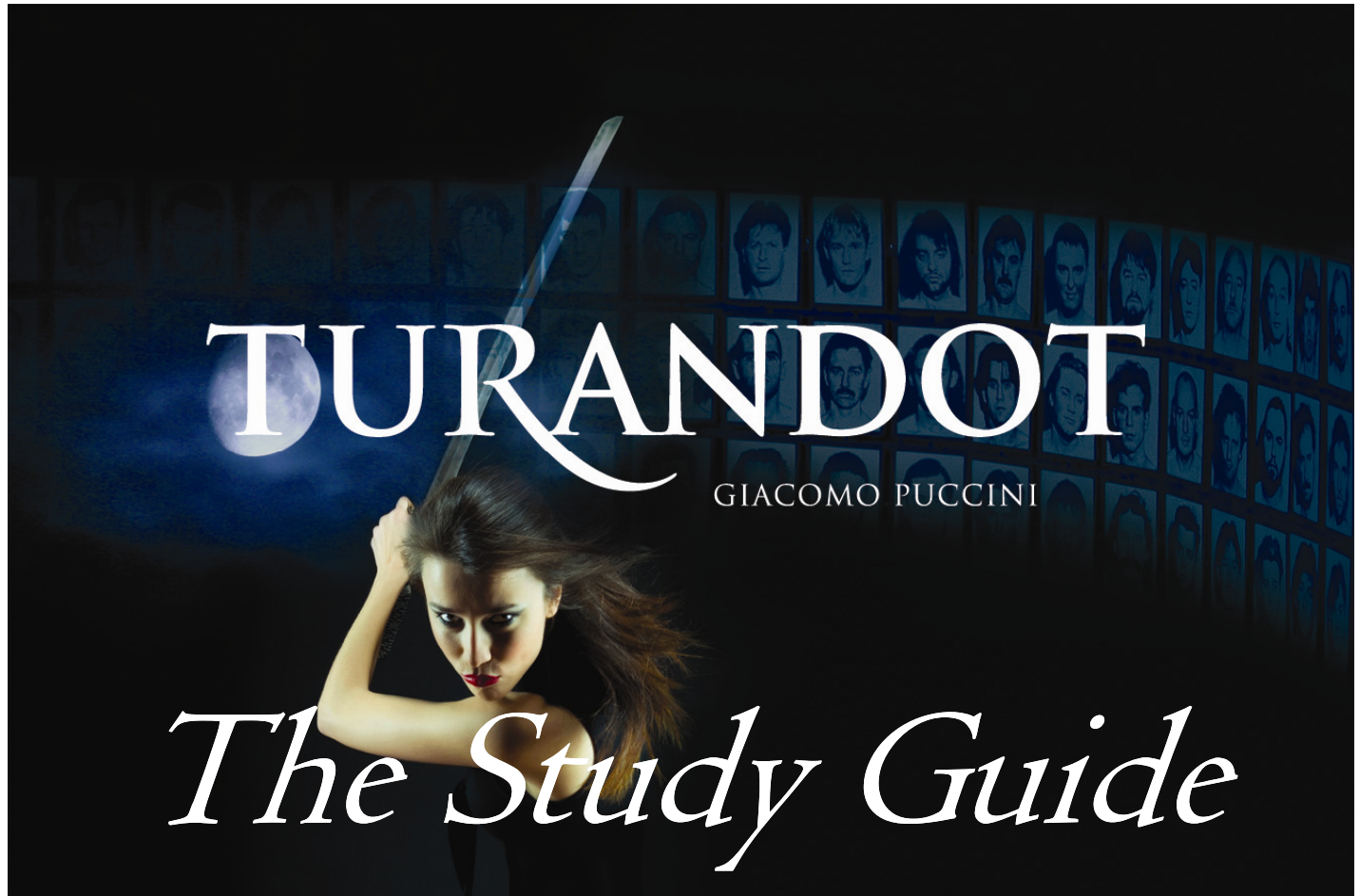




# Education & Outreach

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# synopsis

## Act I

*In Peking, in legendary times.*

The walls of the great Violet City: the Imperial City. The massive ramparts enclose almost the whole stage in a semi-circle.

At sunset, the square is filled with a crowd listening to an announcement from a mandarin. He reads a decree that Turandot, the pure princess, will wed the man who solves her three riddles. Anyone who stands the trial and fails will be executed. The Prince of Persia, her latest unsuccessful suitor, is to meet this fate at moonrise. The crowd calls for his death and demands the executioner, Pu-Tin-Pao.

As the guards thrust back the crowd, Timur, the exiled King of Tartary, falls to the ground, and Liù, his slave-girl attendant, calls for help. A young man runs up: it is Calaf, the Unknown Prince, Timur's son, who has been separated from his father for years. The

usurper of their throne is pursuing them, and they can find no safety.

The chorus sings of the blade being sharpened on the whetstone in preparation for the execution. Timur tells Calaf how Liù has guided his flight. The crowd calls for more young lovers to come forward and accept Turandot's challenge: the riddles are three, but death is one.

As the moon rises, a chorus of boys greets it with a song. Pu-Tin-Pao confronts the Prince of Persia, and leads him off for execution. The crowd now calls on Turandot for mercy. She appears before them, and confirms the sentence of death. Calaf remains awestruck by the Princess, and Liù and Timur try to bring him back to his senses. He

wishes to conquer her, and rushes towards the gong to strike the blow that will announce his challenge.

At this moment, Ping, Pang and Pong, Grand Chancellor, Grand Purveyor and Grand Cook, run forward and block his way. They warn the Unknown Prince that he is in danger



of death and should return to his country. The Princess is not worth the sacrifice; she's nothing but flesh, when all's said and done. Turandot's handmaidens call down for silence, but the three Ministers are still determined to deter Calaf from his course. Ghosts of the dead suitors urge him on, and he invokes triumph and the power of love. The executioner holds aloft the Prince of Persia's head. Timur and Liù plead with him. He begs Liù not to cry. All three ask pity of each other, and the ministers make a final appeal, but the moonlight shines on the gong, and the crowd sings that they are already digging his grave. Calaf rushes to the gong and strikes it like a madman; the ministers laugh raucously, exclaiming that it is useless to protest.

## Act II

### *Scene One*

Ping, Pang and Pong discuss their preparations for what will be either a wedding or a funeral. They lament how China has changed under Turandot's tyranny; instead of the rule of law, everything has been reduced to this terrible contest. Thirteen have already died this year alone. Ping has a house in Honan, Pang a garden in Kiu, Pong has forests near Tsiang, and they long to return to them. They recollect some of the former suitors: princes of Samarkand, India and the Khirgiz, all killed. They pray that the Princess will find a husband and discover the mysteries of love. Trumpets sound, announcing the start of the ceremony.

