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**Vancouver Opera presents Puccini's  
TOSCA**

*Intensify your life!*

**Vancouver, B.C.** ~ Shocking moments, rollercoaster emotions, intense drama and beautiful music are all featured in Vancouver Opera's season-closing production of Giacomo Puccini's **Tosca, April 21–May 1, 2007** at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Cherished for its heart-wrenching melodies and filled with treachery, murder and indestructible love, *Tosca* captures the events of a mere 17 hours in the year 1800 amid the political turmoil of Rome, in a magnificent classic production designed by the venerable Italian set design studio of Scenografie Sormani-Cardaropoli.

Metropolitan Opera soprano **Cynthia Lawrence** stars as the celebrated and fiery singer Floria Tosca. Vancouver Opera favourite **Renzo Zulian** returns in the tenor role of Mario Cavaradossi, her lover. Chinese-American baritone **Yalun Zhang** is the evil Baron Scarpia. Canadian baritone **Thomas Goerz** is political fugitive Angelotti, **Nicolae Raiciu** sings the Sacristan, and Vancouver-based singer **John Arsenault** (tenor) is Spoletta and **John Conlon** (baritone) Sciarone.

**Opening night is Saturday, April 21, 2007** with subsequent performances **Tuesday, April 24, Thursday, April 26, Saturday, April 28** and **Tuesday, May 1**. All performances take place at the **Queen Elizabeth Theatre**, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. and begin at **7:30 pm**. Tickets ranging in price from **\$29 to \$135** are available exclusively at the **Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre**, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or by telephone (**604-683-0222**). See complete ticket information below.

Canadian conductor **Robert Tweten**, Head of Music Staff at the Santa Fe Opera, conducts the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and the Vancouver Opera Chorus (**Leslie Dala**, Chorus Director; **Anita Comba**, Children's Chorus Director). Stage direction is by **Stanley M. Garner**. The breathtaking scenic design is from the Milan-based design studio Scenografie Sormani-Cardaropoli, which was founded in 1838 by **Ercole Sormani**, an Italian master painter who created a detailed three-dimensional world using only age-old artistry, paint and canvas. The beautiful backdrops are lit by **Steve Ross**. *Tosca* is performed in Italian with English SurTitles™ projected above the stage.

## THE SINGERS

American soprano **Cynthia Lawrence (Tosca)** is a regular guest of leading opera companies around the world, including The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Paris Opera and Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin. Her interpretation of *Tosca* has been called "fresh and powerful" by *The New York Times*. These performances mark her VO début.

Baritone **Yalun Zhang** (Scarpia) has sung Scarpia at The Metropolitan Opera. Other frequently sung roles include Amonasro in *Aida* and Count di Luna in *Il trovatore*. Mr. Zhang recently joined the roster of the Stuttgart Opera as principal baritone, and has sung with New York City Opera, L'Opéra National du Rhin, Washington National Opera and Pittsburgh Opera, to name but a few. This is his VO début.

Venetian-born, Bologna-based tenor **Renzo Zulian** (Cavaradossi) made his North American début in Vancouver Opera's 2002 production of *Aida*. Since that time, he has appeared with New York City Opera, Montreal Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia, among others. He was last seen in Vancouver in 2005's production of *Turandot*.

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Toronto bass-baritone **Thomas Goerz (Angelotti)** is known for his versatility in many performance styles, including opera, operetta and musical theatre. He has appeared to acclaim in the recent VO productions of *The Threepenny Opera*, *La bohème* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

Romanian-born dramatic baritone **Nicolae Raiciu** (Sacristan) moved to Canada in 1992. He sings frequently with Toronto's Canadian Opera Company, both as a chorus member and in principal roles. He has also appeared with L'Opéra de Québec. This is his first VO appearance.

Vancouver audiences will recognize tenor **John Arsenault** (Spoletta) from his appearances this season as First Siem in *The Magic Flute* and an Officer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He was also heard in VO's productions of *Werther*, *I puritani*, and *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Baritone **John Conlon** appeared for VO as the wigmaker in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He is completing his Masters Degree in opera performance at UBC, where he has appeared frequently in opera productions.

## THE STORY

Cesare Angelotti, a leader of the short-lived Roman republic and an escaped political prisoner, takes refuge in the Attavanti Chapel of the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle. He seeks out his old friend, the painter Mario Cavaradossi, who is working on a painting of Mary Magdalene. Cavaradossi agrees to hide him at his nearby villa, but they are disturbed by the arrival of Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer and Cavaradossi's lover. Tosca is jealous when she sees that Cavaradossi's model for the portrait is Marchesa Attavanti. He manages to assure her of his love, and, after a lengthy duet, she finally leaves. Angelotti re-emerges, and Cavaradossi gives him the keys to his villa and urges him to hide in the well in his garden. A cannon signals the discovery of Angelotti's escape and the men hurry off. The church choristers celebrate the news that they are to be paid extra for the evening's *Te Deum*, which is to be sung in celebration of victory against Napoleon at the Battle of Marengo. Their good spirits are shattered when the police chief, Baron Scarpia, enters the church looking for Angelotti. When Tosca returns, Scarpia convinces her that Cavaradossi has run away with the Marchesa, provoking the furious Tosca to leave at once for the villa, followed by one of Scarpia's men. Parishioners stream into the church to celebrate the victory over Napoleon. In the midst of the *Te Deum*, Scarpia gloats over his plans to destroy Cavaradossi and seduce Tosca.

