
PUCCINI'S TURANDOT

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
Classical California midday host
Alan Chapman

Thursday, Apr. 16, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, Apr. 18, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Tuesday, Apr. 21, 2026 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St.Clair, conductor
Eric Einhorn, stage director
Pacific Chorale—Robert Istad, artistic director
Kibsaïm Escárcega, assistant conductor and
chorusmaster
Southern California Children's Chorus—
Lori Loftus, founding director
Pacific Symphony

Cast:
Marjorie Owens, Turandot
Limmie Pulliam, Calaf
Alisa Jordheim, Liu
Raymond Aceto, Timur
Hunter Enoch, Ping
Nicholas Nestorak, Pang
David Blalock, Pong
David Crawford, Mandarin
Nicholas Quinn, Emperor
Jayden Guarneri, reader

Technical Crew:
Ken Smith, lighting designer
Robin Walsh, puppet designer
Caitlin Cisek, costume designer
Ronell Oliveri, wig and makeup designer

PUCCINI

Turandot
Act I & II

—INTERMISSION—

Act III



These performances are generously sponsored by:

Honorary Producer: Janet L. Curci

Haydee Mollura
Isidore and Penny Myers Foundation
Mark Nielsen
Opera Focus



Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Carl St.Clair, Music Director Laureate



For more than 35 years, Carl St.Clair led Pacific Symphony, making him the longest-tenured American-born conductor of a major American orchestra. He was honored with the lifetime role of Music Director Laureate in December 2025 during the orchestra's 47th season, as well as inducted into the Orange County Hall of Fame by the Orange

County Board of Supervisors. Under his leadership, Pacific Symphony has grown into the largest-budgeted orchestra founded in the past half-century, recognized nationally for its artistic, innovative programming, and community impact. St.Clair also helped catalyze the vision to build a 2,000-seat Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall in 2006, the Symphony's permanent home and one of the nation's finest concert venues.

St.Clair has guided the Symphony through many landmark achievements. In 2018, he led its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut celebrating Philip Glass's 80th birthday, which *The New York Times* praised as proof that Pacific Symphony is "a major ensemble!" That same year, he conducted the orchestra's first tour of China. Earlier, in 2006, he led the Symphony on its European debut, performing in nine cities across three countries, including Vienna, Munich, Cologne, and Lucerne, to capacity audiences and widespread acclaim. He also conducted the orchestra's national PBS debut on *Great Performances* with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*. His artistic initiatives include the long-running American Composers Festival and Symphonic Voices, the orchestra's acclaimed opera-in-concert series.

A champion of new music, St.Clair has commissioned and premiered dozens of works. Recent highlights include the 2024-25 premieres of Viet Cuong's *Marine Layer* and Adolphus Hailstork's Piano Concerto No. 3 ("The Way Things Are"). In 2024, Pacific Symphony released the world-premiere recording of Sir James MacMillan's *Fiat Lux*. Other notable commissions include works by Philip Glass, Michael Daugherty, William Bolcom, Richard Danielpour, John Wineglass, and Elliot Goldenthal. His discography also includes collaborations with Yo-Yo Ma, Lukas Foss, and others.

Internationally, he was appointed Music Director of the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra in 2025 and holds honorary posts with the National Symphony of Costa Rica and Germany's Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal. Earlier positions include General Music Director of Berlin's Komische Oper and of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle in Weimar.

Equally committed to education, St.Clair has overseen the development of one of the country's most comprehensive orchestra-based education networks, reaching more than 50,000 participants annually. Pacific Symphony's award-winning Class Act program, arts-X-press, Youth Ensembles, Heartstrings, and *Symphony on the Go!* bring music to schools and communities across Southern California. He has also taught at Chapman University, the University of Texas, Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, and the USC Thornton School of Music, where he has served for more than three decades as Artistic Leader and Principal Conductor of orchestral programs.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Eric Einhorn, stage director



Eric Einhorn returns to Pacific Symphony, where his previous productions include *Tosca*, *Turandot*, *Carmina Burana*, and *Madama Butterfly*. From 2012 to 2023, he served as co-founding general and artistic director of On Site Opera, the nation's only opera company dedicated to site-specific productions. Under his leadership, the company earned critical acclaim for immersive

performances in venues ranging from historic homes and restaurants to the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Einhorn has become a recognized leader in site-specific opera and is a frequent speaker and teacher on the subject. He has also directed productions for many of the country's leading opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glimmerglass Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Florentine Opera, Austin Opera, Utah Opera, and Michigan Opera Theatre. From 2005 to 2020, he served on the Metropolitan Opera staging staff, collaborating on more than forty productions. He holds a bachelor of music degree in opera directing and voice performance from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