### *Scene Two*

Eight Sages enter with the sealed answers to Turandot's three riddles. The crowd greets the Sages, and points out Ping, Pang and Pong. Emperor Altoum enters, and the crowd wishes him ten thousand years. The Unknown Prince begs three times to face the trial, and the Emperor calls on him to give up his hopeless quest; he is weary of bloodshed. The mandarin announces the rules of the contest as before, and a chorus of boys announces the approach of the Princess.

Turandot narrates how her remote ancestor, the Princess Lo-u-Ling, was ravished and abducted by a Tartar invader. It is to avenge her death that Turandot has set up her challenge. She warns Calaf of the rule: the riddles are three, but death is one. Calaf contradicts her: it is life that is one. Turandot reads the first riddle: a ghost rises in the night, invoked by all the world, vanishing with dawn but reborn in the heart. Calaf gives the answer: "hope." The Sages open the first scroll: the answer is indeed hope. Turandot dismisses this as the hope that always disappoints, and reads the second riddle: what is it that darts like a flame and is not a flame, that grows cold with death yet blazes with dreams of conquest? Calaf hesitates, then gives the answer: "blood." The crowd shouts their encouragement, and Turandot, enraged, delivers the third question: frost that inflames you, whiteness and darkness that enslaves you if it wants you free, but in taking you captive, makes you king! Turandot sneers at Calaf's hesitation, but then he cries the answer: "Turandot!"

The crowd rejoices at his victory, but Turandot appeals to her father to spare her the shame of marriage like a slave girl to a foreigner. The Emperor declares that the oath is sacred. Turandot implores Calaf not to take her reluctant and shuddering into his arms. He tells her that he only wants her ardent with love, and sets her a riddle of his own: if she can guess his name before daybreak, he is prepared to die. The Emperor prays that the Unknown Prince will survive, and the crowd hails him.

## Act III

### *Scene One*

Night. Heralds are heard issuing the royal command: no one shall sleep in Peking. The stranger's name must be found on pain of death. Calaf repeats their cry and imagines Turandot in her cold room, looking at the stars as they tremble with love and hope. His secret is locked within him, and no one shall know his name until he speaks it with a kiss. When dawn breaks, he will win!

Ping, Pang and Pong sidle up to him with temptations: if it's love he wants, they can offer him maidens; if it's riches, then they have treasures; if it is glory, they'll arrange his escape to a victory anywhere but here. When he refuses, they threaten him with tortures, and fear that they, too, will be tortured to death if they fail. Just as they are about to attack him, the guards bring in Timur and Liù. Calaf denies that they know him. When Turandot appears, Ping announces his intention to torture the name out of them. First Timur is dragged forward, but Liù goes towards Turandot and tells her that the Prince's name is known only to her. She cries out under torture, but refuses to give up her secret. Turandot wants to know what has given her such strength to withstand torment, and she tells her that it is love. Turandot is moved for a moment, then orders her ministers to tear her secret from her. Ping and the crowd call for Pu-Tin-Pao, but when the executioner appears, Liù seizes his knife and stabs herself to death. She dies at Turandot's feet. Timur mourns for Liù. As

they carry the body away, even Ping, Pang and Pong feel pity.

As Liù's funeral procession moves away, Calaf is left facing Turandot. He calls on her to lift her veil and look upon the blood that was shed for her. She refuses: her soul is on high. Calaf clasps her in his arms and kisses her. Turandot admits that dawn has broken, and her sun is now setting. Calaf greets the dawn as the beginning of her glory, not the end. Turandot begins to reconcile her conflicting emotions, but still she begs him to leave with his secret. Calaf tells her that there is no mystery now: he is Calaf, the son of Timur. Turandot's spirit returns with this revelation: now he is in her power, and she can demand his trial before the people. Calaf declares that she has conquered.

#### *Scene Two*

The crowd greets the Emperor. Turandot advances towards him, and tells him that she knows the Unknown Prince's name: it is Love. Calaf and Turandot embrace, while the crowd acclaims the glory of love.



Ping, Pang and Pong in the Christopher Alden production of *Turandot*



# Puccini: The man and his music

'...The Almighty touched me with his little finger and said, 'Write for the theatre—mind, only for the theatre.'"

~~Giacomo Puccini



Son of composer Michele Puccini and the fifth musician in his line, Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, Italy on December 22,

1858. The Puccinis were a fixture in provincial Lucca, having served as organists and choirmasters in St. Martin's Cathedral for 100 years. The post was a hereditary one, and the eldest Puccini boy of each generation served the cathedral as a birthright.

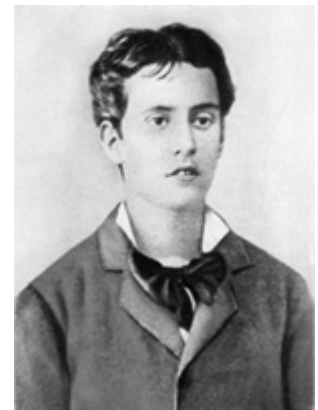
At 5 years old, Puccini lost his father. His musical training fell to his uncle, Fortunato Magi, who did not find him the most apt pupil. Puccini was often distracted; he skipped school and didn't practice. His uncle found he had "neither the ear ... nor the calling of a musician." But he had an hereditary role to fill and began study with Carlo Angeloni under whom he made great progress. Before reaching his majority, Puccini played organ for the churches of Lucca and taught music to the town's children.

By this time, the boy determined that he would make his way in music. Before he was 18, Puccini entered a music competition with a hymn he had composed

in honor of King Victor Emmanuel II. It was returned to Puccini with comments from the committee chair urging him to study his musical technique.

Far from crushed, young Puccini was still resolved to pursue music and, undaunted by distance and poverty, he walked the 25 miles to Pisa to attend a performance of Verdi's new masterpiece, *Aïda*. *Aïda* hit the aimless youth like a bolt of lightning. He would compose operas! Puccini renewed his musical studies with vigor. He soon exhausted his opportunities in Lucca and turned his sights to the Milan Conservatory. He received a study grant from Queen Margaret of Savoy and moved to Milan.

Accepted to the conservatory, Puccini applied himself to his studies diligently enough to earn him the respect of his teachers: Antonio Bazzini, director of the Conservatory, and Amilcare Ponchielli, composition teacher and successful opera composer in his own right. These two invited young Puccini to their



A very young Puccini homes, introduced him to Milan's musical and literary luminaries, and, most of all, encouraged and challenged him to write music.



