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AUSTIN  
OPERA

MIGHTY  
Music

Dear Teachers,

A special welcome from Austin Opera!

This ACCESS OPERA unit provides materials to help you and your students learn about the opera **Tosca**. It includes information on the composer and librettist, a lesson plan and PowerPoint presentation, classroom activities and a focus on musical elements highlighted in an Animated Listening Map.

As you explore this selection, we hope it will become one of your favorites that you will want to hear again and again.

Have a wonderful time experiencing **Tosca**!

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# *Tosca:*

"Vissi d'arte"

BY GIACOMO PUCCINI



## BACKGROUND

### Tosca: "Vissi d'arte"

by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

#### About the Composer

- Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini was born in Italy in 1858 and was a Romantic Period composer.
- He was most famous for his operas, many of which are now standards for opera companies such as *La bohème* and *Madame Butterfly*.
- Puccini's father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather (after whom he was named) were all fairly well-known musicians in Italy.
- Puccini's family was involved with music for the Cattedrale di San Martino for 140 years (1740-1880).
- Puccini loved cars and hunting.
- Puccini died from complications of a treatment for throat cancer.

#### About the Music

- *Tosca* is an opera in three acts by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (Italian libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa) that premiered at the Costanzi Theatre in Rome on January 14, 1900.
- The opera is based on French playwright Victorien Sardou's popular play *La Tosca* (1887) and is about political intrigue and romance in the days of the Napoleonic wars.
- "Vissi d'arte" is a soprano aria from Act 2 of the opera. It is sung by Floria Tosca as she thinks of her fate, how the life of her beloved, Mario Cavaradossi, is at the mercy of Baron Scarpia and why God has seemingly abandoned her. The vocal range is E<sub>b</sub>4 to B<sub>b</sub>5.



#### Vocabulary

**opera** a story told through music, generally sung throughout

**aria** an elaborate melody sung by one person with accompaniment, as in an opera or oratorio

**soprano** a high female or treble singing voice

#### More

In 1889 Puccini, barely 30 years old, set his sights on Sardou's play, a wrenching melodrama of love and hate, passion and death, set against a backdrop of revolution. It had been written for French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was perhaps the only person who could have managed the role's intense dramatics successfully. Critics deplored the play's violence, but the public loved it, and Puccini was determined to base an opera on it.



I lived for art, I lived for love



## BACKGROUND

### Acerca del Compositor

- Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini nacido en Italia en 1858 y fue un compositor italiano del período Romántico.
- Él se volvió muy famoso por sus óperas, de las cuales muchas de ellas ahora son estándares para las compañías de ópera como **La bohème** y **Madame Butterfly**.
- El padre, abuelo, bisabuelo y tatarabuelo abuelo de Puccini (de quienes heredó su nombre) eran músicos reconocidos en Italia.
- La familia de Puccini estuvo involucrada con la música de la Cattedrale di San Martino por 140 años (1740-1880).
- Puccini amaba los carros y la cacería.
- Puccini murió por complicaciones de un tratamiento para el cáncer de la garganta.

### Tosca: “Vissi d’arte”

de Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)



### Vocabulario

**opera** es una composición dramática y musical en la que un texto dialogado se canta

**aria** es una melodía elaborada para ser cantada con acompañamiento, como en una ópera o un oratorio

**soprano** es la voz femenina más aguda

### Más

En 1889 a la edad de 30 años Puccini estaba decidido a establecer su nueva ópera con el melodrama desgarrador de Sardou lleno de amor, odio, pasión y muerte en un contexto de revolución. La obra había sido escrita para una actriz talentosa francesa llamada Sara Bernhardt quien interpretó acertadamente el personaje intensamente dramático de Tosca. Aún así, los críticos pensaron que era muy violento, pero al público le encantó.

### La Pieza Musical

- **Tosca** es una ópera en tres actos del compositor italiano Giacomo Puccini (el libreto italiano de Luigi Illica y Giuseppe Giacosa) que se estrenó en el teatro Costanzi en Roma, el 14 de enero de 1900.
- La ópera está basada en la famosa obra del dramaturgo francés Victorien Sardou, **La Tosca** (1887) y es acerca de una intriga política y romance en la época de las guerras Napoleónicas.
- “*Vissi d’arte*” es una aria para soprano en el segundo acto de la ópera. Es cantada por Floria Tosca, mientras piensa en su destino, como la vida de su amado, Mario Cavaradossi, está a la merced de Baron Scarpia y por qué Dios aparentemente la ha abandonado. El rango vocal va de Mi<sub>b</sub> 4 a Si<sub>b</sub> 5.