Robert Istad, artistic director



A GRAMMY® Award-winning conductor who "fashions fluent and sumptuous readings" (*Voice of OC*) with his "phenomenal" artistry (*Los Angeles Times*), Robert Istad was appointed Pacific Chorale's Artistic Director in 2017. The 2026-27 season celebrates 10 years under his leadership, continuing to expand the choir's reputation for excellence in delivering fresh, thought-provoking

interpretations of beloved masterworks, rarely performed gems and newly commissioned pieces. His artistic impact can be heard on two recent recordings featuring Pacific Chorale, including the 2022 GRAMMY® Award-winning *Mahler: Symphony No. 8* with the LA Phil conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on Deutsche Grammophon (2021), for which he prepared the chorus. Additionally, Istad conducted the Pacific Chorale's recording *All Things Common: The Music of Tarik O'Regan* released on Yarlung Records (2020). He regularly conducts and collaborates with Pacific Symphony, Berkshire Choral International, and Yarlung Records. His extensive credits also include recording for Sony Classical and guest conducting Long Beach Symphony Orchestra, Bach Collegium San Diego, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Bath Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Tesserae Baroque, and Freies Landesorchester Bayern. An esteemed educator, Istad is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies at California State University, Fullerton, where he was recognized as CSUF's 2016 Outstanding Professor of the Year. Istad, who is on the Executive Board of Directors of Chorus America and serves as Dean of Chorus America's Conducting Academy, is in demand as guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Lori Loftus, founding director



Lori Loftus is the founding director of the Southern California Children's Chorus, where she leads a faculty serving singers ages 5 - 18 across six choral levels. Under her leadership, the organization has received three Emmy Awards for excellence in choral music education and performance, with

appearances at such distinguished venues as Carnegie Hall and the Sydney Opera House.

A frequent guest keyboardist with Pacific Symphony since 1976, Loftus performs regularly on organ at Segerstrom Concert Hall and on harpsichord for annual performances of *Messiah* with Pacific Chorale and Pacific Symphony. In 2007, she received the Outstanding Alumni Award for Excellence in Choral Music from California State University, Fullerton, and in 2022, the School of Music honored her with the Titan of Music Award.

Beyond music, Loftus enjoys tournament golf, raising monarch butterflies, and traveling. She and her husband, John, have six grandchildren and two Siamese cats.

Marjorie Owens, Turandot



A former member of the Sächsische Staatsoper Dresden and a Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, soprano Marjorie Owens has emerged as one of today's most exciting dramatic sopranos. This season, she makes her debut at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa as Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* and reprises

her acclaimed Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* with Opera at Artpark.

Recent highlights include debuts with Dallas Opera in the title role of *Elektra*, Pittsburgh Opera as Senta, and Washington National Opera in the title role of *Turandot*. She has also returned to the Canadian Opera Company as Senta and appeared with Vancouver Opera in the same role. Other notable engagements include the title roles in *Turandot*, *Norma*, and *Aida*, as well as *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Owens has received major honors from the George London Foundation, the Gerda Lissner Foundation, the Licia Albanese Puccini Foundation, and the Sullivan Foundation. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Limmie Pulliam, Calaf



Rising dramatic tenor Limmie Pulliam has won acclaim for his commanding stage presence and powerful sound. The 2025-26 season includes a return to the Cleveland Orchestra for Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* under Franz Welser-Möst and a debut with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 under Fabio Luisi. He also

appears in recital with Exeter Academy, Baltimore Community Concerts, Manchester UMC, and the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers at Ithaca College, and in concert engagements with the Jacksonville Symphony, the Festival International de Musique Saint-Georges in Guadeloupe, and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Last season, Pulliam made an anticipated role debut as Calaf in *Turandot* for a special benefit concert at the University of Houston's Moore School of Music and later sang the role in his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra. He also made his Baltimore Symphony Orchestra debut as Radamès in *Aida* and appeared with the Orchestre Métropolitain in Bruckner's *Te Deum*. In 2022, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Radamès in *Aida*. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Alisa Jordheim, Liu



Praised for her "vocally resplendent" and "powerful" singing, soprano Alisa Jordheim has built a versatile career spanning opera, concert, recital, and new music. In the 2025-26 season, she returns to Pacific Symphony for her role debut as Liù in *Turandot* and also appears with the New York Opera Society, Cincinnati Song Initiative, New Philharmonic, Present Music, and Milwaukee Mosaik.