Amilcare Ponchielli

In 1883, at 25, Puccini graduated from the Conservatory. He had received critical praise for his final project and decided to enter a competition requiring a one-act opera. Ponchielli put Puccini in touch with Ferdinando Fontana, who had a libretto ready to be set. The composer liked the story, a fantastic tale of a faithless young man cursed by a coven of women who died abandoned by their lovers. He set it to music and submitted the finished opera, *Le Villi*, to the committee. Unfortunately, when the contest results were announced, no mention of Puccini's piece was made. All was not lost, however. Puccini's one-act found a champion in Giulio Ricordi and premiered in 1884 with a favorable response.

Ricordi had a keen awareness of talent—even talent as raw as the inexperienced Puccini's—and he wanted to foster the career of this promising youth. He bought the rights for *Le Villi* and commissioned another opera from the fledgling composer. This was quite an opportunity since Ricordi owned one of the great publishing companies and was, in fact, Verdi's own publisher. Ricordi's interest in Puccini flourished and bloomed into a life-long association between the publishing house and composer.

Puccini started work on his new opera, *Edgar*, but distractions tore him from his work and slowed his composition. He had met his future wife, Elvira Gemignani. Unfortunately, she was still married to one of Puccini's old classmates, and the lovers created a firestorm of controversy when Elvira chose to leave her husband and join Puccini in Milan.

It took four years for Puccini to compose *Edgar*. The libretto didn't speak to Puccini's peculiar genius for "little souls" in extraordinary situations. The opera received tepid praise, but Ricordi saw improvement from *Le Villi* and pressed on with Puccini, commissioning another opera, the subject of which he left to the composer.

Puccini decided upon *Manon Lescaut*, a risky topic, as it had already been set by Massenet with great success. Still, it touched Puccini, and he opened his version in 1893. Audience reception was wildly enthusiastic. Never again was Puccini to garner such accolades. *Manon Lescaut* gave him international notoriety and Ricordi's faith was well-rewarded.

Next came *La Bohème*, based upon Mürger's novel, *Scènes de la vie de bohème*. Puccini was confident and sure of his dramatic sensibility, causing him to be maddeningly specific with his librettists, Illica and Giacosa. His specificity paid off. *Bohème* was a public triumph. Critics may have pooh-poohed it, but the public acclaim quickly swept it from theater to theater, country to country and continent to continent. It remains today, unequivocally, a masterpiece of the operatic stage.



Elvira Puccini

Puccini was on top. He ventured into *verismo* with *Tosca*, a vivid, disturbing, slightly sadistic opera. The public was enthralled. Seven curtain calls rocked the theater. Indeed, *Tosca* was an unqualified success despite the critics' harping on the lurid subject matter.

After *Tosca* came the much-anticipated *Madama Butterfly*. Every indication pointed to another victory for the composer, but the premiere garnered laughter during Puccini's carefully constructed scenes, boos and jeers so raucous as to beg credulity. Many feel that Puccini's rivals orchestrated the debacle. Humbled, Puccini re-worked his *Butterfly*, the opera he felt to be his masterpiece. Its second opening fared better than the first. Audiences roared their approval, giving Puccini twelve curtain calls. *Butterfly* was vindicated.

While his professional life was a triumph, Puccini's personal life kept descending into painful chaos. His wife, Elvira, continued to have violently jealous outbursts and she accused a maid in their home of seducing her husband. While Puccini had had myriad infidelities, their maid, Doria Manfredi, was not one of them. Elvira was adamant, however, and her outspoken accusations and denunciations led to the suicide of the persecuted Doria. Doria's family sued Elvira and she was fined and sentenced to prison time. Puccini managed to avoid this humiliation by settling with the family. He did so, however, at great personal cost; he



The ill-fated Doria Manfredi

fell into a deep despair and his emotional state was such that he could no longer write.

To flee his depression and his



A ship's officer, Tito Ricordi, Puccini and Puccini's son Antonio aboard the *Lusitania*, circa 1910

harpy wife, Puccini sailed for New York. Here he saw *The Girl of the Golden West*, a play by David Belasco, whose earlier work had inspired *Madama Butterfly*. Excited by the theatrical possibilities of the Wild West, Puccini approached Ricordi and got an agreement. The result, *La fanciulla del West*, was another phenomenal success. Following this, Puccini wrote *La Rondine*, which was also praised, but Puccini felt at odds with himself and the piece. He felt old. His friend and mentor, Ricordi, had died, and he had a less cordial relationship with Ricordi's son. *La Rondine* felt as if he were repeating himself; World War I had engulfed the planet, and Puccini needed to change.

He devoured other composers' scores and kept abreast of the new musical language of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He produced *Il Trittico*, a series of three one-act operas. The public accepted and liked it, but the critics were unnerved by the maestro's new vocabulary and remained cool. The press felt Puccini couldn't, at 61, write better than *Bohème* and *Butterfly*. Puccini knew better and restlessly cast about for a plot which would allow him to explore his brave new ideas more fully. He had absorbed Stravinsky, Webern, Berg, Schoenberg, and Debussy. Finally *Turandot* presented itself to him and

he feverishly began work on what was to become his swan song.

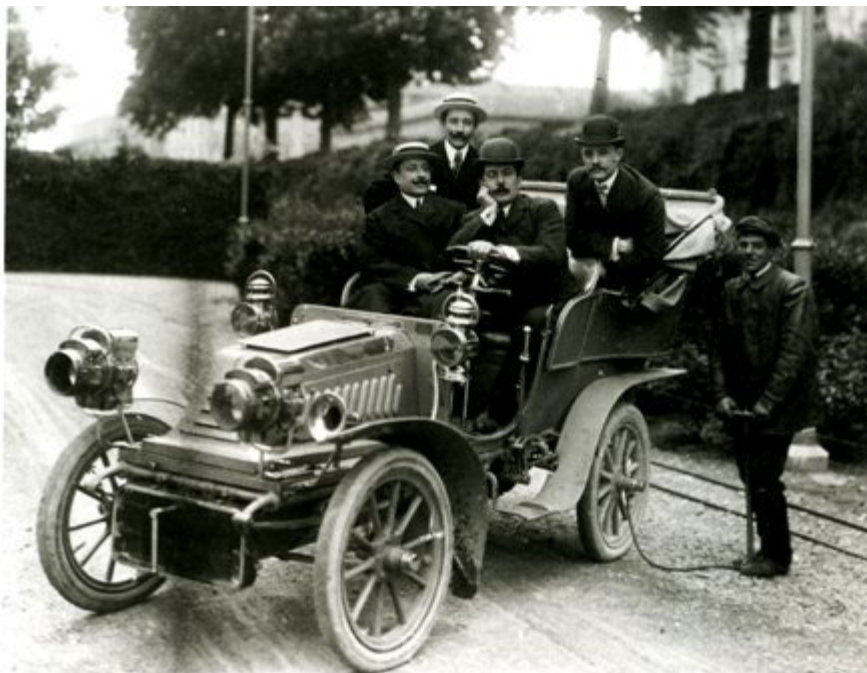
By now, though, Puccini was ill, complaining of throat pain and constant coughing. Eventually, he was diagnosed with throat cancer. He was very sick and feverishly working on *Turandot's* final duet when he passed away in November 1924 after a debilitating treatment regimen. The world mourned his passing. La Scala cancelled performances, and a funeral procession in his honor was attended by thousands.