That evening, Cavaradossi is imprisoned in the Palazzo Farnese, where Scarpia summons Tosca for questioning, after her concert in celebration of the military victory. While Scarpia interrogates her, Cavaradossi is tortured in the next room. Unable to bear her lover's cries of pain, Tosca reveals Angelotti's hiding place at the villa, much to Cavaradossi's disgust. As Scarpia triumphantly summons Cavaradossi, it is announced that Napoleon, not the allies, has won the battle of Marengo. Cavaradossi shouts "Victory!" and is sent back to his cell. Provoked and desperate, Tosca agrees to give herself to Scarpia in return for Cavaradossi's freedom. Scarpia tells Tosca that, to save face, Mario must undergo a mock execution. Scarpia signs their safe-conduct pass, but before the ink is dry, Tosca stabs him with his table knife, taunting him as he dies. Before she flees, she lays out holy candles by his corpse.

The next morning, shortly before dawn, on the rooftop of Castel Sant' Andrea, Cavaradossi awaits his execution. Tosca assures him that the soldiers will be using blank cartridges, and she produces Scarpia's safe conduct pass. The executioners fire. Tosca rushes to Mario, but in horror finds that Scarpia has deceived her. The bullets were real and Cavaradossi is dead. The soldiers have now found Scarpia's body and they pursue Tosca toward the ramparts. Defiant to the end, she hurls herself from the castle walls.

## BACKGROUND

Puccini's *Tosca* was the last great 19<sup>th</sup> century opera. When *Tosca* was first produced, in 1900, Puccini already had *La bohème* and *Manon Lescaut* under his belt and was being widely hailed as the heir to Verdi's mantle. With *Tosca* Puccini was on fire. *Tosca* has everything a really great pot-boiler should have: sex, politics, and religion—a jealous diva; an artist willing to die to oppose tyranny; a depraved baron hiding a lust for dominance behind a mask of piety; love, jealousy, subterfuge, spies, violence, attempted rape, murder and betrayal. Add to that several of Puccini's greatest arias and the luscious orchestration and it's easy to see why *Tosca* has been one of the most frequently staged works in the operatic repertoire. The character of Tosca is considered to be one of the composer's most varied and interesting heroines, fit for great operatic actresses. Indeed, the great Sarah Bernhardt originated the role on stage, and singers of the stature of Maria Callas have created their own indelible interpretations of the operatic version. Puccini said of Sardou's play, upon which the opera is based, "in this *Tosca* I see the opera which exactly suits me, one without excessive proportions, one which is a decorative spectacle and one which gives opportunity for an abundance of music..." With his uncanny sense of drama and his astonishing musical genius, Puccini delivered an abundance of thrilling music rarely equaled in intensity or effectiveness in his other operas.

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## FULL TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets from \$29 to \$135 (plus service charges) are available ONLY from the **Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre**, (located at 835 Cambie Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Monday-Friday 9 am-8 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm), online at **www.vancouveropera.ca** or by phone at 604-683-0222. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted. DISCOUNTS: For groups of ten or more, call 604-683-0222.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### OPERA SPEAKS @ VPL – FREE PUBLIC FORUM

#### “WHEN IN ROME” – An evening of Roman immersion

Vancouver Public Library Central Branch, Alice MacKay Room

Tuesday, April 10, 2007, 7:30-9:30 pm

Immerse yourself in the art, architecture and lifestyles of Rome in 1800, the year *Tosca* is set. Join a panel of experts including art historian **Justin Newell** and UBC emeritus professor of classical studies **James Russell**, and hear an excerpt from the opera. Refreshments courtesy of the Vancouver Opera Guild.

*Opera Speaks @ VPL is sponsored by channel m Multivision Television.*

### TOSCA PREVIEW at UBC ROBSON SQUARE

#### Tosca: The Ultimate Diva

UBC Robson Square | Saturday, April 14, 10 am-4 pm

In this backgrounder to Puccini and his operas, we take a closer look at some of the most beloved Toscas of all time. Through audio and video recordings, we examine Prima Donnas over the past 50 years.

Cost: \$75 (all day, includes a catered lunch and coffee break) or \$25 (afternoon only)

Call UBC Continuing Studies 604-822-1444.

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