Recent seasons have brought a series of notable debuts, including Violetta in *La Traviata*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, La Fée in *Cendrillon*, and Musetta in *La Bohème*. She has also appeared as Gilda in *Rigoletto* with Pacific Symphony, Amarillo Opera, and San Diego Opera, where critics praised her "huge crystalline voice" and "impeccable coloratura."

A Fulbright Scholar and fellow of the American Scandinavian Foundation, Jordheim has researched Scandinavian singing diction and published on the subject. She holds bachelor of music, master of music, and doctor of musical arts degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Raymond Aceto, Timur



American bass Raymond Aceto has built an international career with leading opera companies and symphony orchestras. Highlights of his 2025-26 season include a return to San Francisco Opera as Warden George Benton in *Dead Man Walking*, a role he recently sang at the Metropolitan Opera, and a return to The Dallas Opera as Marquis de la

Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

Recent engagements include Abimélech in *Samson et Dalila* with New Orleans Opera, Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Philadelphia, Sourin in *The Queen of Spades* at the Metropolitan Opera, and Daland in *Der fliegende Holländer* with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. A frequent presence at the Metropolitan Opera since his debut in the 1992-93 season, he has also appeared with Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Washington National Opera, and major international houses including the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Vienna State Opera, and the Arena di Verona.

A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Young Artist Development Program, Aceto is a recipient of Richard Tucker Foundation Career Grants and a Sullivan Foundation Award. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Hunter Enoch, Ping



Bass-baritone Hunter Enoch is earning recognition across the United States for his ringing voice and commanding stage presence. This season, he makes his debut with San Diego Opera as Germont in *La Traviata* and returns to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra to continue *The Ring Cycle*, covering Wotan in *Siegfried* and

Götterdämmerung. Recent engagements include Grégorio in *Roméo et Juliette* with Washington National Opera, Arthur Keller in the world premiere of *Touch* with Opera Birmingham, Escamillo in *Carmen* with

Jacksonville Symphony, and Pope Urban VIII in *Galileo Galilei* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Recent role debuts include Scarpia in *Tosca* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Iago in *Otello* with Pacific Northwest Opera, and the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Maryland Lyric Opera. He is an alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera and has also trained with the Academy of Vocal Arts, Virginia Opera, Seattle Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Nicholas Nestorak, Pang



Nicholas Nestorak joined the Metropolitan Opera roster in 2021 and made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Pang in *Turandot*. He has since returned to cover Pang, Tanzmeister in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, and Spoletta in *Tosca*. This season, he returns to the Met as Second Priest in *The Magic Flute* and as

cover for the Waiter in *Arabella*.

Recent engagements include Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera San Antonio and Austin Opera, Spoletta in *Tosca* at the Princeton Festival, and Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd* with Opera Maine. He also appears this season as Ralph Rackstraw in *HMS Pinafore* with Opera Grand Rapids and as tenor soloist in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra.

Nestorak has also appeared with Pacific Symphony, Opera Delaware, Opera Grand Rapids, Florida Grand Opera, Knoxville Opera, and the Glimmerglass Festival. He holds degrees from the University of Michigan and Hillsdale College. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



David Blalock, Pong



Praised for his "fine tenor voice" by the *Winston-Salem Journal*, David Blalock is admired for his lyric tone and wide-ranging repertoire. In the 2024-25 season, he made his debut with Opera Grand Rapids as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* and returned to the Metropolitan Opera for *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Salome*. In the 2023-24 season,

he returned to the Met to cover Pong in *Turandot*. Blalock made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Pong in the 2019-20 season and has since returned for *La Traviata*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Dialogues des Carmélites*. His Mozart roles include Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. Other highlights include the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Roderigo in *Otello*, and Jaquino in *Fidelio*.

