



Turandot

LYRIC DRAMA IN THREE ACTS
AND FIVE SCENES

Music Director Designate
JAKUB HRUŠA
Director of Opera
OLIVER MEARS

Music GIACOMO PUCCINI completed by
FRANCO ALFANO
Libretto GIUSEPPE ADAMI and
RENATO SIMONI after CARLO GOZZI

Conductors
RAFAEL PAYARE
19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr
FRANCESCO IVAN CIAMPA
12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr

Director ANDREI ȘERBAN
Revival Director JACK FURNESS
Designer SALLY JACOBS
Lighting Designer F. MITCHELL DANA
Choreographer KATE FLATT
Choreologist TATIANA NOVAES COELHO

ROYAL OPERA CHORUS
Chorus Director WILLIAM SPAULDING

ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
Concert Master SERGEY LEVITIN
19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr
Associate Concert Master MELISSA CARSTAIRS
12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr

19 · 22 · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT March ·
1 · 4 · 12 MAT · 15 · 19 April 2025

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Welcome



Oliver Mears © Sebastian Nevols

Turandot is a rich operatic experience that tackles grand emotions and themes: love, fear, devotion and the prospect of death. It displays everything the art form is good at, from creating big spectacles to exploring the most intimate emotions and moments.

While *Turandot* is much more than Act III's famous 'Nessun dorma', to some degree this aria captures the spirit of the entire opera: an anxious wait to see what the future will bring, and a triumphant belief in a heroic individual's ability to overcome the dangers and complexities of life.

Taking inspiration from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* origins of Carlo Gozzi's source play, Andrei Şerban's production conjures a mesmerising vision of a legendary ancient China. Our outstanding cast includes Sondra Radvanovsky and Ewa Płonka (Princess Turandot), SeokJong Baek and Gwyn Hughes Jones (Calaf) Anna Princeva and Gemma Summerfield (Liù), conducted by Rafael Payare and Francesco Ivan Ciampa. We hope Puccini's last masterpiece will both entertain and move you.

We would like to thank Royal Ballet and Opera Principal Julia Rausing Trust and Alan and Caroline Howard for their generous support of this revival.

Oliver Mears, Director of Opera*
Jakub Hrůša, Music Director Designate

*Position generously supported by Sir Mick and Lady Barbara Davis


ROLEX

Principal Partner, The Royal Opera

Cast

Mandarin	OSSIAN HUSKINSON*
Liù	ANNA PRINCEVA
A former slave and Timur's guide	19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 Mar · 1 Apr GEMMA SUMMERFIELD 29 MAT · MAR · 4 · 12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr
Timur	ADAM PALKA
Deposed King of Tartary	19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr JERZY BUTRYN 12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr
The Unknown Prince . . . (Calaf)	SEOKJONG BAEK 19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr
Timur's Son	GWYN HUGHES JONES 12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr
Ping	HANSUNG YOO
The Grand Chancellor	
Pong	MICHAEL GIBSON
The Chief Cook	
Pang	ALED HALL
The General Purveyor	
Princess Turandot . . .	SONDRA RADVANOVSKY 19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr EWA PLONKA 12 · 15 · 19 Apr
Emperor Altoum	PAUL HOPWOOD
Turandot's father	19 · 22 MAT · 24 · 27 · 29 MAT Mar · 1 · 4 Apr ALASDAIR ELIOTT 12 MAT · 15 · 19 Apr
Soprano Solos	MARIANNE COTTERILL, TAMSIN COOMBS
Guards, executioner's men, Turandot's ladies, phantoms, wisemen, heralds, soldiers, populace	

*Jette Parker Artist

Please refer to the digital cast sheet for details of all actors, extra chorus and children

Production Credits

Music preparation

RICHARD HETHERINGTON,
MARTIN FITZPATRICK,
EDWARD REEVE,
NICHOLAS ANSDELL-EVANS,
ERIKA GUNDESEN,
DAVID SUTTON-ANDERSON

Assistant Directors

KIRSTY TAPP, KATIE KIM HACKMAN

Tai Chi consultant

WENDIE HOU

Language Coach

ALESSANDRA FASOLO

Surtitle translation

ANDREW KINGSMILL

Surtitler

KATY READER

Safeguarding Manager

GAYNOR EVANS

Children's Co-ordinator

NATALIE BARRON

Children's Chorus

CARDINAL VAUGHAN SCHOOL

Music Director SCOTT PRICE

GREYCOAT SCHOOL

Music Director STEVE HILL

Stage Management

JONATHAN HARDEN, JOHN NICOLL,

ROB COUPE, MAIKEL BELLANCO

Production Manager

COLIN MAXWELL

Draughtsperson

ANNA BRADFORD

Costume Production Manager

CHRISTOPHER PORTER

Assistant Costume Production Manager

CAROLINE FRANCIS

Scenic construction

ROYAL BALLET AND OPERA PRODUCTION
DEPARTMENT, P.E.KEMP (ENGINEERS)
LTD., SHOWSCENE LTD., RALNIC, CARDIFF
THEATRICAL SERVICES

Scenic painting and props

ROYAL BALLET AND OPERA PRODUCTION
DEPARTMENT

Cloths and plastics

J.D.MCDougall LTD., GERRIETS (UK) LTD.

Wires

AI ROPES & RIGGING LTD.

Costumes, millinery, wigs, jewellery, fabric

painting and dyeing

ROYAL BALLET AND OPERA PRODUCTION
DEPARTMENT (COSTUMES)

Additional costumes

AMANDA BARROW, CLASSIC CUTS,
ROXY CRESSY, DAVID FULLERTON,
BA HIGGINS, RUSSELL & HODGE,
TOMOKO HONDA, MARGARETHE
SCHMOLL, BELA REES, TRISHA
HOPKINS, CHARLES WHITE

Additional footwear

EPOCA, GAMBA

Synopsis

ACT I

Princess Turandot of China has sworn an oath that no man will possess her. However, she offers her suitors a chance: if one of them can answer correctly the three riddles which she asks him, he can marry her. If not, he must die.

Inside the walls of Peking, a crowd wait for the execution of the Prince of Persia, who has failed the test of the riddles. As the guards push back the excited people, a blind old man falls, and is helped up by his companion, a young girl. A young man comes to help them and recognizes the blind man as the exiled King Timur of Tartary. He reveals himself as Timur's son Calaf, who was separated from his father after the loss of their kingdom. Timur's companion is Liù, a former slave, who has cared for him since their exile. It becomes clear that Liù cares deeply for Calaf.

The Prince of Persia is led in by the servants of the executioner. Turandot arrives to confirm the Prince's death. Calaf is horrified, but, as soon as he sees the Princess, is captivated by her beauty. Despite the warnings of the ministers Ping, Pong and Pang, he vows to win Turandot himself. Liù implores him to leave with her and Timur (*Signore, ascolta*). Calaf tries to console her (*Non piangere, Liù*) but remains determined, and strikes the gong to signal his intention to woo the Princess.

INTERVAL

ACT II

Ping, Pong and Pang complain about the endless executions caused by Turandot's obstinacy. Each longs to leave Peking for the peace of his country home.

Wise men arrive holding the scrolls containing the answers to Turandot's riddles. Calaf, calling himself the 'Unknown Prince', is brought before Turandot's father, the Emperor Altoum. The Emperor begs the 'Unknown Prince' to leave, and explains how he must die if he fails to answer Turandot's riddles correctly. Calaf remains obstinate.

Turandot arrives for the test of the riddles. She explains the reason for her cruelty (*In questa reggia*). Many centuries before, her ancestress Princess Lo-u-Ling was raped and killed by an invader. Turandot sees herself as the reincarnation of Lo-u-Ling and has therefore vowed that no one will possess her. The riddles are her one concession. She reminds Calaf that their outcome has so far always been death. Calaf insists on attempting to solve the riddles. Turandot asks him: what is the ghost which all the world invokes and is constantly renewed; what flickers like a flame when a man dreams of conquest; what is frost that burns, that makes a king of the one it accepts as a slave? Encouraged by the crowd, Calaf gives three correct answers: Hope! Blood! Turandot! Turandot is now his. But Calaf does not wish the Princess to give herself to him unwillingly, and therefore proposes another test. Turandot does not know his name – if she can discover it during the night, he is prepared to die at dawn. If not, he will possess her.

INTERVAL

ACT III

Calaf awaits dawn, while the voices of heralds announce that no one in Peking shall sleep until the name of the 'Unknown Prince' has been discovered. Calaf is confident that he will win Turandot (*Nessun dorma*). Ping, Pong and Pang attempt to get him to leave, offering him beautiful women, riches and glory if he renounces Turandot. Calaf remains firm, to the annoyance of the ministers and the rage of the crowd, who begin to threaten him.

Timur and Liù have been discovered and are dragged in. They were seen with Calaf the day before and are suspected of knowing his name. Turandot is summoned, and orders Liù to be tortured until she reveals the identity of the 'Unknown Prince'. Liù explains to Turandot that she can bear the torture due to her love of the stranger (*Tu, che di gel sei cinta*). Still refusing to reveal his name, she kills herself. Timur and the crowd lament her death and carry her body away.

Calaf and Turandot are left alone, and Calaf accuses Turandot of inhumanity. To begin with, she is cold and unyielding, but finally she succumbs to Calaf's embrace. Still not wishing Turandot to marry him unwillingly, Calaf tells her his name and places himself in her power. Turandot summons the Emperor and people, and proudly declares that she now knows the name of the foreigner. It is Love, she states. As Calaf and Turandot embrace, the crowd rejoices.





Puccini: A Timeline

1858	1876	1880	1883
22 Dec 1858, Lucca Giacomo Puccini is born in Lucca, Italy.	At 18, the budding musician walks 20 kilometres from Lucca to Pisa, to hear Giuseppe Verdi's <i>Aida</i> . He is inspired to become an opera composer.	Puccini enters the Milan Conservatory, subsidised by his mother and a scholarship from Queen Margherita. He graduates three years later.	Puccini submits his first opera, <i>Le villi</i> , for a competition sponsored by the Italian music publisher Sonzogno. It does not win.
1893	1896	1900	1903
1 Feb 1893, Turin <i>Manon Lescaut</i> has its premiere at Teatro Regio, in Turin. Puccini becomes star overnight.	1 February 1896, Turin <i>La bohème</i> has its premiere at Teatro Regio, conducted by Arturo Toscanini, then 28.	14 January 1900, Rome <i>Tosca</i> has its premiere at Teatro Costanzi in Rome.	25 February 1903 Puccini is seriously injured in a car crash during a nighttime journey from Lucca to Torre del Lago. The car is carrying Puccini, his future wife Gemignani, and their son Antonio. Puccini's months-long recovery from the accident slows his completion of <i>Madama Butterfly</i> , which in turn delays rehearsals.
1917	1918	1920	1923
27 March 1917, Monaco <i>La rondine</i> has its premiere at Opéra de Monte-Carlo in Monaco. The originally intended Viennese premiere was impeded by the outbreak of World War I and the entrance of Italy in the Alliance against Austria-Hungary.	14 December 1918, New York <i>Il trittico</i> , Puccini's triptych of three operas – <i>Il tabarro</i> , <i>Suor Angelica</i> and <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> – has its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera.	Puccini begins work on <i>Turandot</i> .	A chain smoker of Toscano cigars and cigarettes, Puccini begins complaining of a chronic sore throat.

