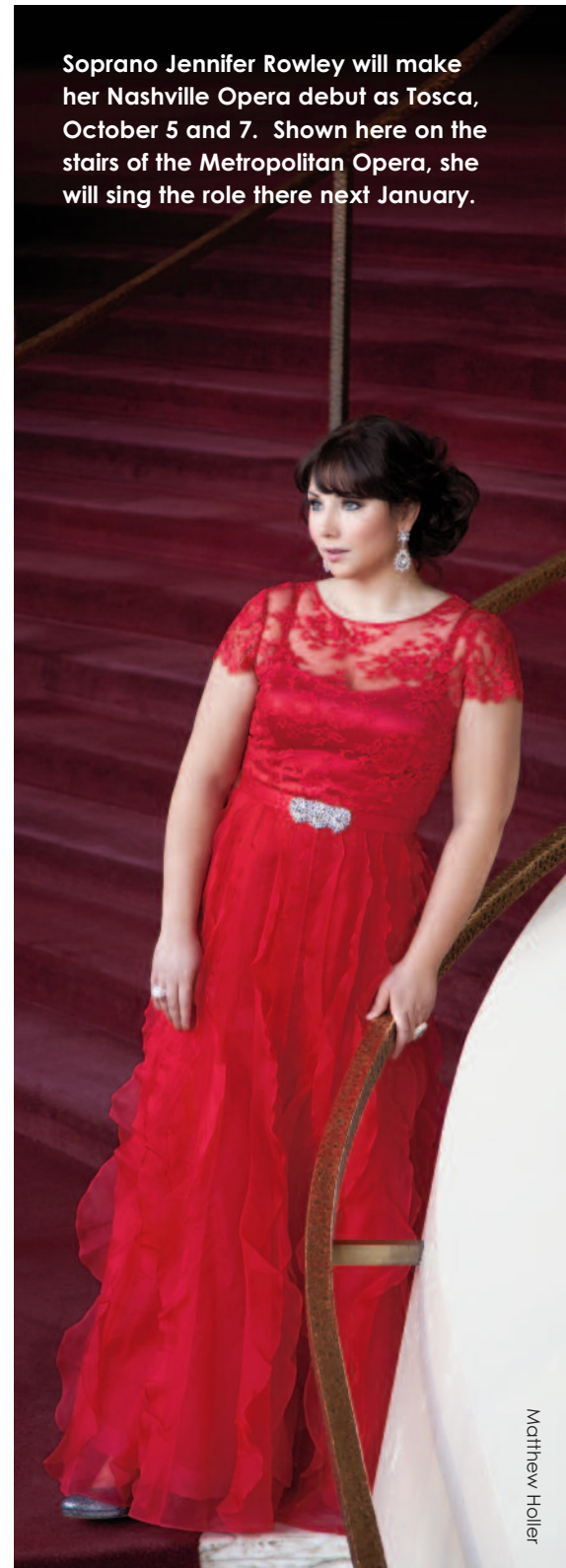
BARITONE

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 *Tosca*, the roles of Baron Scarpia and the Sacristan are sung by baritones. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above.

BASS-BARITONE/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 *Tosca*, the roles of Sciarra and the Jailor are sung by basses. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fourth below.

Soprano Jennifer Rowley will make her Nashville Opera debut as Tosca, October 5 and 7. Shown here on the stairs of the Metropolitan Opera, she will sing the role there next January.



Matthew Holler



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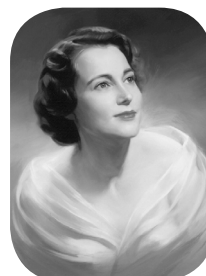
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