

# TOSCA

opera in three acts

libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa e Luigi Illica

The drama was inspired by La Tosca di Victorien Sardou

composer **Giacomo Puccini**

premiere:

Roma, Teatro Costanzi, 14 gennaio 1900

## Act one

Inside the Church of S. Maria della Valle in Rome a man furtively approaches the gates closing-off the Chapel of the Attavanti. It is Angelotti, a leading figure in the failed Repubblica romana. He was arrested by the papal authorities and confined to the prisons of Castel S. Angelo, from where he has just escaped. After some hesitation, Angelotti enters the chapel and in fear shuts himself in. A noise warns him that the sexton is approaching, who comes in at that moment. When the bells toll for the *Angelus*, Mario Cavaradossi also appears. He is a painter, well-known for his anarchic and pro-French ideas. The sexton does not find Cavaradossi pleasant and fiercely protests when he recognized the face of Mary Magdalen in the painting as being the face of a lady who recently has often knelt at the altar in prayer. The beauty of the face Cavaradossi has painted reminds the artist of his own love even though she is so different in every way.

When the sexton goes out, Angelotti looks over the gates again and recognizes his friend, and in a few words tells him of his escape. His sister, the Marchesa of Attavanti has hidden the key of her family's chapel and also a few women's clothes in the holy water fount. Cavaradossi recognizing her as the involuntary model for his painting, promises the fugitive all his help, but at that moment Floria Tosca, the painter's lover, and a famous singer, knocks at the door. Hastily Angelotti hides in the chapel. From the very beginning, the woman's jealousy is obvious from the way she is continuously suspicious of her lover's lack of attention and his haste to take leave of her. Her suspicions however increase when she discovers the portrait of the Marchesa of Attavanti, whom she knows very well. Convinced by Cavaradossi that her fears are completely unfounded, she tells him of her plans for the evening. First she must give a performance at the theatre, but later however they can go together to a villa outside Rome where they can spend the night.

Only a short time after Tosca goes out, the thundering of the cannon of Castel S. Angelo can be heard: the escape has been discovered. Cavaradossi and Angelotti start out for Tosca's villa where there will certainly be some suitable hiding-places.



But this is not all: news has come of Napoleon's defeat and the sexton, in the painter's absence, tells the members of the clergy and the choristers in the church and they begin dancing round in a circle but are abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the police. The inquisitor is Baron Scarpia, who has made himself hateful not only for his reactionary ideas but also for his dissolute behaviour. His suspicions immediately fall upon Cavaradossi who, by his unjustified absence, increases Scarpia's suspicions that he has taken part in the plot. Also Tosca's return, to tell her lover of a sudden engagement for the evening, suddenly gives Scarpia a new idea. Tosca, who is jealous of Mario's absence and having discovered a fan left on the artist's scaffolding, goes directly to the hiding-place to prevent the suspected infidelity, thus guiding the police in their hunt for the fugitive. It is there in the increasingly crowded church for the *Te Deum* that Scarpia plots some new treacher. He will possess Floria and kill her lover, Cavaradossi.

## Act two

It is evening. In one of the rooms of the Palazzo Farnese, Scarpia is waiting for news of Angelotti. His dinner is already on the table, but the Baron's attention is attracted by the music coming through the open windows. Only Tosca, the primadonna of the evening, is missing from the festivities for Napoleon's presumptive victory. At this point Tosca appears, informed by a note from Scarpia. Indeed it has been decided to resort to torture in order to discover the secret. Hearing her lover's cries of pain because of the torture, Tosca succumbs in the hope that he will be set free and reveals Angelotti's hiding-place. However, Mario's indignation at Tosca's decision, and his joy at the news, which has come at that moment, of Napoleon having defeated Melas's troops, induce Scarpia to sentence Cavaradossi to death.

Cavaradossi is taken away and Tosca has no choice but to implore the tyrant to have mercy on him. She first attempts to bribe him with money, but then is forced to sell her body in exchange for her lover's life. Pardon will however be granted secretly. They will pretend to shoot him using unloaded arms, and then the two lovers will be free. Now Scarpia's passion is enflamed, but his advances are impeded by Tosca – stabbing him repeatedly, thus revenging her honour, with a knife which was lying on the supper table. Then the singer, taking the safe-conduct document and placing two candles and a crucifix beside the corpse, exits to attend Mario.



## Act three

In the square of Castel S. Angelo, Cavaradossi is thinking with erotic passion over the times he has spent with this beloved. It is dawn and the moment of the execution is approaching. By bribing him with a ring, he obtains some writing materials from the gaoler so that even though it is the last time he can communicate with the woman he loves. But Tosca suddenly appears before him and in a passionate reunion tells him of the intrigue and instructs him what to do during the execution. He must fall naturally as if he had really been shot. At last the firing squad arrives and carries out the execution. The terrifying noise of the guns does not warn the singer that the execution has actually been done, not with unloaded arms. In this way, although the Baron is dead, he has tricked the lovers. A few moments later it is discovered that Scarpia has been killed. Tosca has only one choice, to take her own life and she throws herself from the walls of Castel S. Angelo.