1884	1886	1889	1891
31 May 1884, Milan Puccini's supporters fund the premiere of <i>Le villi</i> , at Teatro dal Verme, Milan. Head of Sonzogno Giulio Ricordi purchases the copyright and commissions Puccini for a new work.	Puccini begins a relationship with his former piano student Elvira Gemignani, who is married. Only in 1904 will the two legitimise their relationship through marriage.	21 April 1889, Milan <i>Edgar</i> has its premiere at La Scala, in Milan.	Puccini buys a villa in the small town of Torre del Lago, near Lucca.
1904	1910	1912	1914
3 January 1904 Puccini marries Gemignani. Gemignani's husband died the previous year, killed by the husband of a woman with whom he'd had an affair.	10 December 1910 <i>La fanciulla del West</i> has its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.	Ricordi, Puccini's publisher with whom he'd developed a father-son-like relationship, dies.	Puccini starts work on his operetta <i>La rondine</i> , commissioned by the directors of Vienna's Carltheater.
17 February 1904, Milan <i>Madama Butterfly</i> has its premiere at La Scala, to disastrous reception. The opera is revised, with a second version premiering in Brescia on 28 May 1904.			World War I begins.
1924	1926		
Puccini completes <i>Turandot</i> up until the final duet. In October, he is diagnosed with throat cancer, and before leaving to Brussels for treatment, begs Toscanini: 'Don't let my <i>Turandot</i> die.'	25 April 1926, Milan Posthumously completed by Franco Alfano, Puccini's <i>Turandot</i> has its premiere at La Scala.		
29 November 1924, Brussels Following complications with his treatment, Puccini dies of a heart attack at age 65.			

Spotlight: SeokJong Baek



**The South Korean tenor returns
to his signature role**

Q: How did you get your start in opera, and what drew you to the art form?

A: At 17, I was a typical high school student, navigating the joys and challenges of adolescence. When the weight of my future began to press upon me, my parents gently encouraged me to explore the world of classical singing. The moment I stepped into my first voice lesson, something magical happened – I found an undeniable passion for music that ignited my spirit. From that day forward, I dedicated myself to this art form, pursuing my dreams with unwavering commitment and fervour.

Q: What about the role of Calaf stands out to you?

A: Calaf is one of the most formidable challenges in the tenor repertoire. This character demands not only dramatic intensity and technical agility, but also the ability to sing with the purest beauty of the voice. Singing this role requires a mastery of secure vocal techniques. Like in the aria 'Nessun dorma': it may seem easy, but the voice has to be suitable.

Q: Aside from 'Nessun dorma,' are there any score highlights audiences should look out for?

A: One of my favourite moments is the enchanting riddle scene with Turandot. There are three different riddles and answers in this scene, which I think are the highlights of the opera. The dramatic tension between the riddles and the answers brilliantly mirrors the tension between Turandot and Calaf. This scene also brings out the truest voices of the two roles, and I think audiences will be enchanted by the emotion.

Q: You've sung Calaf before, including at the Metropolitan Opera. How have you evolved your understanding or interpretation of the role?

A: The interpretation of the role varies slightly depending on the stage and production, with each bringing its own unique flavour to the performance. The most important thing for me is overcoming the vocal challenges and interpreting the different scenes with passion and strength. Fortunately, having embraced this role on numerous occasions, I can now confidently declare it as my signature role, in which I can express my artistic voice in its most captivating form.

Q: What is your favourite role to sing, and what's one that you're looking forward to in the future?

A: So far, Calaf is my favourite – and I look forward to singing Don Carlo and Manrico in *Il trovatore*.

Q: What are you most excited about in returning to the Royal Opera House?

A: Returning feels like a journey back to the embrace of home, to the very place where my career and dreams first began to take flight.

The Creation of Turandot



Linda Fairtile

As he entered the seventh decade of his life, Giacomo Puccini began to feel the burden of advancing age. The exuberance of youth had long since given way to his natural melancholy, and rather than basking in well-deserved fame, he preferred hunting in the lonely marshes surrounding his home at Torre del Lago. Still smarting from the criticism of journalist Fausto Torrefranca, who had questioned his very identity as an Italian artist, Puccini discreetly campaigned to be named a Senator of the Republic. At the same time, however, he felt out of place in the increasingly aggressive Italy that emerged from World War I. Puccini realized that his next opera might represent not only the culmination of his career, but also the twilight of the tradition that he inherited, and thus his search for a new libretto took on special urgency.

The first mention of *Turandot* in Puccini's correspondence appears in a letter from early 1920, addressed to the dramatist and critic Renato Simoni. Puccini had recently teamed Simoni with Giuseppe Adami, the librettist of *Il tabarro*, and instructed the pair to find a subject for his next opera. After their initial suggestions made no impression, Adami and Simoni recommended Carlo Gozzi's 1762 play, *La Turandot*. In short order, Puccini joyously proclaimed that they had found their subject. However, he cautioned Simoni that the new libretto should be no mere copy of Gozzi's Venetian retelling of an Asian fairytale. Rather, Puccini wanted a *Turandot* 'by way of the modern brain', an opera that would appeal to audiences on both psychological and emotional levels.

While most of Puccini's librettos were prepared in an atmosphere of creative tension, *Turandot*'s had an exceptionally difficult genesis that repeatedly tested the composer's commitment to the project. Despite his approval of Adami and Simoni's plan for the first act, Puccini nonetheless encouraged Giovacchino Forzano, the librettist of *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*, to prepare an alternative text based on an episode from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. While Puccini preferred *Turandot* as an opera subject, he expressed disappointment in Adami and Simoni's plan for its conclusion. Calaf's kiss, Puccini wrote, should cause Princess Turandot to react 'excessively, violently, shamelessly, like a bomb exploding'. Here, in the earliest stages of the opera's creation, we glimpse the central artistic challenge that would plague Puccini for the remainder of his life: how to depict the transformative power of love through musical means.

Puccini's first attempt to refine the *Turandot* scenario took place when he met with Adami and Simoni at the home of Baron Fassini, an Italian diplomat with extensive experience in China. The choice of location reflected Puccini's usual working method for setting an opera in a foreign land: Fassini's house was packed with Chinese furnishings and artworks, including a music box that played traditional melodies. The atmosphere was evidently inspiring, for it was here that the character of Liù was conceived. The humble woman who dies for the sake of love is a fixture in Puccini's operas. At this point, however, Liù's sad fate had not yet been decided; she merely served as a contrast to the proud and imperious Turandot.

As the months passed, Puccini's enthusiasm for *Turandot* grew tremendously, but the lack of a finished libretto prevented him from composing its music. While he jotted down themes and offered further refinements to the storyline, his letters reveal a palpable frustration. One, addressed to Adami, contains the eerily prescient admission that 'I keep thinking *Turandot* will never be finished'. Finally, in December 1920, Adami and Simoni delivered the Act I libretto. Despite reservations about its length and complexity, Puccini responded with a torrent of compositional activity that consumed him for as many as 12 hours a day.

The remainder of *Turandot*'s libretto took shape over an exceptionally long period, and Puccini's inspiration repeatedly faltered. Negotiations about the opera's structure, as well as changes to completed passages, lowered his spirits. In November 1922, Puccini proposed a dramatic development that would radically change the tone of the opera's conclusion: Liù must die, so that her death can help soften Turandot's heart. He believed so strongly in the necessity of this tragic outcome that he composed Liù's final aria, 'Tu, che di gel sei cinta', before Adami and Simoni could create its text; in fact, some of her words in the finished libretto are Puccini's own.

By March 1924 Puccini had completed virtually the entire score of *Turandot*, until frustration with the libretto's conclusion, aggravated by his increasingly troublesome sore throats, once again halted progress. A year's worth of pleas to Adami and Simoni had failed to produce an acceptable text for the final duet. The two librettists were each juggling numerous projects, and whether due to overwork or exasperation with Puccini's perpetual dissatisfaction, they repeatedly ignored his appeals. Finally, at the end of May, Simoni delivered a prose outline of a new final scene. The verses followed in September, and Puccini at last began to sketch the music for Turandot and Calaf's ultimate confrontation, which he regarded as the key to the entire opera. Shortly thereafter, he met with the conductor Arturo Toscanini to discuss *Turandot*'s forthcoming premiere at La Scala. Puccini played the entire opera for him at the piano, but while Toscanini was pleased with the completed portion of the score, he dismissed the embryonic final duet. Puccini subsequently waited for Toscanini to call a meeting in order to solve the crisis of *Turandot*'s conclusion, but no invitation was ever issued.

The pain in Puccini's throat had by now become unbearable. A specialist in Florence diagnosed him with inoperable cancer of the epiglottis, although the composer was not immediately told about the seriousness of his condition. On 4 November Puccini checked into a Brussels clinic, with 36 pages of sketches for *Turandot*'s conclusion in his luggage. After nearly three weeks of external radiation therapy, he endured an excruciating operation, performed under local anaesthesia, to insert radioactive needles around his tumour. On 27 November Puccini's doctor optimistically predicted his recovery, but a heart attack the following evening dashed those hopes. Puccini lingered for nearly eighteen hours, dying on the morning of 29 November. After elaborate funerals in both Brussels and Milan, his body was temporarily laid in the Toscanini family tomb.



Giacomo Puccini photographed in 1924, the year of his death.

Puccini's death, however, did not spell the end for *Turandot*. While his publisher, Casa Ricordi, assured the press that the opera lacked only a few final touches, they swiftly convened a group of advisors to identify a composer to finish the job. Their choice was Franco Alfano, a Neapolitan who had recently tasted success with his own Asian-themed opera, *La leggenda di Sakuntala*. Although Alfano worried that the *Turandot* assignment would disrupt his own musical activity, he accepted out of admiration for his friend Puccini. Later, Alfano admitted a secondary motivation: he, too, had once considered basing an opera on the *Turandot* story.

