

Puccini died on 29 November 1924 at the age of sixty-six. During the period of his illness he was dedicating himself to writing the opera Turandot which he was unable to complete.



***Concert for the centenary of Giacomo
Puccini's death***

Società Dante Alighieri di Leuven
in collaboration with KU Leuven

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Booklet edited by Emanuela Marulli

Program

Adagio

Mi chiamano Mimì - La Bohème

Piccolo Tango

Lento e molto calmo

Piccolo valzer

Quando m'en vo - La Bohème

Foglio d'album

La scossa elettrica

Vissi d'arte - Tosca

Intermezzo dell'opera suor Angelica

O mio babbino caro - Gianni Schicchi

I Crisantemi

Signore ascolta - Turandot

Intermezzo dell'opera Manon Lescaut

Tu che di gel sei cinta - Turandot

Sole e Amore

until making its debut overseas in the following years with "La Fanciulla del West" at the Metropolitan theatre in New York.

Giacomo Puccini continues to live in opera houses around the world through the staging of his prestigious works: La bohème, Turandot, Tosca, Madama Butterfly, Gianni Schicchi, Suor Angelica, Edgar, Manon Lescaut and others.

His particular compositional style takes both the voices and the musical instruments to the extreme of their capabilities, to the point of exalting and making poignant the emotions and characteristics of the characters, also accompanied by the leit motif, which Puccini uses in his compositions. This innovative opera form with attention to the psychology of the character modernized Italian opera to the point that Puccini's music beautifully adapted to the images with the advent of silent films, Puccini's music adapted magnificently to the images.

However, he does not see the potential of music for the image and refuses the proposal to compose for film.

Despite this, his music is present in over three hundred films, enhancing and signifying the plot.

In 1924 Giacomo Puccini fell ill with throat cancer. He therefore decides to try an innovative therapy at

The Institut De La Couronne in Brussels, where in November 1924 he was admitted under the care of Dr. Ledoux.

Seven radioactive platinum nails are stuck in the composer's throat. The surgery succeeds perfectly, but his heart cannot withstand the power of the therapy.

Biographical notes on Giacomo Puccini

Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca on 22 December 1858 into a family that boasts five generations of musicians.

His musical talent is soon evident, even if it does not go hand in hand with his perseverance in studying.

In 1864 his father died, an event that reduced the large family, made up of the mother Albina Magi and eight brothers, into great economic hardship.

In the meantime, his inclination towards composition asserted itself until, in March 1876, he attended a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* which took place in Lucca, a work which enlightened him about the course of study to follow. The young Giacomo decides that he wants to become an opera composer and this entails the need to enroll at the Milan Conservatory, a place that is too expensive for the family's precarious situation.

Puccini's mother writes a letter to Queen Margherita, asking for help so that she can help her son complete his composition studies.

The Queen grants the musician a scholarship to attend the course at the Milan Conservatory. Amilcare Ponchielli and Antonio Bazzini will be his teachers and their teaching will contribute to the growth and development of Puccini's compositional style in its uniqueness.

In 1883 Giacomo composed his first opera in competition, "Le Villi" which did not produce satisfactory results.

The young composer, then, took action and managed to convince the publisher Ricordi to let him join his "team" of composers. From that moment he established himself on the international opera scene,

Listening guide

Adagio

Piano piece composed in 1882 and performed for the first time in Modena one hundred years after its publication, in 1982 in a transcription for string quartet. The melody is calm and delicate.

Si, mi chiamano Mimi

Aria by Mimì placed in the first act of the opera *La Bohème*. Rodolfo meets Mimì in a cold Parisian attic. She is shy and fragile, but her beauty and sweetness immediately capture the poet's heart. When their hands touch, Rodolfo asks Mimì to tell him about herself. And she responds with the famous aria that we are about to hear.

A curiosity: *La Bohème* was born from a challenge between Puccini and Leoncavallo, another well-known Italian composer. Both decide to write the same story, based on Murger's novel, but only Puccini's opera becomes famous.

Piccolo Tango

Composed in 1907 during Puccini's trip to Argentina, the piece offers a playful and rhythmic, at times passionate, atmosphere.

Lento e molto calmo

Composed in 1916 in the Torre del Lago residence, it is a piece for piano with a contemplative and gentle atmosphere. Dedicated by Puccini to the families of those killed in war in 1916.

Piccolo Valzer

Piano piece published in 1894. Puccini composed the waltz inspired by the observation of a boat rocking on Lake Massaciuccoli, a place where he loved to go fishing. The same piece was then elaborated by the composer to write Musetta's famous aria " Quando m'en vo " taken from the opera Bohème. Published for the Military literary magazine "Armi e Arte", in memory of the delivery of the flag of the Battleship Re Umberto.

Quando m'en vo

Aria by Musetta, taken from the opera La Bohème 1896, with a libretto by Illica and Giacosa. The piece is placed in the second act of the opera where Musetta expresses a lively and open character, imbued with various feelings mixed together: passion, love, joy and sadness. The work is set in the lively 19th century Paris, in the Latin Quarter and tells the lives of a group of young bohemian artists who struggle to keep the wolf from the door, and who never lose their joy of living.

Foglio d'album

It seems that this piano piece was composed by Puccini in 1910 when he was in New York for the debut of "La fanciulla del West" at the Metropolitan theater. The song was published in the United States in 1942 by Edward B. Marks Music Corporation.