A strong advocate for contemporary work, he has appeared in *Working for the Macbeths*, *Street Scene*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Glory Denied*, *Silent Night*, and *The Long Walk*. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



David Crawford, Mandarin



Hailed as a "standout" by *The New York Times*, American bass-baritone David Crawford has appeared widely in opera and concert. In the 2024-25 season, he returned to Atlanta Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème* and to the Metropolitan Opera to cover Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He also sang Count Monterone in *Rigoletto* with Atlanta

Opera and joined the Knoxville Symphony and Richmond Symphony as bass soloist in Verdi's *Requiem*.

Since making his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2007 in *Macbeth*, Crawford has taken part in more than 300 performances with the company. Recent Met appearances include *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Macbeth*, *Wozzeck*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*. He has also appeared with Atlanta Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Nashville Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Knoxville Opera, and Seiji Ozawa Music Academy.

A native of Sewickley, Pennsylvania, Crawford holds degrees from Ohio Wesleyan University and Boston University. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



Nicholas Quinn, Emperor



Nicholas Quinn, a native of Farmersville, California, is a junior pursuing a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance at California State University, Fullerton, where he studies with Dr. Kerry Jennings. An active member of the CSUF University Singers, he has been selected as a featured soloist for the ensemble's upcoming international tour

to India, where he will perform Handel's "Sound an Alarm."

In 2023, Quinn won first place in the College of the Sequoias Concerto Competition, an early milestone in his collegiate career. He has also appeared in musical theater roles including Gleb Vaganov in *Anastasia*, John Utterson in *Jekyll and Hyde*, and Marcellus Washburn in *The Music Man*.

Most recently, he performed Achilles in the CSUF Opera Theatre Fall Scenes Program in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*. With a growing repertoire in both opera and musical theater, Quinn continues to develop as a versatile young artist.

Jayden Guarneri, reader



Jayden Guarneri is a 12-year-old performer whose love of the arts began early. He started acting at age five and has since distinguished himself as a promising young talent onstage while also excelling as an honor student.

His interests extend beyond performance to science and math, and he is known for his curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Outside the classroom, Guarneri enjoys singing, creating video content, and traveling with his family.

He discovered his passion for theater while appearing as Young Simba in a local production of *The Lion King*, an experience that sparked a lasting commitment to the stage. When he is not performing, he enjoys spending time with family and friends.

I ABOUT PACIFIC CHORALE

The GRAMMY® Award-winning PACIFIC CHORALE is an Orange County “treasure” with a “fresh viewpoint” that “can sing anything you put in front of it with polish, poise and tonal splendor” (*Orange County Register*). Founded in 1968, the resident choir at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is celebrated for artistic innovation and expanding the choral repertoire, having given more than 40 world, U.S., and West Coast premieres—including commissions by leading composers such as John Adams, Jocelyn Hagen, Jake Heggie, David Lang, Morten Lauridsen, Tarik O'Regan, Frank Ticheli, and Eric Whitacre. Led by Artistic Director Robert Istad, Pacific Chorale presents its own concert series and enjoys long-standing partnerships with Pacific Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with which it won the 2022 GRAMMY® Award for Best Choral Performance for *Mahler: Symphony No. 8* conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. The ensemble tours internationally, maintains a discography of 14 self-produced recordings, and offers extensive free digital programming. Its choral-theatrical film *To the Hands* was featured as an Official Selection at the Newport Beach Film Festival and won Best Experimental Feature Film at the Culver City Film Festival. Education programs include after-school vocal instruction for elementary students, a high school summer camp, and an annual community-wide singing event.

www.pacificchorale.org

ABOUT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHILDREN'S CHORUS

The Southern California Children's Chorus, founded in 1996, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching children's lives through exceptional choral music education and performance. Serving nearly 300 singers ages 5 to 20, SCCC helps young people build musical skill, confidence, discipline, teamwork, and character. Internationally recognized and the recipient of three EMMY® Awards, the chorus has performed at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House, Westminster Abbey, and the White House, and has appeared in films, television, recordings, and Disney productions. SCCC's six-choir program is led by an experienced faculty, and the organization works to keep participation accessible through scholarships, fundraising, and community support.

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for full bio.