I lived for art, I lived for love

# Tosca: "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Nell'ora del dolore  
per ch , perch , Signore,  
per ch  me ne rimuner i coss ?

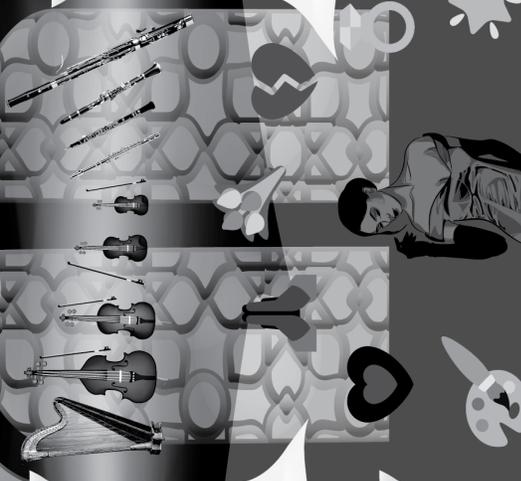
Sempre conf  sincera  
la mia preghiera  
ai santi tabernacoli sa l .  
Sempre conf  sincera  
die di fiori a gl'al tar

Vissi d'arte,  
non feci mai male ad anima viva!  
Con man furti va  
quante miserie conobbi ai u t a i.

Nell'ora del dolor  
per ch , perch , Sig  
a h, muner i coss ?  
per ch  me ne ri

Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,  
e die di il canto agli astri, al ciel,  
che ne ri dean pi  belli.

I lived for art, I lived for love



# LESSON OVERVIEW



## **Tosca: "Vissi d'arte"** by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

### LESSON BY DEBBIE TANNERT

#### GENERAL CONCEPTS/ VOCABULARY

Opera, Romantic Period,  
Active Listening Etiquette

#### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. Experience operatic music of the Romantic Period.
2. Demonstrate active listening etiquette.

### MATERIALS



Mighty Music PPT

Mighty Music PDF Lesson Unit



Student Reproducible Pages:

Background Page in English/Spanish  
English Translation

**Tosca** Plot Synopsis

Checking for Understanding

Relating Music to Other Disciplines

Activity Page

Active Listening Etiquette

Interesting Information

Puccini Portrait

"Vissi d'arte" Wall Poster

**TIME:** 3:13

#### CONCEPTS/VOCABULARY

*aria*, *crescendo*, dynamics, *fermata*, melodic direction, opera, *portamento*, Romantic Period, soprano

#### OBJECTIVES FOR THIS LESSON

1. Identify melodic direction.
2. Explore the impact of economic factors on performers and performances.
3. Interpret music symbols and expressive terms referring to dynamics.

#### TEKS

**HS Level 1** - 1.A, 2.B, 3.D, 3.E, 5.E, 6.A

**MS Level 1** - 1.A, 1.B, 1.D, 2.A, 2.D, 3.C, 4.B, 4.C, 5.A

**Grade 5** - 1.A, 1.B, 1.C, 1.D, 2.A, 2.C, 3.A, 5.B, 6.A, 6.C, 6.D, 6.E

# LESSON

## **Tosca: "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini**



### SETTING THE STAGE

Introduce the concept of Romantic Period Opera.

- ◆ An opera is a story told through music, generally sung throughout. Puccini's operas demonstrated a new style of opera in the Romantic Period called *verismo* (derived from the Italian word *vero*, meaning 'true'). The *verismo* style celebrated realism in opera, including everyday characters and relatable emotions, such as the experience of falling in love.

Introduce the concept of *portamento*.

- ◆ Listen to the beginning of the aria. Listen for the examples of *portamento* - sliding from one note to another. Have students explore "portamento" and experience the breath support needed for these long notes. Suggest students predict the emotions conveyed in this selection without knowing the text.

Tell students they will hear the aria "Vissi d'arte" from the opera **Tosca**. "Vissi d'arte" is a soprano aria from Act 2 of the opera. It is sung by Floria Tosca as she thinks of her fate, how the life of her beloved, Mario Cavaradossi, is at the mercy of Baron Scarpia and why God has seemingly abandoned her.



### TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1) Have students:

- ◆ As you view the PowerPoint, read or listen to background information on Puccini (poo-CHEE-nee) (1858-1924) and this selection, **Tosca**. View the Composer Portrait and Wall Poster.
- ◆ Read or listen to the **Tosca** Plot Synopsis and the Interesting Information Page.
- ◆ Define Concepts/Vocabulary for this lesson.

2) Review the listening map.

- ◆ Identify the text box at the bottom. Italian lyrics with English translation will display as heard.
- ◆ Notice the melodic direction shown by the Italian word placement.
- ◆ Notice the *dynamics*. The beginning is performed *pianissimo*, and gradually increases in volume: the high Bb is performed *forte*. After that, the piece undergoes a sharp *decrescendo*, once again back to *pianissimo*, where it remains until the end of the aria. Have students experience singing at different dynamic levels.

3) Listen to, sing and/or play the Theme found in the NOTATED THEME section of the lesson. Use words or a neutral syllable.

4) Listen to the selection and follow the map two times. Watch the melodic direction and Italian lyrics the first time and watch the English translation text box the second time. Click on the arrow at the bottom of the Animated Listening Map slide to start the Animated Listening Map.

5) Visit <https://tinyurl.com/vissidarteprice> to hear Leontyne Price perform this selection. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/vissidartedoublebass> to hear this selection performed as a Double Bass solo.

The PPT includes links to these YouTube videos that we do not own, hosted on SafeShare.



# LESSON

## Tosca: "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini



### ASSESSMENT



After discussing the Active Listening Etiquette Guide, review if students were showing Active Listening during the listening.



Complete the "Checking for Understanding" worksheet.  
ANSWERS: 1. b 2. a 3. a 4. b 5. c



Complete the Perceptive Listening Activity Page.

Explore the impact of economic factors on performers and performances. Discuss with students the different jobs involved in opera production: Conductor, Chorus Master, Costume Designer, Stage Director, Scenic Designer, Lighting Designer and Choreographer. The singers and orchestra performers usually get all the press and accolades but there are many jobs to create these wonderful opera productions. Discuss with students the impact of economic factors on the production of operas in Austin.

SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) Connection:  
Discuss with students the emotions conveyed in this aria. It is basically Tosca's slow, intense, sorrowful prayer. The first verse speaks of how Tosca 'lived for art', never harmed anyone and always tried to correct any and all mistakes she ever made. The next verse talks about how she was always faithful to God, always prayed and laid flowers at the altar. The last two verses are Tosca's screams of why did she deserve this fate, when she had tried to live her life as a compassionate, selfless human being, who cared and respected others. The lyrics are extremely powerful, and make you feel outraged on her behalf - she does not deserve to be put in this awful position.  
Ask the students if they have ever had an experience of being outraged on someone else's behalf because they did not deserve to be in a certain situation.

# LESSON



## **Tosca: "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini**



### **VOCABULARY/DEFINITIONS**

**aria** an elaborate melody sung with accompaniment, as in an opera or oratorio

**crescendo** gradually getting louder

**decrescendo** gradually getting quieter

**dynamics** the volume (loud or quiet) of the music

**fermata** a symbol that means a note or rest is held longer than the normal duration

**melodic direction** the path of notes in a melody; up, down, or staying the same

**opera** a story told through music, generally sung throughout

**portamento** sliding from one note to another

**Romantic Period** (1820-1900) Period of music history with more freedom of expression and emotional content in the music and nationalism in music was important. New music forms included the art song and chamber music. Also a dramatic expansion in the size of the orchestra and in the dynamic range and diversity of instruments used in this ensemble.

**soprano** a high female or treble singing voice



### **PERFORMANCE CREDITS**

Miriam Gauci, Soprano  
Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra  
Alexander Rahbari, Conductor

# LESSON

## *Tosca*: "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini



### TRANSLATION

I lived for art, I lived for love.  
I never did harm to a living soul.  
With a furtive hand,  
So many troubles I encountered, I soothed.

Always with sincere faith my prayer,  
Rose to the holy tabernacles.  
Always with sincere faith,  
I gave flowers to the altars.

In my hour of sorrow,  
Why, why, Lord,  
Why do you repay me so?