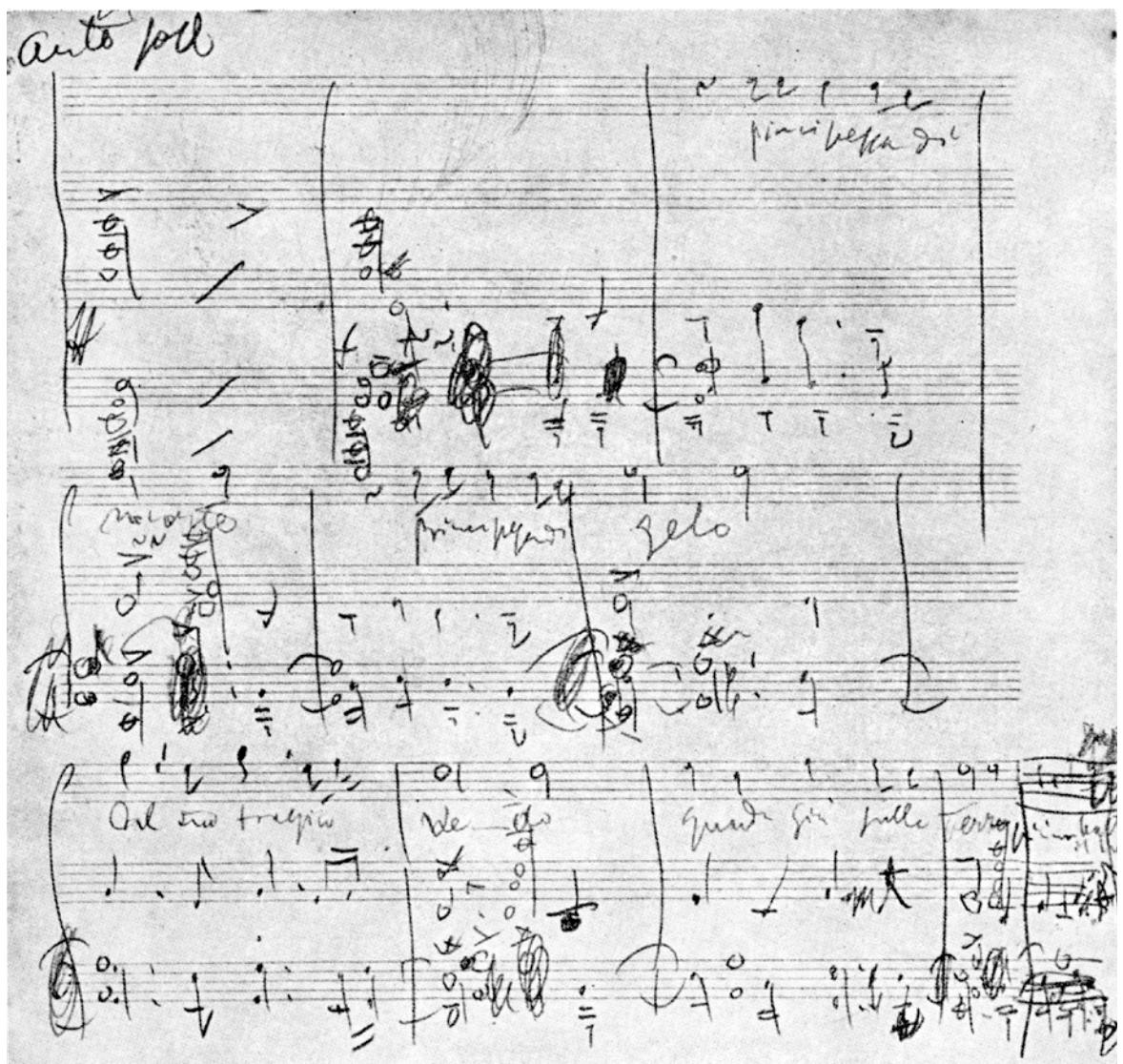
Armed with Puccini's manuscripts, as well as recollections of his last conversations with the composer, Alfano set to work. He immediately discovered that press reports had been overly optimistic: the final scene of *Turandot* existed only as a series of cryptic sketches that were in no condition to be performed. Undaunted, Alfano crafted an ending for the opera that blends some of Puccini's ideas with new music of his own invention. The response that Alfano received for his efforts could hardly have been what he expected. Toscanini reacted with anger, denouncing the lengthy passages that Alfano composed himself, as well as his failure to incorporate all of the musical material that Puccini had left behind. The conductor ordered some one hundred bars to be cut from Alfano's conclusion, inserting more of Puccini's musical sketches in the process. The resulting, shorter ending is the one most often heard today.

The first performance of *Turandot* took place on 25 April 1926, at La Scala, Milan. Benito Mussolini had been expected to attend, but upon learning that Toscanini would not play the obligatory Fascist hymn before the performance, Il Duce uncharacteristically avoided the confrontation. None of the lead singers – Rosa Raisa as Turandot, Maria Zamboni as Liù and Miguel Fleta as Calaf – had been chosen by Puccini, who had other voices in mind when he composed the opera. In accordance with a previously announced decision, Toscanini ended the performance after Liù's death, allowing the unfinished opera to stand on its own. Alfano's conclusion was heard at the second performance.

In recent years, another composer took up the challenge of completing Puccini's final work. Luciano Berio, long fascinated by *Turandot*'s unfinished state, obtained permission from Casa Ricordi to provide it with a new conclusion. His solution, first performed at the Festival Internacional de Música de Canarias in 2002, uses Puccini's sketches as points of departure, while also inserting music of his own composition. The result contrasts with the unambiguously triumphant tone of Alfano's final scene, in deference to the lingering tragedy of Liù's torture and death. Although it sometimes speaks a musical language distant from Puccini's, Berio's conclusion nonetheless provides a fascinating alternative viewpoint.

Musicologists William Ashbrook and Harold Powers have pronounced *Turandot* 'the end of the great tradition'. Indeed, no subsequent opera approaches it in terms of popularity. In this, his last work, Puccini both recalls and transforms conventions that he inherited from the 'golden age' of Italian opera. And despite lacking an authoritative conclusion, *Turandot* still stands as a fitting testament to one of Italy's best-loved composers.

— Linda Fairtile is Head of the Parsons Music Library at the University of Richmond (Virginia). She is the author of *Giacomo Puccini: a Guide to Research* (Garland Publishing, 1999), as well as articles on various aspects of Italian opera. She is preparing critical editions of Puccini's *Edgar* and Verdi's *Otello*.



Unpacking Chinese Boxes



Following the opening up of the Far East to commercial, diplomatic and cultural contacts in the mid-19th century, Europe and America became obsessed with all things emanating from the 'mysterious East'. Debussy and Ravel heard Javanese gamelans at the Paris Exposition of 1889 and incorporated the sounds into their music, Van Gogh and Degas discovered the woodcuts of Hokusai and Hiroshige, Gilbert and Sullivan wrote *The Mikado* to coincide with a Japanese exhibition in London in 1885, and in drawing rooms bedecked with Japanese prints, Chinese screens and bamboo wallpaper, Western hostesses in silk kimonos presided over jasmine tea and games of mah-jongg. There were 'Oriental' operas, from Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* (The Pearl Fishers, 1863) and Delibes' *Lakmé* (1883) to Mascagni's *Iris* (1898), Puccini's own *Madama Butterfly* (1904) and Stravinsky's *Le rossignol* (The Nightingale, 1914), as well as Lehár's operetta *Das Land des Lächelns* (The Land of Smiles, 1923, rev. 1929) and the hugely popular musical *Chu Chin Chow* (1916).

Puccini fell under the Oriental spell; while *japonaiserie* was appropriate for *Madama Butterfly*, a certain strain of 'absent-minded Orientalism' crept into many of his other scores. Pentatonic or whole-tone scales, chains of parallel 4ths or 5ths, lilting rhythms and tinkly orchestral sounds of piccolo, xylophone and triangle crop up at sometimes inappropriate moments in *La rondine* and *La fanciulla del West*, and even occasionally in *Tosca* and *La bohème*. So when the librettists Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni suggested *Turandot* as a subject for an opera in 1920, Puccini already had the musical language for it. However, as with *Madama Butterfly*, for which he had researched genuine Japanese melodies, Puccini wanted to include authentic material. He found a printed collection of Chinese melodies (J.A. van Aalst's *Chinese Music*, published in 1884) and something more, as Giuseppe Adami recalled:

We brought the first draft of the plot with us to read to him at Bagni di Lucca, where he met us with a surprise. The reading took place in the villa of Baron Fassini, who for many years had been associated with our embassy in China and who had furnished his house with every sort of *chinoiserie*. Hardly had the manuscript been deposited on a little lacquered table when... the silence was broken by the clear sound of a music box playing the ancient Imperial Hymn.¹

Decades later, there was a fascinating sequel to this story, as William Weaver relates:

After World War II, Michael Rose of the BBC found that Baroness Fassini was in Rome, so he called her. We went to her home with a tape recorder, and I interviewed her. It was a pretty little music box made of rosewood, but when she tried to start it, it didn't work. We were horrified when she jabbed at it with a screwdriver, but finally she got it to play. The music was absolutely what Puccini used; there were five tunes, and three of those were quite obviously in *Turandot*. It was an eerie experience with this tinkly music and the idea that Puccini had had this very box.²

But these authentic Chinese tunes were not the only sources for the music of *Turandot*; always keen to keep abreast of contemporary musical trends, Puccini was something of a magpie, and we can find echoes of a variety of influences in his most eclectic and 'modernist' score.