Puccini's legacy is the interweaving of music with drama so seamlessly that even as his most elegantly crafted music is played, the drama of the moment supercedes all else. He is a sublime communicator, reaching audiences across the years and continuing to arrest our hearts



Gatti Casazza, playwright David Balasco, Toscanini, and Puccini

with a dramatic perfection wholly accessible and eternal.



Puccini loved fast cars, fast boats, hunting and fishing.



# Swan Song: Puccini's *Turandot*

"Poor boy. Obviously, he went crazy during the night...Ah, well, He's not the first lunatic in a high place, and I daresay he won't be the last."

~~*Brighella on Calaf in Carlo Gozzi's 18<sup>th</sup> century play, Turandot*~~



Carlo Gozzi

Many composers have tried their hands at setting Gozzi's fairy tale play to music. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Danzi, Reissiger, Vesque von Puttlinger, Bassini and Rehbaum all

dashed themselves against the cold and stony heart of Turandot. More famous composers, drawn to the vivid personality of the Chinese princess wrote incidental music for Gozzi's brilliantly witty tragicomedy. Weber and Lachner, for instance, scored Schiller's German adaptation and Busoni, most famous of the "lesser" *Turandot* composers, set Karl Vollmoeller's 1911 translation of Gozzi's play. Of all of the attempts at an operatic telling, only Puccini's towering, musically ambitious, emotionally charged *Turandot* still graces opera houses today. But without the *commedia* flourishes and fairy tale conventions of Gozzi's highly successful play, the libretto, heavily influenced by Puccini's desires as an artist and needs as a composer for "words to music already written," presents dramaturgical dilemmas.

Why would Calaf continue to pursue the icy Turandot after she has had Liù tortured,

resulting in the slave girl's suicide? It defies credulity and lessens the audience's sympathy for the tenor. And how, exactly, in the course of the serious, "authentic" opera Puccini set up in the first two acts, are we to believe that the man-hating Turandot should succumb to Calaf's kiss? In the context of Gozzi's play the balance so skillfully wrought by the playwright among comedy, tragedy, fairy tale and romance would make such a question ridiculous and churlish, but Puccini set himself up for an overwhelming climax of redemptive love, and in doing so changed characters substantively enough that the question is reasonable and one the composer asked himself and agonized over. Finally, how can Calaf, Turandot's subjects and the audience forget—not just forgive—the fact that Turandot is a murderess? How to resolve these questions? Puccini's untimely death precludes us from ever knowing his answer.

But the savage, thundering beauty of his last score invites us to imagine his resolution and mourn its loss.



Carlo Goldoni

Puccini was notoriously cautious about choosing his subjects. After his first two operas, he had been careful of

his topics and since *Manon Lescaut*, all fed into his genius for depicting ordinary people navigating impossible emotional situations. Lately, though, Puccini had felt music—indeed life—leaving him behind. *La Rondine* had pleased audiences, but left critics shrugging their shoulders. His last work, *Il trittico*, had achieved critical acclaim only with *Gianni Schicchi*. Several projects were started and abandoned, none allowing Puccini the opportunity to tap into the modern modes of musical expression with which he longed to experiment. In 1920, he lunched with librettists Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, and Simoni suggested *Turandot*.

*Turandot* was an eighteenth century Italian play by Carlo Gozzi. Written as part of a series of fantastical comedies which included *The Love for Three Oranges*, this collection of Venetian *commedia*

*dell'arte* was a direct response to Carlo Goldoni's popular naturalistic comedies. Gozzi and Goldoni had conducted a very public battle over theatre forms, Gozzi representing the older, "nobler" forms of Renaissance *commedia dell'arte* and Goldoni championing the more realistic comedies popular in France at the time. Gozzi perceived Goldoni's plays as "trivial." Particularly galling to the patrician Gozzi was Goldoni's insistence on using characters pulled from the Venetian lower classes. Goldoni responded to these attacks by referring Gozzi to the packed theatres presenting his "low comedies". To which Gozzi replied in a pamphlet he circulated throughout Venice, "any novelty, even Truffaldino and a dancing bear [would

attract a large public]". Then, to prove his point, Gozzi wrote his unnatural fairy tales, starring nobly born heroes, remarkable adventures, and true love, all in the old *commedia* form.

*Turandot* coupled *commedia* with the exotic "Orient," just being exploited by European and American artists at the time. The *commedia* was imposed upon the Chinese setting with the "masks", Brighella, Truffaldino, Pantelone, and Tartaglia. Puccini retained these in the form of Ping, Pang and Pong, their names and function in *Turandot's* court changed to make them

more "authentic," though they still act as Italian bureaucrats would! Gozzi's play encapsulates two mega-themes, the battle between the sexes and the redemptive power of love. Gozzi sourced his play from a story in *The Arabian Nights*.



Adami, Puccini and Simone

Though the action of both works shares elements, Gozzi's and Puccini's treatments of *Turandot* are fundamentally different. Gozzi couched his war of the sexes in farcical fairy tale; for Puccini the stakes were much higher. After Simoni suggested the premise, Puccini agreed on *Turandot* but insisted on fundamental changes which would make it his own. He added the fragile soprano Liù as a tragic foil for the cruel *Turandot*. In Gozzi, Adelma, *Turandot's* favorite slave and a Tartar princess, takes Liù's place. Adelma betrays Calaf in a jealous rage because he prefers possible death at *Turandot's* hands than to escape with her. Liù is, in contrast, loyalty personified, dying for the memory of Calaf's

smile. Her Puccinian antecedents are Mimi and Butterfly. Turandot herself underwent a complete makeover in the Puccini. In Gozzi, she is far more human in some ways, a true dichotomy. Her transformation from demon to ideal lover is much more believable because Gozzi hints at it all the way through the play. Gozzi's Turandot is motivated by her own wish to remain free and by her distrust of men. Puccini's Turandot is motivated by revenge, not on her own behalf but that of her legendary ancestress Princess Lo-u-ling, who was kidnapped and raped, and who now "lives within her." Puccini uses Liù's sacrifice as the catalyst for Turandot's change, whereas Gozzi's princess contains the possibility of change within her already.