I gave jewels to the Madonna's mantle,  
And I gave my singing to the stars in heaven,  
Which then shined more beautifully.

In my hour of sorrow,  
Why, why, Lord,  
Oh, why do you repay me so?



### Relating Music to Other Disciplines

Relating music to the other arts, as well as disciplines outside the arts, enhances understanding. Building connections allows for the understanding of a culture as a whole and the relationships of the parts. Be sure to consider art, theater, literature, fashion, pop culture, politics and any other cultural influence.

Compare and contrast this musical composition to other art forms from the Romantic Period.  
Architecture

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Painting

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Sculpture

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Plays

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Research contemporaries of Puccini from the other disciplines:

Science

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Literature

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Mathematics

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Politics

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# LESSON



## *Tosca:* "Vissi d'arte" by Giacomo Puccini



### NOTATED THEME

Theme

Vis - si d'ar - te, vis - si d'a - mo - re,  
non fe - ci mai ma - le ad a - ni - ma vi - va!

The musical notation is written on two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes, with a long slur over the first two measures. The second staff continues the melody with eighth notes and triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above the notes). The piece ends with a double bar line.

# Synopsis

## The Story of *Tosca*



Rome, June 1800.

### ACT I

The escaped prisoner Angelotti hides in a nearby church where his friend, the artist/painter Mario Cavaradossi, is painting a new portrait. After finding the key his sister has hidden for him, Angelotti hides in his family's private chapel. Soon, Cavaradossi arrives to work on his portrait of Mary Magdalene. The painting has been inspired by Angelotti's sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, whom Cavaradossi had seen praying in the church. Angelotti emerges from his hiding place and Cavaradossi promises to help him escape. Soon, Cavaradossi's girlfriend, the opera singer Floria Tosca, arrives. When he lets her into the church, she jealously asks Cavaradossi to whom he has been talking. Suddenly recognizing the Marchesa Attavanti in the painting, she accuses him of being unfaithful, but he assures her of his love. When Tosca has left, Angelotti again comes out of hiding. A cannon signals that the police have discovered the escape, and he and Cavaradossi flee to the painter's home.

The sacristan enters with choirboys who are preparing to sing at an upcoming celebration. At the height of the excitement, Baron Scarpia, the evil chief of police, arrives searching for Angelotti. When Tosca comes back looking for Cavaradossi, Scarpia shows her a fan that he has just found with the Attavanti crest on it. Seemingly confirming her suspicions about her lover's infidelity, Tosca is devastated. She vows vengeance and leaves as the church fills with worshippers. Scarpia sends his men to follow her to Cavaradossi, with whom he thinks Angelotti is hiding. While the congregation intones the Te Deum, Scarpia declares that he will bend Tosca to his will.

### ACT II

That evening, Cavaradossi has been arrested and brought to Scarpia's palace. Tosca arrives just as Cavaradossi is being dragged to the torture chamber. Terrified by his screams, she begs Scarpia to save him. Once alone with Tosca, Scarpia calmly suggests that he would let Cavaradossi go free if she'd give herself to him. Fighting off his advances, she declares that she has dedicated her life to art and love and calls on God for help ("Vissi d'arte"). Scarpia becomes more insistent, when Spoletta bursts into the room - Angelotti has killed himself. Tosca, now forced to give in or lose her lover, agrees to Scarpia's proposition. Scarpia describes how Cavaradossi will have to pretend to die in a mock execution before they can flee. Tosca watches as Scarpia signs the papers that will guarantee their escape. Then, when Scarpia turns to embrace her, she grabs a knife from the table and plunges it into his heart. She takes the papers and leaves.

### ACT III

At dawn, Cavaradossi awaits execution. Tosca arrives with their escape papers. The two imagine their future in freedom. As the execution squad appears, Tosca implores Cavaradossi to fake his death convincingly, then watches from a distance. She watches as the soldiers take aim and fire. When Cavaradossi doesn't move, Tosca discovers Scarpia's final cruel trick: The bullets were real, and Cavaradossi is dead. Police officers arrive searching for Tosca. Vowing to confront Scarpia before God, Tosca climbs to the top of the prison walls and throws herself to her death.

# CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_



**Tosca:**  
"Vissi d'arte"  
by \_\_\_\_\_

After listening to and viewing the Animated Listening Map, answer the following questions.

1) What is the best definition of *opera*?