SETTING THE SCENE

The opera opens with an arresting unison motif embodying the savagery and strangeness of ancient China (as perceived through Western eyes), reminiscent not only of the opening 'Scarpia' motive of *Tosca* but also of Iago's sinister 'Credo' in Verdi's *Otello*. The music settles on an uneasy bitonal chord – D minor plus C sharp major – which will become a substantial building block for the whole work; Puccini may have taken the idea from the 'Dances of Young Girls' in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which is based on a similar bitonal chord of two keys a semitone apart. The Mandarin's solemn pronouncement of *Turandot*'s terrible decree is preceded by an accelerating figure of alternating notes on the xylophone, a third apart; Puccini has borrowed this – no doubt unconsciously – from the Dance of the Seven Veils in Richard Strauss's *Salomé* (1905). The chorus erupts in fury, demanding the Executioner. The sheer energy and hair-raising ferocity of Puccini's choral writing in *Turandot* is something new, although it is foreshadowed by the gold-miners of *La fanciulla del West*. The use of the chorus as a forceful protagonist in the drama can perhaps be traced back to Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1781), via Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and Act II of Verdi's *La traviata* (the angry choral outburst when Alfredo throws his winnings at Violetta). Puccini himself was alarmed at what he had unleashed: 'Until recently I have always been a musician of small things, but now *Turandot* threatens to burst through the frame – it is large, grandiose.'

The crowd resumes its terrifying shouts, but a sudden hush descends as the people call for the moon to rise, in the sustained, atmospheric and beautiful 'Invocation to the Moon', which gradually grows in volume and urgency. An offstage choir of boys' voices sings a hymn, which is one of the tunes ('Mo Li Hua – Jasmine Flower') from the Chinese musical box. The score of *Turandot* is constructed like a tapestry, a series of static panels stitched together into a glittering fabric; once again there is a change of mood, and the young Prince of Persia is brought forth to be executed, to the sound of a grim funeral march based on an original Hymn to Confucius. The crowd shouts for Princess *Turandot*, and at last she appears – but does not sing. Calaf is smitten by her silent beauty, but his way is barred by the Three Masks, Ping, Pong and Pang. Their musical idiom, while characteristically 'Chinese', has been compared to the music of Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka*, with its percussive orchestration, biting harmonic clashes and changing metres; Puccini said of *Petrushka* that 'it was worth travelling a thousand miles to see'.

Although the operas of Wagner had a huge influence on Puccini, as on most composers from the late 19th century onwards, *Turandot* is the least Wagnerian of his scores. However, Wagner's influence shows itself here in one tiny detail: the principal spokesman of the Three Masks is Ping, the baritone, while the other two are tenors,

singing above him. We may wonder whether Puccini would have thought of this idea without the example of the Three Norns in *Götterdämmerung*, in which the First Norn has the lowest voice of the three.

Turandot's maids are heard from above, bidding the Masks to be silent while she sleeps. The music is bizarre, almost atonal; hollow swooping arpeggios on flute, clarinet, celesta and harp seem to echo the 'lake of tears' passage in Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1918). The Masks resume their teasing of Calaf but are interrupted again, this time by the ghostly voices of Turandot's dead suitors, in a strange and even more atonal passage apparently written as a tribute to Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912), which Puccini heard in April 1924. Above the orchestra 'the piccolo chirrups mournfully like some lost, unhappy night bird' (Spike Hughes, *Famous Puccini Operas*) – or, we might add, like the Falcon in Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919).

According to Spike Hughes, the aria 'Signore, ascolta', in which Liù pleads with Calaf to give up his passion for Turandot, is a genuine Chinese pentatonic melody. Following the Prince's response with the aria 'Non piangere, Liù', the music takes on a tremendous, unstoppable momentum, growing seamlessly out of these two arias – a Grand Finale of a type familiar from Verdi (Act II of *Traviata* again) and Puccini himself (the Te Deum at the end of Act I of *Tosca*, and the Embarkation Scene in *Manon Lescaut*). Calaf strikes the palace gong three times to challenge Turandot, and the act draws to a close with a massive restatement of the 'Mo Li Hua – Jasmine Flower' theme.

SOLVING THE RIDDLES

Act II begins with the *Petrushka*-like music of the Masks, aggressively harmonized with the bitonal 'Turandot chord'. The first scene, for Ping, Pong and Pang, has both genuine and imitation Chinese tunes (with a 'Chinese' instrumental effect produced by weaving sheets of paper between the strings of the harp) as well as simple diatonic lines that would not be out of place in an operetta or cabaret. The voices of the Masks fade away 'with comical fear' at the sound of the offstage band playing a march in a totally different key; Puccini had used this trick before, at the end of Act II of *La bohème*, but here it is much more startling in its effect. As the Masks await 'the umpteenth execution', the march grows into a tremendous procession, full of extrovert energy and pizzazz – prompting Jeremy Sams in BBC Radio 3's 'CD Review' (now 'Record Review') to thoughts of Leroy Anderson.

The music broadens to the Imperial Hymn (one of the tunes in Baron Fassini's musical box), and the chorus sings in praise of Turandot's father, the Emperor Altoum. He is introduced by a unison brass fanfare whose opening notes are identical to those in the song 'I am Chu Chin Chow of China' from the long-running musical *Chu Chin Chow*, which Puccini had heard in London in 1919. To the accompaniment of several exotic instruments (including a bass xylophone, copied at Puccini's request from a Siamese

original), the Emperor tries to dissuade the Prince from his quest, in a threefold exchange which echoes the three strokes of the gong at the end of Act I and Turandot's Three Riddles themselves. The model here is the Trial scene in Verdi's *Aida*, with its threefold accusations; ever since Puccini had walked 20 miles to hear it as an 18-year-old schoolboy in 1876, *Aida* had been close to his heart, and it is the opera that probably influenced *Turandot* more than any other.

The Mandarin repeats his proclamation from the opening of Act I, and the boys' chorus sings the 'Mo Li Hua – Jasmine Flower' tune again; there is an expectant silence, and at last Turandot appears. At the climax of her aria 'In questa reggia' she is joined by the Prince; together they soar ever higher, eventually both hitting a top C. The trial begins; the Three Riddles again follow the threefold pattern borrowed from *Aida*. When the Prince triumphantly solves all three, there is an immense outburst of exultation from the crowd, to the music of 'Mo Li Hua – Jasmine Flower'. The Prince sets a riddle of his own: if Turandot can guess his name by morning, he is prepared to die. The orchestra creeps in with a pre-echo of 'Nessun dorma', which Puccini realized would be the hit number of the opera. The Emperor hopes that tomorrow he will welcome the Prince as his son-in-law; he is accompanied by a genuine Chinese 'Guiding March', which Puccini took from Van Aalst's printed collection, imitating the original as closely as he could, even down to the sounds of the Chinese instruments and the syncopated percussion offbeats.

A FITTING END?

Act III opens with the 'Turandot chord' in different transpositions, this time in a misty, muted orchestration reminiscent of Debussy. Offstage heralds proclaim Turandot's decree that 'none shall sleep' until the name of the 'Unknown Prince' is discovered; the Prince takes up their words – 'nessun dorma' – in his famous aria. Ping, Pong and Pang burst in; the crowd calls for Turandot. Under torture, Liù professes that she does know the name, but for love of the Prince she will keep it secret. She sings two beautiful arias in succession: 'Tanto amore, segreto', accompanied touchingly by a solo violin, and 'Tu, che di gel sei cinta', accompanied mainly by a solo oboe and other wind instruments (against all the rules of orchestration, since the voice should in theory be drowned; but Puccini's orchestral textures are always imaginative, effective and beautifully judged). Mosco Carner, in the ENO/ROH Guide (no.27) to *Turandot*, traces this melody to a passage in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. After Liù stabs herself, her secret still unrevealed, the crowd prays for her peace in rich choral harmonies that would not be out of place in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, and Timur leads her funeral cortège off into the night. The entire scene unfolds seamlessly from Liù's 'Tu, che di gel', dying away to the spectral sound of piccolo and bass clarinet five octaves apart.

'Here the Master laid down his pen'; this was the last music Puccini wrote before he died. The remainder of the score was completed by Franco Alfano, who was given the 23 pages of Puccini's sketches plus a vocal score of the rest of the opera; he did his best, but has been much vilified for his efforts. Despite claims that Puccini was

psychologically incapable of providing the great love duet that the opera needed, it seems that he had the music more or less clear in his mind; he wrote to the librettist Giuseppe Adami, ‘as you are aware, the music is already in existence – not yet elaborated...’. So it seems Puccini was only waiting for the final passages of the libretto before expanding the sketches into a fully worked-out conclusion.

Mystifyingly, after the beginning of a duet for Turandot and Prince Calaf, the sketch is labelled ‘poi *Tristano*’ (then *Tristan*). What did Puccini intend? Something like the ersatz Wagner of the interlude between Acts II and III of *Madama Butterfly*? Julian Budden, in *Puccini: His Life and Works*, thinks ‘poi *Tristano*’ probably signified ‘no more than “a long love-duet”’. Puccini had once proposed a substantial transformation scene in the middle of Act III, ‘as in *Parsifal*... to find oneself in a Chinese Hall of the Grail’; Alfano gives us only a brief but exultant ceremonial passage before the final scene, which is now a very short tying-up of loose ends (Alfano’s contribution having been extensively cut by the conductor Arturo Toscanini). The opera concludes with a hymn of joy to the music of ‘Nessun dorma’; Alfano has been criticized for this ‘cheap’ ending, but Puccini had asked his librettists for final verses in the metre of ‘Nessun dorma’, so this must have been what he had in mind.

OUT OF THE BOX

Though left truncated by his death, *Turandot* is Puccini’s most magnificent and ambitious score; in its broad sweep and glittering ritualistic splendour, it is unlike any of his other operas. How strange to think that inside Baron Fassini’s little Chinese musical box lay the beginnings of ‘the last Grand Opera’.

¹Giuseppe Adami: *Il romanzo della vita di Giacomo Puccini* (Milan, 1942), quoted in William Ashbrook and Harold Powers: *Puccini’s ‘Turandot’: the End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1991)

²William Weaver, quoted in Mary Jane Phillips-Matz: *Puccini: a Biography* (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 2002)

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Turandot and the Riddles of the Sphinx



Turandot is a cultural fable that speaks of the enigma of femininity, the question of what it means to be a woman as well as what a woman wants. The 19th-century notion of femininity emphasized woman's loving nature and her need for both motherhood and being nurtured through the union of marriage. Women without men were associated with the menace of disorder in the West, especially since the *fin de siècle* with such characters as Elektra, Turandot, Salome and Lulu. Despite the differences in the stories of these women (the contrast between purity and promiscuity), they were all presented as marginalized characters, consumed by unhealthy passions that distanced them from their duty and destiny as women: marriage and children.