Devon Alaniz
Elianna Alaniz
Shreya Bhatt
Carmina Blanco
Olivia Carpenter
Caitlin Chang
Audrey Damikolas
Mykela Jenaya Del Rosario
Jaclyn Gergens
Huy-Jonas Glassey-Tranguyen
Kien-Lucas Glassey-Tranguyen
Aria Halbardier
Matilda Haselhuhn
Ashley Hong
Avni Krishnamoorthy
Hope Lee
Samantha Lee
Owen Lemen
Brianna Liauw
Jiya Nangia
Heidi Neyer
Jesse Rae O'Conner
Isabella Ortiz
Elise Ovidia
Zelda Preston
Kalia Simes
Kaia Wang
Kate Xu

Robert Istad / Artistic Director and Conductor
Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons Artistic Director Chair
Kibsaïm Escárcega / Assistant Conductor
and Chorusmaster
Ron Rudderow Legacy Chair
Rhett M. Del Campo / President and CEO
Alex Nelson / VP, Artistic Production and Operations
David Clemensen, DMA / Collaborative Pianist
Aram Barsamian / Italian Diction Coach

SOPRANO

Rebecca Hasquet
Section Leader
Amy Bandy
Alexandria Burdick
Andria Nuñez Cabrera
Ariana Celeste
Chelsea Chaves
Sophia Do
Karla Verónica Gil
Amy Glinskis
Jenna Hansen
Saousan Jarjour
Kathryn Lillich
Maria Cristina Navarro
Nicole Peppel
Laura Pluth
Linda Wells Sholik
Sarah L. Sweerman
Haven Watts
Victoria Wu

ALTO

Jane Hyun-Jung Shim
Section Leader
Emily Border
Mary Clark
Kathryn Cobb-Woll
Denean R. Dyson
Ivanna Evans
I-Chin Betty Feinblatt
Benny Fisher
Erin Girard
Kathleen Thomsen Gremillion
Brandon Harris
Allison Hieger
Meadow Jones
Kristen Kleinhans
Nellie Kwang
Kathleen Moriarty
Michele M. Mulidor
Kathleen Preston
Tiffani Santiago
Stephanie Shepson

TENOR

Nicholas Preston
Section Leader
Roger W. Johnson Memorial Chair
Mike Andrews
Daniel Coy Babcock
Chris Butters
Abraham Cervantes
Michael Elson
Marius Evangelista
Jason Francisco
Vincent Hans
Craig S. Kistler
Jin Ming Liao
Greg Long
Benjamin Lopez
David López Alemán
Ricardo Martinez
David Melendez
Michael Morales
Sammy Salvador
Ron Gray Legacy Chair
Frank Watnick
Christiaan Westerkamp
Eric Xu

BASS

Ryan Thomas Antal
Section Leader,
Ron Gray Legacy Chair
Kyle Boshardy
Randall Gremillion
Peter Hahn
Mark Hamilton
Jared Hughes
Matthew Kellaway
Dylan Leisure
Aaron Leppke
John Middlebrooks
Martin Minnich
Kenneth Moore
Ryan Morris
Seth Peelle
Raphael Poon
Ryan Ratcliff
Ian Schipper
Joshua P. Stansfield

TURANDOT DIRECTOR'S NOTES

A Word from Eric Einhorn

The Power of Puccini's "Once Upon a Time"

In the late 19th century, the *verismo* movement dominated the opera world. With its intense emotions, contemporary relatable characters, and realistic locations, verismo marked a major shift away from the more far-fetched opera plots seen earlier in the century. Sitting at peak of this movement was Giacomo Puccini. Puccini and his librettists replaced mythic Valkyries, tortured hunchbacks, and scheming devils with a jealous opera singer in Rome (*Tosca*), young bohemians in Paris (*La bohème*), and a young woman left to raise a child alone in Japan (*Madama Butterfly*). Why, then, for his final opera, did this master of realism buck tradition by choosing the story of a vengeful princess, unbelievable trials, and a mysterious prince set in mythical ancient China? What value could Puccini have seen in writing a fairy tale, a genre typically reserved for children?

In his 1976 landmark book on child psychology, *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim writes:

For those who immerse themselves in what the fairy tale has to communicate, it becomes a deep, quiet pool which at first seems to reflect only our own image; but behind it we soon discover the inner turmoils of our soul – its depth, and ways to gain peace within ourselves and with the world, which is the reward of our struggles.