- a. a story told through dance and scenery
- b. a story told through music, generally sung throughout
- c. a story on a religious theme, told through music without the use of costumes, scenery, or action

2) Look at the following ensembles pictured here.



A.



B.



C.

Which of these ensembles accompanies this selection?

- a. A
- b. B
- c. C

3) Read the following newspaper article headlines:

- A. Puccini Composes Beautiful Aria for Soprano
- B. Puccini Composes Beautiful Aria for Tenor
- C. Puccini Composes Beautiful Aria for Baritone

Which article would you read to find out more about this aria?

- a. A
- b. B
- c. C

4) From which musical period is this selection?

- a. Classical
- b. Romantic
- c. 20th Century

5) What is the best definition of *aria* as heard in these selections?

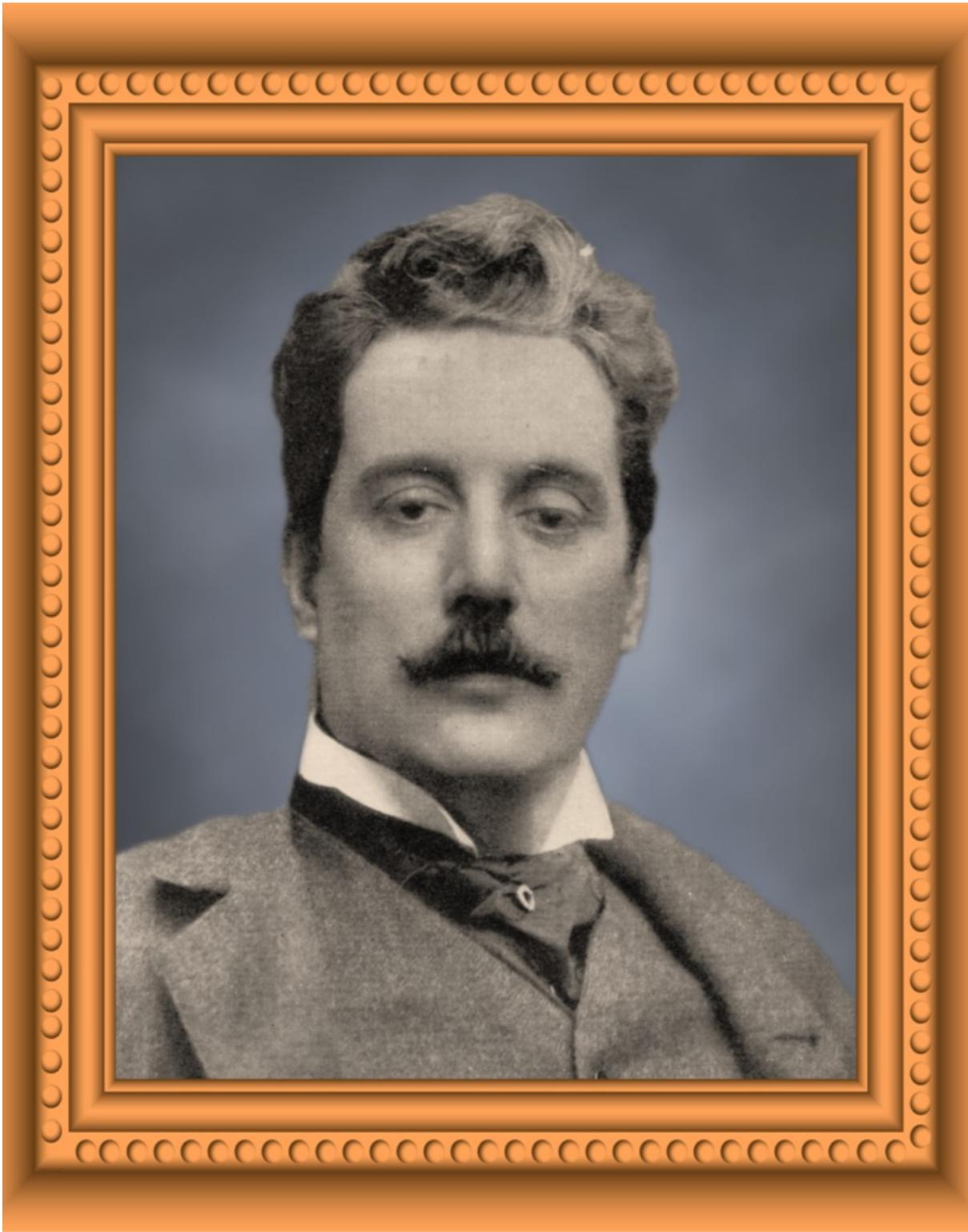
- a. a suffix occurring in scientific terms of Latin origin
- b. a nymph from Classical Mythology
- c. an elaborate melody sung with accompaniment