Puccini's *Turandot* may be a Chinese princess of a mythic Orient (as perceived by the West), something beautifully presented in The Royal Opera's production through dragons, masks and colourful costumes, yet her character is a quite modern one. Sidestepping the usual contrasting duo of the promiscuous seductress plunged into hysteria, and the loving heroic woman who sacrifices herself for her man, *Turandot* presents us with a slightly different story. On the one hand, there is Liù, the domesticated sweetheart characterized by such virtues as constancy, obedience and love, who devotes her life and death to her love for Calaf. On the other, there is the pure, proud yet cold Turandot who refuses to honour her family or follow her destiny as a woman through marriage. Apparently Puccini didn't like the idea of Turandot as a hysteric, since in a letter to Renato Simoni he criticizes Max Reinhardt's production of the work:

above all we must heighten Turandot's amorous passion, which has suffocated for so long beneath the ashes of her great pride. Reinhardt made Turandot a tiny little woman surrounded by tall men deliberately chosen for their height; large chairs, large furnishings, and this little viper of a woman with the strange heart of an hysteric.... In short, I find *Turandot* the most normal and human play in Gozzi's entire output. To sum up: *Turandot* perceived by the modern brain, yours, Adami's and mine.

Although Turandot is a modern character, she becomes so by a different reason from Puccini's intentions. She is modern precisely because of her rejection of love and marriage, something that Puccini does not consider as genuine but

sees as a repression of love that is eventually resolved. In this sense, Puccini's *Turandot* finds herself immersed in disorder just like Reinhardt's *Turandot*; she suffers from her wildness and rawness, which defy and challenge the commonplace idea of womanhood.

Unmarried women have always been associated with magic and spells in the Christian world. Marriage as an institution is not a private affair but has been endorsed by societies in its different forms as a multi-dimensional alliance between families. Through a flow of exchanges the families become more powerful and their legacy is continued. *Turandot's* refusal to be part of such an exchange, which in a way objectifies her, threatens the survival of her race, as Ping points out in Act II: 'Farewell to love! Farewell to our race! Farewell, divine lineage! And China comes to an end!' *Turandot* constantly sings of her refusal to be possessed by a man as an object that will merely change hands from the father to the husband. She refuses to be tamed even though, musically speaking, she is not as elusive as her dramatic presence. Calaf is able to replicate her vocal line a diminished 7th lower as early as their first confrontation in Act II, when he sings 'The enigmas are three, and life is one', echoing *Turandot's* 'The enigmas are three but death is one!', a phrase they then sing in unison. Even so, her desire remains a mystery to him up until the end, when he reveals his name and waits to see her reaction.

Like the Sphinx and her lethal enigma, *Turandot* gives three riddles to her suitors, whose inability to answer costs them their lives. The Greek Sphinx was a creature that had the body and the tail of a lion, the face and breasts of a woman and the wings of an eagle. She is the mythic monster whose riddle was solved by Oedipus on his way to Thebes. After her defeat the Sphinx killed herself, while Oedipus' prize was the kingdom of Thebes and its queen, Iokasta. The analogy is not coincidental, since the Sphinx is an image that has become symbolic of a wild femininity that does not comply with the rules of its gender as defined in patriarchal societies. It is a femininity that castrates, devours and refuses to be tamed. While in Oedipus' case the vital issue is his wisdom, Calaf does not want to win *Turandot's* mind, but to conquer her love and turn her into a conventional woman.

The Royal Opera production evocatively conveys the Sphinx imagery in the Riddles scene in Act II.

Before Turandot poses the riddles she takes off her mask and reveals her face, confident that the man who sees her will soon die, just as Actaeon dies when he looks at naked Artemis. Standing on opposite sites and not facing each other, Turandot dressed in a long gown with sleeves that seem like wings, she asks Calaf the first riddle. Her arms are crossed in front of her and open up like wings as she begins her questioning with minimum movement, something between a statue of a Sphinx and a Pythian sibyl. The second riddle is different since Turandot now stands near Calaf and begins by moving her hands towards him as if she were casting a spell on him like a sorceress. Her wildness is fully exposed in the last riddle. With Calaf on the ground she hovers round him like one of the Furies, those nightmarish Greek creatures – often represented with the wings of a bat or a bird – that personified vengeance and haunted men in antiquity. Turandot is thus transported into the world of intimidating creatures as she sings in Calaf's ears and looks at him with deadly joy, convinced of her success and his demise.

Turandot's renunciation of her destiny (as perceived by society) because of the brutal rape and death of her ancestor Princess Lo-u-Ling is considered an unnatural whim. However, what is more puzzling is Calaf's whim: his instant love for Turandot is highly questionable. Like so many operatic characters, Calaf falls in love as if through a vision when he sees Turandot at the execution of the Persian Prince. Just as Senta falls in love with the Dutchman through stories and a painting, Calaf's love is similarly based on that impossibility that surrounds Turandot. His love jeopardizes the lives of his father and Liù (who eventually kills herself), while he remains oblivious to the dangers he puts them through. One wonders why Calaf does not go for the beautiful and faithful Liù rather than the lethal Turandot; given that his princely status has already been compromised through exile, his choice seems to be driven by a self-destructive urge above anything else.

Calaf's passion for an inaccessible, silent, icy beauty brings to mind the love of the troubadours for the courtly 'Lady'. Such a Lady was also renowned for the cruel tests she imposed on her servant rather than any concrete virtues: she functioned as that Freudian Thing that aroused desire rather than what actually fulfilled it. In this sense, in *Turandot* the Orient meets the West through the enigma of a love that is founded on

its very impossibility. Just like the passion for the Lady, Calaf's love is essentially a narcissistic one driven by the idea and the image of Turandot rather than the person herself, who is essentially absent. Ping, Pong and Pang hint at this when they try to warn Calaf at the end of Act I that 'Turandot doesn't exist! Only the Nothingness in which you annihilate yourself!' Behind Turandot's beautiful face lies the void and death. Essentially, what they suggest is the element of excess that characterizes her. This cannot be fully accommodated within the realms and rules of society and the one-dimensional understanding of femininity. It is this excess, nevertheless, that makes Calaf want to conquer her even more. Such a victory would grant him a sense of potency and wholeness, for it would be a victory against the fear of loss and death that underlines the human condition.

Turandot may be a modern character, but the opera's ending nonetheless distances her from her 20th-century operatic sisters. Elektra dies right after the murders of Ägisth and Klytämnestra. Her consuming passion for revenge makes it impossible for her to rejoin society and become an integral part of it. In Turandot's case, her resistance to the idea of woman as a domesticated sweetheart driven by love and emotions does not last: her final word is 'love'. Hence, she embraces the destiny that she has rejected so vigorously throughout the opera and marries Calaf, agreeing to a pact of alliance between the Mongol prince and the Chinese emperor. In this sense, the ending of *Turandot* brings it closer to the 19th century, since it concludes with a very simplistic and essentializing notion of femininity. Yet, it is the image of the savage Turandot, lingering full of arrogance, pride and vengeance over her victim in the Riddles scene, that stays with us and haunts us even after her final submission.

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The Sphinx and the Chimera; oil on canvas (1906) by Louis Welden Hawkins (1849–1910)
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An Appropriate Ending?



Designs by Cecil Beaton for Turandot



The posthumous premiere of *Turandot* on 25 April 1926 was, without doubt, the operatic event of the season. Indeed, it was widely felt that there had scarcely been a performance of such significance in La Scala's entire illustrious history. Anybody who was anybody was there, and Rosa Raisa, the Polish soprano who sang the title role, reported an atmosphere in the auditorium more electric than any she had previously experienced. There was much to surprise and delight the audience: the staging was unprecedently lavish for a Puccini opera and the chorus impressively large. And added to these striking scenographic aspects was a marked change in dramatic mood, for the composer had abandoned his customary humble characters sketched from real life for a cruel fantasy world on a much more ambitious scale than anything he had previously attempted. Puccini had undoubtedly gone out with a bang.

The first performance of the opera was not merely a fashionable occasion but a highly symbolic event. It was Milan's way of making amends, if posthumously, with a composer whose last opera to receive its premiere at La Scala, *Madama Butterfly*, had been mercilessly booed. In sharp contrast to that disorderly and disastrous night in 1904, the *Turandot* premiere was characterized by a reverential, quasi-religious mood, with many critics making reference to the opera's 'baptism' and 'consecration'. Several got so carried away by the emotion of the occasion that they reported Puccini's ghostly presence to be with them in the auditorium.

The evening, then, took on the atmosphere of a wake, and many of the first-night reviews read like a second set of obituaries. But if this was in a sense a memorial service, it was one particularly charged with significance, for Puccini was a national composer with no obvious successor. His status as heir to Verdi had been established early on in his career and had not been challenged: the young generation of avant-garde Italian composers were for the most part more interested in founding a new school of Italian instrumental music than in writing operas with wide popular appeal. Aware that an era was at an end, the audience at the *Turandot* premiere had come to commemorate not merely the passing of a composer but that of an entire tradition. Hopes for *Turandot*, then, were agonizingly high. Ever since *Manon Lescaut* (1893), Puccini's first big commercial success, a new Puccini opera had always been an occasion for great excitement, not only in Italy but throughout the Western world. In the case of *Turandot*, the anticipation on the part of critics and audiences alike was intensified by the fact that the work had been many years in the planning, and delayed for a further 17 months after Puccini's death while Franco Alfano completed the final act. At the first performance, however, the opera was performed without Alfano's ending, and Toscanini made the spine-tingling gesture of laying down his baton at the precise point in the score where Puccini was reported to have laid down his pen. At the Rome premiere a week later, the work was staged in its entirety, but the performance was once again halted at the same moment, this time as the result of a supposedly spontaneous reaction from the audience. Press reports, such as this from the journal *Musica d'oggi*, emphasized the patriotic sentiment that the opera had apparently stirred in the hearts of the listeners:

At the end of Liù's scene, just after the funeral, the audience, as if obeying a command, fell silent and rose to its feet, remaining for a moment in collective silence, thus greeting with regret the moment at which the author had been forced to break off from orchestrating the work. A voice, from a box, exclaimed: 'Peace and glory to the Italian soul of Giacomo Puccini!'

A certain mystique surrounds composers' last works – think of Beethoven's late quartets or Mozart's *Requiem* – and this is intensified further in the case of works that have been left incomplete. Many critics depicted *Turandot* as Puccini's spiritual swansong: his last artistic will and testament. In fact, the composer had several future projects in the pipeline, and throughout much of the composition of *Turandot* was unaware of the severity of the sore throat that had been troubling him for some time (he was to die in November 1924 following an operation to cure the throat cancer that was the legacy of a lifetime of heavy smoking). Although Puccini was probably oblivious to the fact that *Turandot* was to be his final work, the critics nevertheless romanticized the opera by depicting it as the point up to which Puccini's entire career had been building. *Musica d'oggi*, the house journal of Puccini's publisher Ricordi, was predictably unstinting in its praise, and proudly announced that in *Turandot* Puccini 'has said not merely his last word but his best word'.