By 1920, Adami and Simoni had reworked the original idea enough to satisfy Puccini. In 1921, Puccini was sketching in some music. By 1922, he

had finished orchestrating the first act and begun work on the second. As he was scoring Act 2 in 1923, the maestro began to suffer from a painful sore throat and coughing fits, but because he had always smoked heavily, Puccini did not suspect anything more sinister than his usual smoker's cough and chose to ignore his illness and get on with his work.

Early in 1924, the second act was finished and he began to feverishly write the third act up until Liù's death. This scene, which Puccini had insisted upon in 1922,

presented Adami and Simoni the dramatic problems mentioned earlier. The final duet between Calaf and Turandot was a constant bone of contention, and none of Simoni's solutions satisfied Puccini. Puccini demanded an earth shattering love duet where the characters are "transformed into human beings through love." Puccini's greatest achievements had always been based upon true and ardent love destroying a gentle soul, but now, instead of depicting love as a destructive force, he wanted love as the ultimate redemption. He told his librettists of his intent to explicitly use Liù's death as the impetus of Turandot's transformation in a 1922 letter. Why this idea, which would have solved the dramatic

flaw of the opera, was abandoned is unknown. Perhaps, in the confusion over how to finish the opera after Puccini's death, this solution was lost in the shuffle.

By 1924, the pain in Puccini's throat had

become unbearable and after consulting his physician, he was diagnosed with throat cancer. The final two scenes of the opera had yet to be written. Puccini ultimately accepted Adami's fourth version of the last duet and began to compose from his bed in a Belgium sanitarium. On November 24, he underwent radiation therapy and an operation. Four days later, he died of heart failure. The opera remained incomplete. Only unintelligible sketches in Puccini's hand existed for the finale. Toscanini, who was to conduct the opening and had worked closely with Puccini during the last several



The death of Liu as envisioned by Christopher Alden



Franco Alfano

months of his life, suggested that Ricardo Zandonai complete the work. Puccini's son refused this suggestion, concerned that Zandonai was "too well known" and offered Franco Alfano as an alternative.

Alfano, after initially refusing, accepted the commission.

Alfano had written a successful opera of his own and immediately set to work completing a dramatically workable ending for Puccini's unfinished work. He presented Toscanini with his finished score in January 1926. Toscanini refused it, however, considering that Alfano had imposed too many of his own ideas. The conductor forced Alfano to cut much of his own connecting music, creating a truncated and unsatisfying denouement which continued to anger Alfano until his death.

The opera premiered in April 1926, 17 months after Puccini's death. At that performance, following Liù's death and the chorus' mournful, *Oblia! Liù, poesia!*, Toscanini put down his baton and said, "Here ends the opera...because at this point the Maestro died." Alfano's abbreviated ending was performed the following night and continues to conclude the opera to this day.



## Around the world in 1926

- ◆ Queen Elizabeth II of England born
- ◆ Fascist youth organizations Ballilla in Italy and Hitlerjugend in Germany founded
- ◆ Germany admitted to the League of Nations
- ◆ Hirohito succeeds his father as Emperor of Japan
- ◆ Dr. Joseph Goebbels named Nazi Gauleiter of Berlin
- ◆ Book of the Month Club founded.
- ◆ A.A. Milne: "Winnie the Pooh"
- ◆ "Jelly Roll" Morton's first recordings of jazz appear
- ◆ Sigmond Romberg: "The Desert Song"
- ◆ Kodak produces the first 16mm movie film
- ◆ Permanent wave invented by Antonio Buzzacchino
- ◆ Tunney wins the heavyweight boxing championship from Dempsey

### How do you say *that*?

Altoum.....	ahl-toom
Calaf.....	Cah-lahf
Liù.....	Lyoo
Timur.....	Tee-moor
Turandot.....	Too-rahndot



# Context: Who was Carlo Gozzi?

“You may not have noticed it, but I am not, myself, of Chinese descent.”

~~Pantalone, Chief Minister to the Emperor of China,  
In Gozzi's play *Turandot*~~

Carlo Gozzi was funny. Very funny. And witty, intelligent, urbane, patrician, judgmental, ornery, caustic...a son of the decadent nobility in the Age of Revolution, a pauper scion of a lordly family in decline, like 18<sup>th</sup> century Venice herself, partying its way into dissolute insignificance. Not that Gozzi was dissolute. No, Carlo Gozzi was mindful of his pride and place, a touchy traditionalist who viewed with disgust his family's frittering away of its dwindling wealth and who viewed the French ideals of the Enlightenment with horror and derision. He was not an egalitarian.

Count Carlo Gozzi was born in 1720 to an old Venetian family. They had had money and prestige, but by the time their sixth child, Carlo, came of age, there was so little money left that he was compelled to join the military to support himself. After three years, he returned to his home to find his family in woeful decline. His mother was dead and his father, having suffered a stroke, unable to speak. His sister-in-law, wife of his equally talented

brother Gasparo, who became one of the very first true journalists and who shared many of his brother's convictions, was in charge of the household until Gozzi *pere* died. The death of the patriarch stirred the wasps' nest of dissention carefully papered over previously, and through nine lawsuits the family raged against itself. Slowly, over the years, the family cannibalized their hereditary home in Friuli, selling bricks and beams to pay lawyers and trades people. Their Venetian villa was slowly broken into apartments, rented and sold. The Palazzo Gozzi still exists today and one may visit it in an unfashionable part of the city near the church of San Cassiano.

Carlo Gozzi, meanwhile, distracted himself from this “mirror of misery” by retreating into literary pursuits

which supported his conservative politics. In 1747, Gozzi co-founded the Accademia dei Granelleschi, a group of dedicated defenders of Venetian art and literature, who purposed to “restore the purity of the language undermined by the innovations of Francophiles.” One of these innovations



Alexander Moissi as Prince Kalaf in Gozzi's *Turandot*, 1911

had begun to infiltrate the Venetian theater. Carlo Goldoni, an Italian playwright gaining great popularity with his newfangled plays, had abandoned the old *commedia dell'arte* forms in favor of more realistic, naturalistic comedies, featuring familiar Venetian characters from real life, much like the French playwright Beaumarchais who was to become one of the voices of the French Revolution. Gozzi detested the new style of comedy, with its protagonists taken from the Venetian hoi polloi, and fought back with pamphlets and poetry at first, but finally with fantastic fairy tale plays which paired extravagant, exotic plots with traditional *commedia dell'arte* techniques and some wicked satire. The first of these was *The Love for Three Oranges* in 1761, which was a raging and immediate success. Over the next four years, he produced nine more, including *Turandot* and *The Green Bird*. Goldoni, who was a pleasant and non-confrontational man, left the Venetian field and plied his trade elsewhere, rather than put up with the unreasonable irascibility of Gozzi. Gozzi's confrontational style did not subside after this victory, however.