Of the following, which stood out to you the most in the singing of this aria - diction (strong consonants), round vowel sounds or use of dynamics? How did it impact the performance?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



GIACOMO  
**PUCCINI**  
(1858-1924)



# *Tosca:*

# "Vissi d'arte"

*by* Puccini



## Active Listening Etiquette Guide

Effective listening is an extremely important life skill.

Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing refers to the sounds that enter your ears, which happens automatically for most people. Listening, however, requires focus and concentrated effort, both mental and sometimes physical as well.

You are listening to this opera today to obtain information and understanding, to learn about the music and to enjoy the experience.

We can all benefit from engaging our active listening skills. Becoming a better listener can improve your productivity at school and work, as well as your ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. You'll improve the quality of your relationships with others as well as gain a better appreciation for music of all genres.

As you listen today:

- 1) Pay attention to the listening map very carefully. You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by whatever else may be going on around you. Put aside distracting thoughts.
- 2) Use your own body language and gestures to show that you are engaged - Nod occasionally and make sure that your posture is open and interested.
- 3) Especially if this is your first opera experience, defer judgement and be open to the possibilities of a new style of music.
- 4) When the music is over, provide feedback. Reflect on what you heard, what you liked, and what questions you have.
- 5) Be candid, open and honest in your response to the music. Assert your opinions respectfully and encourage others' respectfulness towards and understanding of the music.

## Interesting Information about the Austin Opera Performance

Austin Opera's much-anticipated return to live performance is an innovative outdoor staging of Puccini's *Tosca* at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) Germania Insurance Amphitheater. Educators and students will have the opportunity to experience this unique production via a LIVESTREAM during both performances – Thursday, April 29 at 7:30pm and Saturday, May 1, at 7:30pm.

**Germania Insurance Amphitheater at Circuit of the Americas** (COTA) is a Formula 1 racetrack located just 15 miles outside of downtown Austin. The two performances of *Tosca* are set for **Thursday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m.** and **Saturday, May 1 at 7:30 p.m.** and will feature the Austin Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Timothy Myers, the company's Sarah and Ernest Butler Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor. David Lefkowich (2018's *La traviata*) will direct the massive outdoor production, which will employ more than 125 local artists and stage crew who have been out of work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Making their Austin Opera debuts in *Tosca* are a trio of important international artists. A recent *Opera News* cover star, soprano Latonia Moore is Tosca, the fiery diva caught in the crossfire of love. A native of Houston, Moore has recently sung *Tosca* at Washington National Opera, Opera Australia, and in Rouen, France. Tenor Adam Smith makes his role debut as the heroic Cavaradossi, and baritone Aleksey Bogdanov is the evil Scarpia. Texas singers take on many of the opera's supporting roles.

*Tosca* is one of opera's most popular and enduring classics and returns to the Austin Opera stage for the first time since 2014. The first act's booming finale, the "Te Deum," will have a unique visual complement in Austin's stunning sunset, adding ethereal power to the full force of the Austin Opera Orchestra and Chorus. The second act's most anticipated moment is *Tosca*'s "Vissi d'arte," one of the most famous arias in all of opera, in which *Tosca* reflects on art, love, and faith as she reaches the most pivotal crossroads of her life. In the final act, Cavaradossi will sing his signature salute to the stars, "E lucevan le stelle," under the blanket of stars in Austin's evening sky. And in the opera's thrilling finale, *Tosca* will make the ultimate leap of faith in a moment of staging not to be missed in this site-specific production.

The performance will be sung in Italian with English supertitles.

These ***Tosca*** educational materials are an integral piece of the complete ***Tosca*** audio/visual PowerPoint package commissioned by Austin Opera from Mighty Music Publishing.

To learn more about this product and collaboration, or to inquire about purchase of the complete package for your organization, contact Mollie Tower, Mighty Music Publishing, [MightyMusic.Mollie@gmail.com](mailto:MightyMusic.Mollie@gmail.com).