But to what extent did the opera really match up to the high expectations built up around it? In some quarters of the press, Puccini's deliberate attempt to pursue a new artistic path late in life was portrayed as very much to his credit, at least at the level of plot. *Turandot* seemed a bold new work for a bold new era. Dramatically speaking, the subject matter of the opera had the potential to lend itself to some rather shady contemporary interpretations. There were obvious parallels between the monumental crowd scenes in *Turandot* and the theatricality with which the fledgling Fascist regime presented itself through mass processions and rituals. Many of the critics who were so impressed by this aspect of Puccini's opera were card-carrying supporters of Mussolini, a politician whose style of public oration was self-consciously exaggerated, to the point of being quasi-operatic. And undoubtedly, the institutionalized sadism that Puccini set to music in *Turandot* must have called to mind the idea of violence as national regeneration which the Fascists were beginning to promote in the mid-1920s.

In terms of musical language, Puccini was felt by all but the most forward-thinking critics to have gone too far in his attempt to update his style. In this respect, however, he could not win. He would undoubtedly have come under fire from the critics had he resorted to stale old clichés, as he was accused – rather unjustly – of doing in the first version of *Madama Butterfly* and even as far back as *La bohème* (1896). And yet his new opera must not be so innovative as to represent a radical departure from the old Puccini that audiences knew and loved. Progress was permitted, but only within rather limited parameters. In truth, what most members of the audience wanted from Puccini's last work were reminiscences of their old favourites.

Manon Lescaut, *La bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*, operas composed 20 or 30 years earlier that would transport them back to what seemed in the aftermath of World War I to have been a golden age, both socially and artistically.

But this, for the most part, was not what Puccini had served up. The bitonality of *Turandot*'s opening bars announced immediately to listeners that much of the opera's music (and particularly that associated with the opera's heroine) would be more characteristic of the forward-looking musical style that Puccini had developed in *La fanciulla del West* (1910) than of his more crowd-pleasing works composed around the turn of the century. In *Fanciulla* Puccini had used a more adventurous harmonic palette, altered the style of his vocal writing and moved towards giving the balance of the musical interest to the orchestra. The fact that *Turandot* seemed to be in a similar vein was undoubtedly an unpleasant surprise, for in the 1920s *Fanciulla* was still being talked about by critics as an 'error of judgement'. The score of *Turandot* was perhaps not 'modernist' music by the standards of much of what was being written elsewhere in Europe at the time, but its use of whole-tone, modal harmonies and aggressive rhythms made it too modern by far for many Italian listeners. The sentimental servant Liù, to whom Puccini had given some of the most lyrical music in the opera and who reminded the audience of his earlier suffering heroines, Mimì and Cio-Cio-San, was the only character to be greeted with any real enthusiasm.

Today we can appreciate *Turandot* as a 20th-century masterpiece, but in 1926 the work prompted a certain amount of nervous misapprehension. Critics devoted large parts of their reviews to celebrating Puccini's life and earlier works in order to avoid commenting explicitly on a score that many of them found highly baffling. Reading between the lines, it seems unlikely that the first-night audience genuinely believed *Turandot* to be the monument to Puccini for which they had so desperately longed. Nevertheless, after its premiere Puccini's last opera was loudly proclaimed by the press to be a triumph. Such were the expectations surrounding *Turandot* that it was unthinkable that it should be anything less.

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Performance Note

Puccini's *Turandot* received its world premiere on 25 April 1926 at La Scala, Milan. The cast included Rosa Raisa (Turandot), Miguel Fleta (Calaf), Maria Zamboni (Liù) and Carlo Walter (Timur). Arturo Toscanini was the conductor. The first performance of *Turandot* at Covent Garden was on 7 June 1927 as part of the Grand Opera Season. The production reproduced the designs from the La Scala world premiere. The cast included Bianca Scacciati in the title role (replacing an indisposed Maria Jeritza), with Francesco Merli as Calaf, Lotte Schöne as Liù and Fernando Autori as Timur. Vincenzo Bellezza was the conductor. The opera was well received and was regularly revived at Covent Garden in the years before World War II.

The first Covent Garden production of *Turandot* after World War II opened on 29 May 1947; sung in an English adaptation by R.H. Elkin, it was conducted by Constant Lambert, produced by Michael Benthall and designed by Leslie Hurry. Eva Turner, a famous Turandot, sang the title role. Also in the cast was Walter Midgley as Calaf, who also sang the role opposite Turner on tour to Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Croydon later that same year, and for two performances in February 1948. Reginald Goodall conducted all these performances.

Turandot featured in every Season at Covent Garden from 1951/2 to 1959/60 except 1957/8. In 1963 a new production, sung in Italian, was conducted by Edward Downes, produced by Sandro Sequi and designed by Cecil Beaton; Amy Shuard sang Turandot, Raina Kabaivanska sang Liù, Bruno Prevedi and Dimiter Uzunov sang Calaf and Joseph Rouleau sang Timur. The production had several revivals.

The present production had its first performance at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles on 9 July 1984 as part of The Royal Opera's visit to the Olympic Arts Festival. The cast included Gwyneth Jones (Turandot), Yoko Watanabe (Liù), Plácido Domingo (Calaf) and Robert Lloyd (Timur); the conductor was Colin Davis. It was first performed at Covent Garden in September 1984 with Jones and Ghena Dimitrova (Turandot), Helen Donath (Liù) and Domingo and Ernesto Veronelli (Calaf); the conductors were Davis and John Barker. The production has been revived 15 times at Covent Garden, toured worldwide

and been adapted for performances at Wembley Arena in 1991 and 1992. The most recent revivals were in September 2013 and February 2014, with Andrew Sinclair as revival director. In September 2013, the conductor was Henrik Nánási, and the cast included Lise Lindstrom (Turandot), Marco Berti (Calaf), Eri Nakamura (Liù) and Raymond Aceto (Timur). In February 2014 the conductor was Nicola Luisotti and the cast included Iréne Theorin (Turandot), Alfred Kim (Calaf), Ailyn Pérez (Liù) and Matthew Rose and Kurt Rydl (Timur).

The 2017 revival featured Lindstrom and Christine Goerke (Turandot), Sung Kyu Park, Aleksandrs Antonenko and Roberto Alagna (Calaf), Aleksandra Kurzak and Hibla Gerzmava (Liù) and Brindley Sherratt and In Sung Sim (Timur), conducted by Dan Ettinger. The latest revival, in 2023, featured Anna Pirozzi and Catherine Foster (Turandot), Yonghoon Lee and Russell Thomas (Calaf), Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha and Ermonela Jaho (Liù) and Vitalij Kowaljow (Timur). Antonio Pappano and Paul Wynne Griffiths conducted. In June 2024, The Royal Opera took *Turandot* on tour to Japan, with Pappano returning to conduct. Maida Hundeling and Ewa Płonka shared the title role, alongside Brian Jagde (Calaf), Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha (Liù) and John Relyea (Timur).





Turandot costume designs by Sally Jacobs, for the current Royal Ballet and Opera production
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Biographies



RAFAEL PAYARE Conductor

Rafael Payare is Music Director of Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and San Diego Symphony Orchestra. He was previously Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Ulster Orchestra (2014–19) with whom he appeared twice at the BBC Proms. Payare works regularly with orchestras worldwide including the Vienna Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester, London Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Berlin, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and in the US with the Chicago, Boston and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras. Opera appearances include at the Glyndebourne Festival, Staatsoper Berlin, Royal Opera House (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Royal Stockholm Opera and Royal Danish Opera. Engagements for 2024/25 include a European tour with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and returns to the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra.



FRANCESCO IVAN CIAMPA Conductor

Born in Italy in 1982, he studied orchestral conducting at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. He has worked as an assistant to Antonio Pappano and Daniel Oren, and in 2009 founded the Laboratorio Lirico/Orchestra in Benevento. He is currently Artistic and Musical Director of the Orchestra Filarmonica di Benevento and of Il Concorso Internazionale Pasquale Pappano. He regularly conducts Italian orchestras, including I Pomeriggi Musicale di Milano, and the orchestras of Deutsche Oper Berlin and Opéra Bastille. He made his Royal Opera debut in the 2019/20 Season with *La traviata*. Recent operatic engagements include *Aida*, *La bohème*, *Turandot* and *Carmen* (Arena di Verona), *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (La Fenice, Venice), *La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* (Maggio Musicale, Florence), *La forza del destino* (Modena, Piacenza and Reggio Emilia), *Les Pêcheurs de perles* and *Jérusalem* (Bilbao) and *Manon Lescaut* (Hamburg State Opera). Engagements for 2024/25 include *Aida* at Bayerische Staatsoper, *Il trittico* in Trieste, *Don Pasquale* in Hamburg, *L'elisir d'amore* at Vienna State Opera and *Otello* in Bilbao.



ANDREI ȘERBAN Director

Andrei Șerban, a Romanian-American opera and theatre director, works all over the world. He is both surprised and delighted that his production of *Turandot* is still revived at the Royal Opera House after more than 40 years since its creation.



JACK FURNESS Revival Director

Welsh stage director Jack Furness is the founder and Artistic Director of Shadwell Opera. Recent directing credits include *The Snow Maiden* (Royal Northern College of Music), *Faust* (Irish National Opera), *Il re pastore* (Buxton International Festival), *Candide* (Scottish Opera), *Rusalka* (Garsington Opera, Edinburgh International Festival), *Don Giovanni* (Nevill Holt Opera), *Gianni Schicchi* (Copenhagen Opera Festival), *Dido and Aeneas* (Royal Academy of Music), revival of David McVicar's production of *Carmen* (Dallas Opera), revival of Kasper Holten's production of *Don Giovanni* (ROH), *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni* (Teatru Manoel, Malta), *Written on Skin* and *Lessons in Love and Violence* (Melos Sinfonia in St Petersburg), and *Hansel and Gretel* (Wexford Festival). Productions with Shadwell include Oliver Knussen's *Where the Wild Things Are* (Alexandra Palace Theatre, Bamberg Symphony, Mariinsky Concert Hall, St. Petersburg), *Die Zauberflöte*, which won a 2009 RBS Herald Angel Award (Edinburgh Fringe Festival), *The Lighthouse*, *Erwartung* and *Into the Little Hill*. Engagements for 2024/25 include *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* (London Handel Festival).