Instead, Gozzi took his pugnaciousness into the realm of love, fending off two rivals for his mistress's favors. Gozzi embroiled himself in a scandal involving Teodora Bartoli-Ricci, the leading lady of many of his plays and the mistress of Giovanni Antonio Sacco, a celebrated *Arlecchino* and the leader of a *commedia* troupe of which Teodora was a member. While her husband quietly endured, other members of the company broke into factions, favoring the suit of either Gozzi or Sacco. The troupe imploded. Meanwhile, yet another suitor, Gratarol, a Venetian bureaucrat, raised Gozzi's hackles. Gozzi dipped his poison pen into the inkwell for another play,

*Il Droghe dell'Amore*, over which Gratarol sued for libel. Gozzi was saved a humiliating defeat by his powerful and vindictive cousin, Caterina Dolfin Tron, who was so without compunction that Gratarol was forced to flee Venice, never to return as he was sentenced to death *in absentia*! All of his assets became the property of the state. Gratarol circulated a pamphlet lambasting Gozzi, which Gozzi replied to with the *Trivial memoirs of the Life of Carlo Gozzi*, which the Encyclopedia Britannica characterizes as "a vivid, if immodest autobiography." Gozzi thoroughly enjoyed his victory and his position as a "living legend."

His "living legend" status was short-lived however. After the success of his fairy tale plays, he tried his hand at tragedy into which he introduced comic elements. The critics were upset by this genre-bending and the plays were unpopular. He then tried his hand at some Spanish influenced works, which enjoyed a moderate reception. He died on April 4, 1806.

In Italy, his works were enjoyed during his time, but came to be viewed as dated. The German Romantics, however, rediscovered his work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had wonderful fun with it. Friedrich Schiller adapted Gozzi's *Turandot* into a tragedy, and in general, the Germans loved Gozzi's fairy tale plays, comparing him favorably with Shakespeare. The French, too, adored him during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sharing the Germanic love for folk and fairy stories. It is interesting then, that the Italians abandoned Gozzi for more realistic fare, until Puccini claimed *Turandot* as his own.



# Context: Confronting Turandot

“Come, stranger, what is the ice that gives fire?”

~~ Turandot to Calaf, the final riddle in the Riddle Scene~~

Turandot...the ice that gives fire, the contradiction, the conundrum...the enigma. Of all of Puccini's heroines, Turandot is unique. She is secure in her power—indeed she, of all his heroines has *real* power over others. She holds the power of life and death over her suitors and all China...something Mimi, Tosca and Butterfly did not, even if Tosca and Butterfly did display a little initiative in sacrificing themselves. For Tosca, death was to pursue vengeance (“Scarpia! Before God!”), for Butterfly, honor. Turandot's foil, Liù, commits suicide for love of Calaf, and to win for him Turandot's love. But Turandot is unique, and with this proud, cruel,

vengeful woman, Puccini gives us an unexpected challenge. How do we cope with her? How do we reconcile ourselves to the death of the innocent Liù? How do we simply forget her when Calaf wins Turandot with something as banal as a kiss? This is opera, of course, and a fairy tale, too, so that might allow us to gloss over these little plot points, but it is Puccini's curse in *this* opera that he create such human monstrosities. Despite ourselves, we care, and we take Puccini seriously. We trust him to wrap this up for us with the same satisfaction we feel when Tosca leaps from the Castel Sant' Angelo.



Poster for Dallas Opera production of *Turandot*, original art by Kinuko Craft

Unlike his source material, Puccini

does not allow his characters to be the standard actors in a plot which detaches us from identifying too closely with them. We are delighted by Calaf's and Turandot's love and marriage in Gozzi's play; and even, as in most great



A commedia dell'arte vision of *Turandot* from Odyssey Theater

tragicomedies, a little uncomfortable, but mostly we feel pretty good about the way things turned out. Gozzi's dead suitors are primarily abstract, and he doesn't give us *Liù*. *Liù*, whom we love—who has taken responsibility for another, Calaf's father, who also loves her—her death has the possibility of ruining not only herself but a blind old man, who, should his son be defeated by Turandot, will have no recourse. *Liù*'s death, spurred by her torture, is an unforgivable breach. One can almost forgive Turandot. After all, *Liù* is hardly her responsibility, and she has been set up for this. She is acting in character. But Calaf? How can we forgive Calaf's callousness? He reproaches Turandot and seems to claim her all in the same breath! After all this, why would he *want* her? The answer must lie within Turandot and Puccini's intent for her.

I must confess that *Turandot* is one of my favorite operas. It was the first opera that made me cry for sheer excitement at its beauty. At nineteen, it was the opera a friend handed me when he said I should pursue opera as a career, and it is the one on permanent rotation in my husband's car. I am predisposed to love it and see its genius. But I have always felt dissatisfied by its denouement. Of course, I am not alone, and I was somewhat mollified when I

learned years ago that the “slam, bam, thank you, ma'am” ending wasn't composed by Puccini, who had died before he completed the final, crucial scene. But the longer I

have lived with this troublesome beauty, the more I sense that Puccini must have planted the seeds necessary for this love to bloom before, that he must have had an understanding of Turandot that I simply wasn't seeing, since I still have a hard time not being annoyed with Calaf's single-minded pursuit. I don't think that I am alone. Others have tried to tease out how this setup can end happily with much more success than I, and here, I will present three arguments and interpretations for viewing *Turandot*. I am not sure that I agree entirely with any of them, but each of them have informed my inevitable pleasure in Puccini's final opera.