La scossa elettrica

A "Brilliant March" for piano, composed in 1899 and performed on the occasion of the centenary of the

But even more interesting is Puccini's dedication to Francesco Paolo Tosti from Abruzzo:
to my dearest F. P. Tosti
this first germ
of Bohème"

Liù, a woman of pure and disinterested love, is a character not present in the original fairy tale Turandot, it is in fact hers, a role invented by Puccini, since the dramaturgical plot lacked passion and warmth. After having finished composing the last aria "Tu che di gel sei cinta" and having written the draft of the duet between Turandot and Calaf, Puccini runs aground. He can't move forward and doesn't know how to finish the work. In the meantime he fell ill and unfortunately the illness ended quickly with his passing. The drafting of the score is then completed by Franco Alfano, who concludes the opera on the basis of Puccini's notes. We are in 1926. La Scala Theater in Milan. Director Arturo Toscanini.

During the rehearsals which went very well, M° Toscanini, although annoyed, completed the opera, but at his first and only direction of Turandot, to the surprise of the public and the theater superintendency, once Liù's aria had been completed he suspended the performance, he turns to the audience and exclaims:

"Here the opera ends because at this point Maestro Puccini is dead". It is April 25, 1926.

Sole e amore

Published by the Genoese magazine "Paganini" and published on 15 December 1888.

The text is inspired by Giosuè Carducci's sonnet "Mattinata", the music is exactly the same as the beginning part of the Bohème quartet "Goodbye sweet wake up in the morning" which the composer was writing.

invention of the electric battery by Alessandro Volta. The march was written on behalf of the telegraph companies to highlight this anniversary. The same song was also arranged for musical groups.

Vissi D'Arte

Aria taken from the opera Tosca written in 1900 and located in the second act. The work is set in Rome, in the period of the Napoleonic wars.

Floria Tosca is a well-known singer, romantically linked to Mario Cavaradossi, a painter. Scarpia, the merciless head of the Roman police, accuses Mario of being on the side of the revolutionaries and therefore decides to arrest him and sentence him to death. Then a desperate Tosca appeals to Scarpia to pardon Mario. Scarpia is willing to stage a fake execution, as long as the woman gives herself to him. The singer pretends to accept the proposal and, overcome by desperation, turns to God in prayer in one of the most beautiful and poignant Italian opera arias written by Giacomo Puccini.

Intermezzo dell' opera Suor Angelica

Debuted at the Metropolitan Theater in New York on 14 December 1918, Suor Angelica belongs to the Puccini triptych Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi. The leitmotif of the interlude expresses the sad and suffocated feelings of Sister Angelica, who has recently learned of her son's death.

A curiosity: Puccini lived for a month as a guest in the convent of his sister nun, Sister Iginia, because he needed

the silences of the convent to translate into music.

O mio babbino caro

Aria taken from the opera Gianni Schicchi 1918, with a libretto by Giovacchino Forzano.

Lauretta, daughter of Gianni Schicchi, and Rinuccio Donati, nephew of Buoso, are in love and wish to get married, but the different social conditions of the two young people make the possibility of a marriage difficult. Rinuccio belongs to a very prestigious Florentine family.

Gianni Schicchi is in Buoso Donati's house when he dies.

Having hidden the body, Gianni Schicchi therefore pretends to be Buoso, climbing into his bed and dictating a will in which he entrusts many of his assets to Gianni Schicchi, i.e. himself, to the amazement of the relatives present and of a notary, who do not notice the fraud.

This therefore allows Lauretta to be raised socially and thus be able to marry Rinuccio.

This fact that actually happened is cited by Dante Alighieri in the XXX canto of Hell, dedicated to forgers.

I Crisantemi

This work was composed in 1890 on the occasion of the premature death of Amedeo di Savoia, Duke of Aosta. The chrysanthemum symbolizes heroism, loyalty and sadness. The elegant and melancholy melody contains elements that Puccini would use three years later in Manon Lescaut.

Signore, Ascolta!

Liù's aria, slave of Timur, disinherited king and father of Calaf., protagonist of the opera Turandot.

The piece is located in the first act of the Unfinished Opera 1924. The last opera written by Puccini.

Calaf is struck by Queen Turandot, a mysterious and at the same time ruthless woman with her would-be spouses. To anyone who dares to approach her, the queen asks three riddles. No one manages to solve his puzzles and the consequence of failure is the death sentence for the pretenders to the throne.

Liù represents exactly the opposite of Turandot. A woman in love and passionate, who begs Calaf not to try to conquer the queen, since the idea that he could die is unbearable for both her and her father. Through this prayer Liù betrays his unrequited feelings for Calaf.

Intermezzo dell'opera Manon Lescaut

Musical moment located within the four-act opera, performed for the first time at the Teatro Regio in Turin on 1 February 1893. The character of the intermezzo is dramatic, of great intensity and emotional beauty.

Tu che di gel sei cinta

Located in the third act of the opera Turandot.

The icy queen Turandot falls under the charm and mystery of Calaf, who does not reveal his name to her in a gesture of defiance. She knows that Liù knows the prince's name and orders it to be revealed to her. The tender slave chooses not to say it as she has promised this to Calaf, with whom she is secretly in love.

Under torture, Liù makes a desperate gesture; he takes a dagger from the belt of a guard present and kills himself.