SALLY JACOBS Designer

Jacobs designed and directed theatre from 1960. Designs for Peter Brook included *Theatre of Cruelty*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Marat/Sade*, *US*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Conference of the Birds*. While in the US she designed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston and New York, working with Joseph Chaikin, Joe Papp, Richard Foreman, Edward Parone and Gordon Davidson. Opera design includes *Die Fledermaus* (Paris Opera), *Turandot* (ROH, Wembley Arena) and *Fidelio*, *Eugene Onegin* and *Die Soldaten* (ENO). Directing/designing work includes *Oedipus at Colonus* (Mark Taper Forum Los Angeles), *Last Tango on the North Circular* by Peter Weigold, *The War in Heaven* by Joseph Chaikin and Sam Shepard, *The Dancing Room*, co-devised with Kate Flatt (BBC), *Me You Us Them*, a performance piece in response to the Iraq war, and a staged version of *Invisible Cities*. She was Senior Lecturer in stage design at the Central School of Art and Design, the Slade School of Fine Art and Goldsmiths University, where she was also a Fellow. In the US she taught at the California Institute of the Arts, New York University, The Actors Studio and Rutgers University. Her Archive was acquired by the Harvard Theatre Collection at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. She died in 2020.



F. MITCHELL DANA Lighting Designer

Born in New York, he studied Fine Arts at Yale University School of Drama. His work includes *Turandot* (ROH, 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, Wembley Arena), *Carmen* (Expo '92), *Die Zauberflöte* and *The Merry Widow* (Cleveland SO), *Carmen*, *The Makropulos Case*, *La traviata* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Los Angeles Opera), *Don Giovanni*, *Falstaff*, *The Mikado*, *Madama Butterfly* and 30 other productions (New Jersey Opera Festival), *La traviata* (Liceu, Barcelona, Juilliard), *La rondine* (NYCO), the world premiere of *Harriet, the Woman Called Moses* and *Un ballo in maschera* (Virginia Opera) and more than 500 productions throughout Canada and the US, including 36 musicals in the 11,500-seat Muny, St Louis, and Broadway shows including *The Suicide*, *Freedom of the City*, *Mass Appeal*, *Monday After the Miracle*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *Man and Superman*, *The Inspector General* and *Oh Coward!*. He was National Vice President of United Scenic Artists 829.



KATE FLATT Choreographer

Flatt trained at the Royal Ballet School and is a choreographer, movement director, mentor and dance educator. She created the original musical staging for RSC's *Les Misérables* (1985–2019, Queens Theatre/worldwide). Opera includes *Don Giovanni* (Welsh National Opera), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Garsington); *The Carmelites*, Verdi's Requiem, *Carmen* (ENO); *Betrothal in a Monastery* (Glyndebourne, Valencia); *Turandot*, *William Tell*, *Il viaggio a Reims*, *Aida* (ROH); *La damnation de Faust* (Théâtre du Châtelet); *Boris Godunov* (Paris Opera); *Peter Grimes* (South Bank Award) and *Gloriana* (Emmy Award) for Opera North. Theatre includes *Undivided Loves* (Phoenix Dance Theatre); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Sheffield Crucible, West End); *Roots* (Donmar); *Three Sisters*, *Dream Play*, *Albert Speer, Power, Ends of the Earth* (National Theatre); *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Dr Faustus*, *Skellig*, *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Young Vic); *Hamlet* (Old Vic); and *Kreutzer Sonata* (Gate Theatre). Dance includes *Slowburn*, *Soul Play*, *Songs from a Hotel Bedroom* and *The Ballroom of Joys and Sorrows*. Film includes *Chaplin*, *Restoration*, *The Avengers*, and with Sally Jacobs, *The Dancing Room* (BBC). She teaches at RBS, is a Churchill Fellow and holds a Rayne Foundation Choreographic Fellowship. She was awarded an OBE for services to Choreography in the 2020 New Years Honours.



TATIANA NOVAES COELHO Choreologist

Born in Brazil, she studied classical ballet in São Paulo and moved to London in 1994 to study dance. She completed a diploma in Musical Theatre at the London Studio Centre, then trained at the Benesh Institute of Choreology. She is a fully qualified choreologist and has worked as a choreologist and rehearsal director with Northern Ballet Theatre, and in similar roles for Boston Ballet and The Royal Opera, on productions including *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, *Dracula* and *Romeo and Juliet*. She runs her own pilates business in South Kensington, and a series of teacher training courses. She has been a guest speaker at many dance and pilates conferences. She was choreologist for *Turandot* (The Royal Opera) in 2013 and 2014.



WILLIAM SPAULDING Chorus Director

Born in Washington D.C., he studied at the University of Maryland and the Vienna Hochschule, and was appointed Associate Chorus Master at Vienna Volksoper in 1997. He went on to become Principal Chorus Master of the Liceu, Barcelona, and from 2007 to 2016 was Chorus Director at Deutsche Oper Berlin, where he was also appointed Kapellmeister in 2012. He and the Chorus were awarded 'Chorus of the Year' by Opernwelt three years in a row (2008–10), and the 2012 European Chorus Prize from the Foundation 'Pro Europa'. He has also conducted *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Nabucco*, Verdi's Requiem and *Carmen* (Deutsche Oper Berlin). He joined The Royal Opera as Chorus Director of the Royal Opera Chorus in September 2016 and in this role has moderated and presented several *Insights* events and was conductor for the short film *ROH Unlocked*. He has been Guest Chorus Master at the London Symphony Chorus since 2019.



SERGEY LEVITIN Concert Master

Born in Saint-Petersburg, he started playing violin aged six and made his first appearance as a soloist with Kharkiv Philharmonic at aged twelve. As a soloist and chamber musician, he became a prize-winner of several competitions including Paganini violin competition. At 23, he became a youngest ever Concert Master of the orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, subsequently touring and recording intensively with the company. He was on high demand as a guest leader in the UK and across Europe and as a soloist he performed under such conductors as Gergiev, Pappano and Noseda. For Dutton Epoch he has made a number of world premiere recordings of violin concertos with leading UK orchestras under Martin Yates. He joined the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House as Associate Concert Master in 2003, was made Co-Concert Master in 2009 and Concert Master in 2018.



MELISSA CARSTAIRS Associate Concert Master

A Scottish violinist, she made her professional concerto debut at 15. She studied with Clive Thomas and Lydia Mordkovitch and is a graduate of the Juilliard School where she studied with Sally Thomas. Since graduating, she has appeared as guest leader with orchestras including Cabrillo Festival Orchestra in California, US and Royal Scottish National Orchestra where she also performed as a soloist. She was appointed Assistant Concer Master of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House in 2004. She regularly performs chamber music and has led the Edinburgh String Quartet in a tour throughout Scotland. In 2012 she joined The World Orchestra for Peace under Valery Gergiev for performances in the US and again in 2014 performing at the Proms. She has led the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House in all major ballet repertory, most recently *Swan Lake*, *Mayerling*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. In October 2022 she joined the Orchestra of Opera North as leader in their production of *La traviata*.



SEOKJONG BAEK Calaf

South Korean tenor SeokJong Baek made his debut with The Royal Opera in the 2021/22 Season as Samson (*Samson et Dalila*). Recent highlights include his Metropolitan Opera debut as Ismaele (*Nabucco*), Calaf (*Turandot*) also in New York, his role debuts as Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Radamès (*Aida*) and Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*) for The Royal Opera, his Teatro di San Carlo debut as Calaf and his role debut as Cavaradossi (*Tosca*) for Arizona Opera. During COVID-19, he transitioned from baritone to tenor; as a baritone, he was an Adler Fellow and a member of the Merola Programme at the San Francisco Opera, as well as a former resident artist of the Lyric Opera of Kansas and an alumnus of the Manhattan School of Music. Engagements for 2024/25 include Cavaradossi for the Metropolitan Opera, Radamès for Deutsche Oper Berlin, his role debut as Rodolfo (*La bohème*) for Arizona Opera and a return to Teatro del Maggio Musicale, Florence.



JERZY BUTRYN Timur

Polish bass Jerzy Butrym has appeared on stages worldwide, with notable highlights including roles at Grand Théâtre de Genève, Rome Opera, Teatro Regio di Parma, St. Gallen Festival and the Glyndebourne Festival. His repertory includes the title role of *Mefistofele*, Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the Four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Engagements for 2024/25 include performances at the Salzburg Festival as Totsky in *The Idiot*, Timur for Teatro Massimo, Palermo, Mefistofele in *Faust* for Prague National Theatre, Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* for Polish National Opera and Vodník in *Rusalka* for Norwegian National Opera. This is his Royal Opera debut.



ALASDAIR ELLIOTT Emperor Altoum

Born in Scotland, he studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Royal Opera appearances include Squeak (*Billy Budd*), Balthasar Zorn and Vogelgesang (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), roles in *The Nose*, Monostatos (*The Magic Flute*), Pong, Emperor Altoum (*Turandot*), Innkeeper (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Don Curzio, Brighella (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Andres (*Wozzeck*), Pásek (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Goro (*Madama Butterfly*), Roudi (*William Tell*) and Bardolph (*Falstaff*). Other engagements have included Dancing Master (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Beppe (*Pagliacci*), Mime (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Friedrich Engels (*Marx in London*) and Bardolph for Scottish Opera, Witch (*Hansel and Gretel*), Shvonder (*A Dog's Heart*), Monostatos, Vítek (*The Makropulos Case*) and Brighella for English National Opera, Don Curzio, Zorn, Gamekeeper (*Rusalka*), Red Whiskers (*Billy Budd*), Bardolph, Vašek (*The Bartered Bride*), Snout (*The Nose*) and Monostatos for Glyndebourne, Sellem (*The Rake's Progress*) in Lille, Andres and Snout in Tel Aviv, Spoletta (*Tosca*) in Seattle, Torquemada (*L'heure espagnole*) for La Monnaie, Brussels and Dr Caius (*Falstaff*) for the Barbican (Grammy Award-winning recording).