In their invaluable book, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines*, Geoffrey and Ryan Edwards address this “sympathy issue” by suggesting that Franco Alfano was simply incapable of fulfilling Puccini's wishes, intimating that Puccini understood the underlying problem and would have addressed it, had he not died. The problem with this is that Puccini himself was incredibly concerned about it and rejected four of his librettists' attempts to write a credible final scene. The one he finally accepted still seems to lack the essential transformative moment, but it is true that many an unsatisfactory dramaturgical moment in opera has been made deeply



*Princess Turandot* by Silvano Campeggi satisfying by the music. The final solution that Alfano created was gutted by Toscanini, because he felt that Alfano had inserted too much original music into the score, instead of relying solely on the almost unintelligible notes left behind by Puccini. Alfano's original ending did, indeed, contain much that was his own, but also created 8 bars of music for the life-altering kiss, which after Toscanini's amputation became, according to musicologist Linda Fairtile, "five thumps and a grand pause [instead of an] eight-bar orchestral tutti." Toscanini ruthlessly cut this as well as some "luxuriously scored passages," and the final soaring solo obbligato lines and complex orchestrations of the final chorus. To be charitable, the result falls somewhat short of the "something vast, something grandiose" that Puccini envisioned. In his alteration, Toscanini also dropped a total of 24 lines of text from the end of the act, lines that might help the audience to "come around" as it were and embrace the ending more comfortably. So, perhaps it wasn't Alfano who was at fault. Some critics certainly didn't think so. Claudio Sartori, for instance, "absolved Alfano of responsibility, observing that '*Turandot* is not an unfinished opera, but rather an opera that cannot be finished, and it was fortunate for Puccini that he died

before realizing his failure.'" Geoffrey and Ryan Edwards don't view it this way, citing evidence within the context of what Puccini *did* write which argues for the idea that Turandot's ultimately passionate and loving nature was inside all along and that she was fighting her essential self in trying to rid herself of the almost demonic vengefulness she nurtures on behalf of her long-dead ancestress, Lo-u-ling. In this argument, Liù, who never expected Calaf to actually love her, becomes merely a catalyst to Turandot's redemption. By dying, Liù "[embodies] the ennobling power of love, which Turandot herself must come to recognize." When she sees Liù's sacrifice, Turandot is unnerved and is ready to submit to Calaf's kiss and her essential loving self. There is evidence in Puccini's own letters that that is how Puccini may have seen it. If this is true, Puccini's changes to Gozzi's heroine eviscerate her power by denying her autonomy. Ultimately, she becomes less self-determining than the Puccini heroines who allow themselves to be undone by men.

In seeking to make Turandot more human, Puccini changed the motivation from a proto-feminist ideal (Gozzi's Turandot "loathes" men on principal, and refuses to submit to one and lose her freedom. Gozzi trivializes this motivation for comic effect, but it is an autonomous motivation nonetheless.). He raises the stakes for Turandot by making her serve a higher purpose: justice (vengeance) for the kidnapped, murdered and raped Princess Lo-u-ling. Turandot explains that Lo-u-ling, "the flower of my race, took refuge within my soul." This could be read as in some way a possession. Turandot is helpless to stop her cruelty; she answers to a higher power, in this case, Lo-u-ling. It takes the blood sacrifice of Liù to release Turandot from "possession" and Calaf's kiss to reclaim her soul. Turandot still views love as a zero sum game, however, and it takes Calaf relinquishing any power over her by telling her his name to finally enable her to move past her fear of possession ("no man shall

possess me”), impotency and death. She can move from being a tool of vengeance to Calaf’s beloved wife.

Ping-hui Liao argues something like this in his 1993 article *Hope, Recollection, Repetition: “Turandot” Revisited*, but he goes significantly farther in seeing *Turandot* as representative of Puccini’s politics. Liao casts Puccini’s *Turandot* and China as benighted, in need of rescuing, civilizing. Calaf is the strong leader that the people and the Princess need to turn them from darkness. In Liao’s reading, Puccini uses Calaf to co-opt the Princess by turning her words and musical motifs against her. He speaks her language and makes it his own. In doing so, he takes from her in the hope that something new will be created. Liù becomes a conduit—a reminder of Calaf’s past and her death is a bridge to his and *Turandot*’s new future together. There is an implicit and explicit longing in *Turandot* and her subjects for this new order of things for *Turandot* personally, and for the people politically.

Both of these readings are the Newmans’ and Liao’s readings are interesting and lend something to the discussion of Puccini’s most puzzling heroine, but I cannot help



George Lin painting of *Turandot*

feeling as if we do her an injustice by stripping her of self-determination or burdening her with a post-colonial reading. I am still not satisfied by her character, but if I allow myself to be lulled by the cadence of “once upon a time” the opera works for me again. The deaths of all those princes



Birgitte Nilsson as *Turandot*

are ritualized to the point of religion, the law of the Princess and the land is inviolate. *Turandot* is washed of the blood on her hands by the internal logic of a fairy tale, as familiar as Andrew Lang’s *The Green Fairy Book*. Perhaps, in this case, looking too closely for answers obscures the only possible solution: It is what it is.

## Did you know...?

- ◆ Puccini had no less than five middle names? His full name is Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini
- ◆ Puccini grew to dislike one of his most famous arias, *Vissi d’arte* from *Tosca*, because he felt it interrupted the flow of the opera. Try telling the soprano that it is being cut!
- ◆ Puccini’s home was turned into a museum, the Villa Museo Puccini. He, his wife and son are all buried here.
- ◆ Puccini loved modern technology and was pen pals with Thomas Edison
- ◆ One fourth of the opera performances in the world are of Puccini’s operas *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*
- ◆ Pavarotti’s 1990 recording of *Nessun dorma* for the World Cup reached number 2 on the United Kingdom’s singles chart.



# What do you call *that*?

<b>Aria</b>	<i>(ah-ree-ah) a solo song. In opera, arias are often used to tell the audience what the character is thinking or feeling—like a monologue in plays</i>
<b>Recitative</b>	<i>(reh-chih-tah-teev) literally, “to recite.” Lines that are sung rather than spoken, and forward the action of the story. They are often followed by arias or ensembles which tell how the characters feel about the situation.</i>
<b>Ensemble</b>	<i>Group singing, or the group itself. An ensemble can be a chorus of 50 or a duet—it just has to have more than one singer singing at the same time.</i>
<b>Duet</b>	<i>Two people singing together</i>
<b>Trio</b>	<i>Three people singing together</i>
<b>Quartet</b>	<i>Four people singing together</i>
<b>Opera</b>	<i>The plural form of the Latin word, opus, which literally translated means “work”. A play that is sung, usually with orchestral accompaniment</i>
<b>Soprano</b>	<i>The highest female voice. Turandot and Liu are sopranos.</i>
<b>Mezzo soprano</b>	<i>The middle female voice—in a choir, a second soprano or first alto.</i>
<b>Contralto</b>	<i>The lowest female voice</i>
<b>Tenor</b>	<i>The highest male voice. Calaf is a tenor.</i>
<b>Baritone</b>	<i>The middle male voice. Pang and Pong are baritones.</i>
<b>Bass</b>	<i>The lowest male voice. Timur is a bass.</i>
<b>Trouser or pants role</b>	<i>In some operas, a mezzo soprano plays a young man or a boy whose voice hasn’t changed yet. This is a very old operatic convention.</i>
<b>Set</b>	<i>Short for “setting”. The scenery the singers/actors work on.</i>
<b>Conductor</b>	<i>The leader of the orchestra and singers. Just like on a train, the conductor keeps everything on track.</i>
<b>Props</b>	<i>Short for “properties.” Anything onstage that is not part of the set or the costumes.</i>



## To find out more...

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# Hungry for More?