MICHAEL GIBSON Pong

Scottish tenor Michael Gibson is a graduate of the Royal College of Music's International Opera Studio, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Bachelor of Education in Music), and the Royal Northern College of Music (Master of Music). He was a Making Music Phillip and Dorothy Green Young Artist (2021–23) and is an alumnus of the 2024 International Meistersinger Akademie in Neuemarkt, Germany. He is also a former member of the Jette Parker Artists Programme (2022–24), where roles included Borsa (*Rigoletto*), Young Servant (*Elektra*), Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Heinrich (*Tannhäuser*), Pong, Gastone (*La traviata*), Ruiz (*Il trovatore*), and in the Linbury Theatre, Charles Byrne (*Giant*), Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) and Varo (*Arminio*). Engagements for 2024/25 include Jaquino (*Fidelio*) and Funeral Director (*A Quiet Place*) for The Royal Opera and Erster Jude (*Salomé*) for Teatro Massimo di Palermo. Future roles will include Gualtiero (*Griselda*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and Brighella (*Ariadne auf Naxos*).



ALED HALL Pang

Welsh character tenor Aled Hall's repertory ranges from Mozart to Wagner and he has appeared with companies and orchestras internationally. Appearances include at the Royal Opera House, Royal Swedish Opera, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Baden-Baden Festival, Tokyo Bunkan Kaikan Theatre, Salzburger Landestheater, Bergen National Opera, Tokyo Bunkamura Theatre, Wexford Festival Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, English National Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera North, Buxton International Festival and Opera Rara, and with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Mozart Players. Conductors he has worked with include Antonio Pappano, Mark Elder, Karen Kamensek, Marco Armiliato, Daniel Oren, Dan Ettinger, Lothar Koenigs, Marc Minkowski, Carlo Rizzi, Leo Hussain and Alexander Soddy.



PAUL HOPWOOD Emperor Altoum

Paul Hopwood started professional life teaching English; first at a comprehensive school in South London and eventually at Eton College. However, perhaps following an unguarded fit of bohemianism, he then left teaching to attend the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He cut his operatic teeth at Glyndebourne, singing in the chorus, performing principal roles in studio productions and covering main stage roles. His work as a cover continues – he has covered roles from Berlioz's *Faust* to Glass' *Gandhi* (*Satyagraha*) – and he recently met the remarkable milestone of covering over 365 performances without ever having 'gone on'. Pleasingly, this milestone was met on the first night of The Royal Opera's *Jephtha*, in which Paul was covering the title role. A keen concert soloist, he has sung everything from Bach to Verdi, and in venues from small parish churches to the Royal Albert Hall. Highlights include *St. Matthew Passion* for the AAM at the Barbican, *Messiah* on the Isle of Skye, his debut at the Göttingen International Handel Festival as Melanzane in Jonathan Dove's *Marx in London* at Scottish Opera, and directing a group of London teenagers in a performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. This is his debut with The Royal Opera.



OSSIAN HUSKINSON Mandarin

British bass-baritone Ossian Huskinson joined the Jette Parker Artist Programme in the 2024/25 Season. He is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music where he was a Bicentenary Scholar, and was an English National Opera Harewood Artist (2022/23). He was a finalist in the Neue Stimmen (2022) and Paris Opera (2023) Competitions, winner of the Mozart Prize in the Tenor Viñas Competition 2024, and was named Young Vocal Talent of the year (2022–23) by The Critics' Circle. Roles include Sciarrone (*Tosca*), Harashta (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), and Speaker (*The Magic Flute*) for ENO, Jupiter (*Platée*, Summer 2024), Zaretsky (*Eugene Onegin*), Pluto (*Orfeo*) and Truffaldino (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) for Garsington Opera, Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for Dorset Opera, Pietro (*Simon Boccanegra*) for Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for Opéra de Toulon. His debut solo recital 'The Roadside Fire' with pianist Matthew Fletcher was released on Linn Records in 2022. 2024/25 Royal Opera roles include Angelotti (*Tosca*) and Wagner (*Faust*).



GWYN HUGHES JONES Calaf

Welsh tenor Gwyn Hughes Jones made his debut with The Royal Opera in 2005 as Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) and has since returned to sing Cavaradossi (*Tosca*), Macduff (*Macbeth*) and Walther von Stolzing (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*). His operatic highlights include the title role in *Otello* (Grange Park Opera), Calaf in *Turandot* (Paris Opera, English National Opera); Cavaradossi (ENO, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Welsh National Opera); Pinkerton (Metropolitan Opera, ENO); Rodolfo in *La bohème* (San Francisco Opera, ENO); Ismaele in *Nabucco* (Metropolitan Opera, SFO, Paris); Manrico in *Il trovatore* (Metropolitan Opera, WNO); Fenton in *Falstaff* (Metropolitan Opera); and Riccardo (*Un ballo in maschera*), Canio (*Pagliacci*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Duca (*Rigoletto*) and the title role in Gounod's *Faust* for WNO. Engagements for 2024/25 include Tristan (*Tristan und Isolde*) for Grand Théâtre de Genève and ABAO Bilbao Opera and Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.



ADAM PALKA Timur

Born in Poland, Palka studied at the Gdansk Academy of Music and the Zurich Opera Studio. Highlights include Verdi's Requiem with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, and Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Conte di Walter (*Luisa Miller*) at Oper Köln and Staatsoper Hamburg, his Canadian Opera Company debut as Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) and Timur at The Royal Opera, Méphistophélès (*Faust*), Vodník (*Rusalka*) and Don Basilio at Vienna State Opera, Fafner (*Das Rheingold*) at Staatsoper Stuttgart, Timur and Gremiin (*Eugene Onegin*) at Liceu, Barcelona, Philippe II (*Don Carlos*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Rodolfo (*La Sonnambula*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) at Staatstheater Stuttgart, and his debut in the title role of *Boris Godunov* at La Scala, Milan. Engagements for 2024/25 include Don Basilio and Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) at Vienna State Opera, Walter at Staatsoper Hamburg, Vodník, Commendatore, Oroveso (*Norma*) and *Turandot* at Staatsoper Stuttgart, and Zaccaria (*Nabucco*) and the title role of *Mefistofele* at National Theatre of Prague.



EWA PLONKA Princess Turandot

Ewa Plonka's recent engagements include her Staatsoper Hamburg, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Washington National Opera debuts as Turandot, Tosca for Dallas Opera, her Zurich Opera debut as Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*), her Polish National Opera debut as Aida, Abigaille (*Nabucco*) for Arena di Verona (also Teatro Massimo, Palermo), Turandot for Teatro Real, Madrid, Oper im Steinbruch St. Margarethen and The Royal Opera (on tour to Japan), Venus (*Tannhäuser*) for The Royal Opera, Foreign Princess (*Rusalka*) for Bayerische Staatsoper, Lady Macbeth for Deutsche Oper am Rhein and Aida for Prague National Theatre. Engagements for 2024/25 include her La Scala, Milan debut as Turandot (also Savonlinna Festival), Aida for Paris Opera, Lady Macbeth for Washington National Opera, Abigaille for Bayerische Staatsoper and Deutsche Oper Berlin, Elisabetta (*Don Carlos*) for Staatsoper Berlin and Tosca for Staatsoper Hamburg.



ANNA PRINCEVA Liù

Anna Princeva trained at conservatories in her hometown of St. Petersburg and in Italy. Since then, she has appeared at opera houses in Bonn, Basel, Freiburg and Graz as well as at Deutsche Oper am Rhein, in roles including Contessa (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*) and Violetta Valéry (*La traviata*), among others. Recent highlights include a recital under Enrique Mazzola and the title role in *Madama Butterfly* at the Bregenz Festival, Nedda (*I Pagliacci*) and Musetta (*La bohème*) at Sydney Opera House, Hélène (*Les Vépres siciliennes*) at Rome Opera, *Madama Butterfly* at Prague State Opera, Alice Ford (*Falstaff*) and Nedda at Staatsoper Hamburg, Mimì (*La bohème*) and *Madama Butterfly* at Staatsoper Berlin and the title role in *Norma* at Opera Antwerpen. For The Royal Opera she has sung Mimì and Nedda. Engagements for 2024/25 include her Glyndebourne Festival debut as Alice Ford.



SONDRA RADVANOVSKY Princess Turandot

American-Canadian soprano Sondra Radvanovsky appears regularly at opera companies worldwide. For The Royal Opera she has sung Maddalena di Coigny (*Andrea Chénier*), Donna Leonora (*La forza del destino*), Roxane (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), Lina (*Stiffelio*), Leonora (*Il trovatore*) and the title roles of *Tosca* and *Manon Lescaut*. She is a regular guest at the Metropolitan Opera, where recent engagements include Flavia Tosca, Aida, Amelia (*Un ballo in maschera*), Norma, Elisabetta (*Roberto Devereux*), Maria Stuarda and Anna Bolena. Recent appearances elsewhere include Luisa Miller and Maddalena di Coigny (Liceu, Barcelona), Flavia Tosca (Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Los Angeles Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper), Elisabetta (San Francisco Opera, Munich), Leonora and Aida (Paris Opera), Amelia (Paris, Zurich Opera) and Norma (Lyric Opera of Chicago, Munich). Recordings include Verdi scenes with Dmitri Hvorostovsky and a solo disc of Verdi arias.



GEMMA SUMMERFIELD Liù

British soprano Gemma Summerfield's recent engagements include Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) for Opera National du Rhin, First Lady (*The Magic Flute*) for Staatsoper Hamburg, Ulana (*Manru*) for Opéra National de Lorraine and concert performances of Delius' *Mass of Life* with the Bergen Philharmonic, Elgar's *The Kingdom* with The Hallé and solo appearances at the Wigmore Hall and Liceu, Barcelona for the Concurso Tenor Viñas Competition. Additional roles have included Mimì (*La bohème*), Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), Ginevra (*Ariodante*) and Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*). Awards include First Prize of the Concurso Tenor Viñas Competition. She made her debut with The Royal Opera in the 2023/24 Season as Micaëla (*Carmen*).



HANSUNG YOO Ping

Hansung Yoo was born and raised in South Korea. He studied classical voice at The Korean National University of Arts in Seoul, Korea. Awards include the 2014 Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, where he was a finalist, and Third Prize in the 2015 Tchaikovsky Competition. Notable recent engagements include Ping for The Royal Opera and on tour with The Royal Opera in Japan (2023/24), Semperoper Dresden, and the Salzburg Easter Festival, his debut as Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*) for Deutsche Oper Berlin, Tonio (*Pagliacci*) for Israeli Opera, Giorgio Germont (*La traviata*) for Korea National Opera and Staatstheater Kassel, and his role debut as Scarpia (*Tosca*), Gunther (*Götterdämmerung*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Donner (*Das Rheingold*) also for Kassel. Engagements for 2024/25 include Ping for Israeli Opera and the title role in *Macbeth* at Theater and Orchester Heidelberg. Engagements for 2025/26 include his Metropolitan Opera debut as Ping.