Join us for some of these exciting, informative events! Your opera experience doesn't have to begin with the downbeat or end with the curtain call!

## Opera Insights

One hour prior to every regular performance, join Portland Opera's resident music historian, Bob Kingston, for an illuminating inside look at that evening's (or afternoon's!) performance! This is a free event. Just show up at the theater an hour prior to the performance and head on up to the first balcony.

## Backtalk

Directly following each of our performances, join General Director Christopher Mattaliano for a conversation about the performance—ask questions, give feedback—it's an opportunity to decompress after a riveting performance and make a magical evening all the more memorable.

## Destination Opera: From Music to Psyche

Join Education and Outreach Manager Alexis Hamilton and members of the Oregon Psychoanalytic Institute for a unique look at each of our operas—it is opera on the couch! Each of our Destination Opera events is held at Sherman Clay Moe's Pianos, NW 13<sup>th</sup> and Davis, at 7:00 pm.

<i>Pagliacci/Carmina burana</i>	October 1, 2010	Dr. Duane Dale
<i>Hansel &amp; Gretel</i>	November 12, 2010	Dr. Nancy Winters
<i>Turandot</i>	February 11, 2011	Barbara Drinka, LCSW
<i>L'heure espagnole</i> <i>L'enfant et les sortilèges</i>	April 8, 2011	Dr. Ralph Beaumont

## Opera Previews

Join chorus master, Rob Ainsley and members of the Portland Opera Studio for an delightful concert/lecture about each of our operatic gems. All previews are held at the Central Library, downtown at 2:00 pm.

<i>Pagliacci/Carmina burana</i>	September 19, 2010
<i>Hansel and Gretel</i>	October 31, 2010
<i>Turandot</i>	January 30, 2011
<i>L'heure espagnole/L'enfant et les sortilèges</i>	March 27, 2011

## For the Kids!

Imbibe in the elixir of love! Join Portland Opera To Go, Portland Opera's education and outreach program for a 50 minute, English language version of Donizetti's delightful comedy, *The Elixir of Love*. A terrific way to introduce your whole family to the wonder of opera. Cost is \$5 for children under 12, \$10 for everyone else. Shows are at the Hampton Opera Center, 211 SE Caruthers, Portland, Oregon 97214. For tickets please call 503-241-1802.

Portland Opera To Go *The Elixir of Love*: February 18, 2011, 7:00 pm, February 19, 2011, 1:00 pm & 4:00 pm.

# curricular connections—for the teacher

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## aesthetics & art criticism

- ♪ After preparing with the Study Guide and attending student dress rehearsal of *Turandot* have students write a review of the opera, noting how the music directly affects the emotional interpretation of the listener.
- ♪ Puccini died before he was able to complete *Turandot* and another composer, Franco Alfano, had to complete his work. Do you see this as problematic? How much of Alfano's own musical personality should have been allowed into the opera to attempt to complete Puccini's vision? Most of the time when artists or musicians die, their works are left unfinished. Why do you think it was important for *Turandot* to be completed?

## english, reading & writing

- ♪ After seeing Portland Opera's production of *Turandot*, have students write a journal entry or review of the show as a reflection.
- ♪ Write a sequel to *Turandot* about what happens to the characters 5 years after the action of the opera.
- ♪ Using persuasive writing styles, create a new ending for the opera utilizing known character information to produce absolute change within one or more of the characters.
- ♪ Most operas are not original stories, but are based on plays or novels. Have students chose a favorite story and write an opera libretto. Remind them that they may have to streamline and/or simplify their story—it takes a lot longer to sing something than to say it. Also remind them that their libretto will consist almost exclusively of dialogue. After they have written their libretto, have them reflect on what they had to do to take a written story and make it work as a dramatic or musical one. They can use poetry or not, as they wish.

## social science

- ♪ Puccini was writing *Turandot* about a culture (China) he knew little about. He incorporated traditional Chinese folk tunes into his work, and used instruments not usually found in a western orchestra to give his audiences a feeling of authenticity. How careful should artists be when they approach a culture different from their own? Can a white person ever truly understand and write an authentic story about another culture? Should they? Does a person's ethnicity undermine the point they are trying to make if they are using characters who are racially, economically or culturally different from them? Why or why not?

## science

- ♪ People die in operas in astounding ways—stabbings, poisonings, tuberculosis, insanity—and as they are dying, they are usually singing! Pick an operatic death. Research what would happen to the body during that death. What systems are affected? How does the body try to compensate? Would someone really be able to sing?
- ♪ The voice is a combination of a wind instrument and a string instrument...air passing through the vocal cords creates a vacuum, pulling the vocal cords closed. The cords then vibrate together and create sound. Pitch is determined by the tension of the vocal cords—just like a violin or a guitar. You can demonstrate this with a rubber band: Wrap a rubber band around your fingers. Pluck it a few times. Can you see and feel the vibrations? The harder you pluck the rubber band, the more it will vibrate, creating a louder sound. If you stretch the rubber band, making it longer and thinner, what do you hear? (It will be a higher pitch.) Have your students place their hands on their throats while speaking or singing at different pitches—have them feel the vibrations in their throats and their chests. Explore sound waves.

## create, present, perform

- ♪ Obtain and make copies of the translation for the libretto for *Turandot*. Have students read the parts in a dramatic reading, infusing as much feeling and power into the words as possible. The language may be awkward or embarrassing for some of the students—that's okay, have them explore the reasons why. Have them “translate” the libretto into their own language and perform that. Then return to the original libretto. How does their perception of the language change—or not? Do they think that music would affect how the lines would sound?
- ♪ Write a paragraph in the style of a news report. As the reporter, give your two-minute spin on the performance or elements within the production for the class. Make eye contact and speak clearly with attention to pronunciation and rate of speech.
- ♪ Have students break into groups and write their own “opera” using popular songs and stringing them together with dialogue. Perform for the class.
- ♪ Sets and costumes play an ENORMOUS role in opera. Design sets and costumes for an different version of *Turandot*. Costumes are rendered in color on paper and set designers often make dioramas of their set designs. Keep in mind the symbolism possible in color and texture. Remind students that drawings on paper would have to be translated into three dimensions and made practical. How does that affect their designs? Have them present their sets and costumes to the class pointing out their challenges and the possible symbolism of their choices.