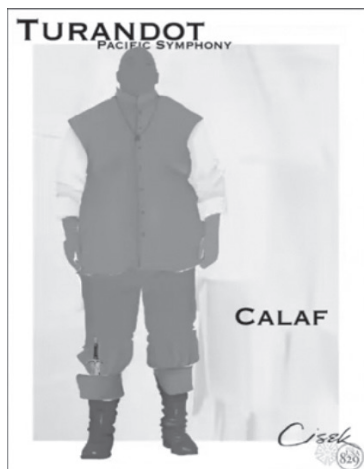
A vintage black and white portrait of a man wearing a suit and a fedora, looking confidently at the camera.

Fairy tales allow the child "to bring some order into the inner chaos of his mind so that he can understand himself better." Just as Puccini's *verismo* operas allowed audiences to connect with authentic, relatable emotions, I believe the composer also understood the implicit value of fairy tales as a vehicle for self-reflection and understanding. By infusing a fairy tale with verismo sensibilities, Puccini shows us the story's raw emotional potential and invites even the most cynical among us to find a path towards self-discovery.

To prime us for that journey tonight, we will experience the opera through the eyes of Bettelheim's purported target fairy tale audience: the reading child. Rather than be put off by the story's implausible plot, the reader is drawn in further until he himself becomes the hero of the story. Without hesitation, the child creates a mythic, reality-defying world. Without the constraints of realism, he can adventure freely, risk danger, and boldly stand up to those who would do him harm.

I encourage us all to follow the reader's example tonight. Immerse yourself in Puccini's fairy tale. Immerse yourself in the vivid costumes, puppets, and lighting the reader envisions. And give yourself permission to jump headlong into the "deep, quiet pool" of the story to ultimately understand yourself better.

-Eric Einhorn



Scan the QR code to watch the Opera Focus
Behind-the-Scenes discussion with Eric Einhorn



TURANDOT PROGRAM NOTES & SYNOPSIS

Giacomo Puccini

Born: Dec. 22, 1858 in Lucca, Grand Duchy of Tuscany

Died: Nov. 29, 1924 in Brussels, Belgium

Turandot



Composed: 1920 – 24; posthumously completed by Franco Alfano in 1926

Premiered: Apr. 26, 1926 at La Scala Opera House, Milan, Italy, with the La Scala Opera Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Feb. 23, 2016 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert

Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting, Eric Einhorn as stage director, and Elizabeth Caballero as Turandot.

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, three clarinets including bass clarinet, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, celesta, organ, six trumpets, four trombones, percussion, and strings.

Approximate duration: 2 Hours and 40 minutes.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT *TURANDOT*

Music by Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, based on a dramatic fairy tale by Carlo Gozzi (1720 – 1806)

ACT I

Though she does not take the stage until the middle of Act II, the presence of the formidable Princess Turandot—and her continuing fight to avenge her ancestor—are evident throughout the opera. The drama opens in a public square in ancient Peking with a mandarin proclaiming a now-familiar decree: the princess will wed the first suitor who can solve three riddles. All those who fail will be executed, including the most recent candidate: a Persian prince scheduled for public execution at moonrise.

In the midst of the crowd, an elderly blind man is knocked to the ground, and the young woman with him calls out for help. Prince Calaf, who comes to their aid, recognizes the old man as his own father, Timur, the exiled King of Tartary, who has fled that country with the Liú, who attends him. Her devotion to Calaf and his father began when Calaf smiled at her. As the executioner arrives, the crowd prays for the moon to appear.

A procession leads the Prince of Persia to the scaffold. His dignity and courage move the onlookers to call for leniency, but their entreaties are ignored. The prince's death comes in a rite of solemn brutality, and he calls out Turandot's name as the axe falls, but the frightful spectacle only confirms Calaf's resolve to try his luck as Turandot's suitor. Three bureaucrats of the Chinese court—Ping, Pang, and Pong—try unsuccessfully to dissuade him, and Liú sings a heart-rending appeal to no avail.

ACT II

The job-weary bureaucrats Ping, Pang, and Pong prepare the imperial court for either a wedding or a funeral, and they reflect upon the difficult conditions in China since Turandot's ascent to power. Crowds sing in the hope that a successful suitor will subdue Turandot's rage, bringing calm to China once again. This leads to one of the most unusual and dramatic entrances in opera: the royal procession that climaxes with the brilliant ceremonial appearance of Turandot herself. Robed in magnificence and hauteur, Princess Turandot sings the fearsomely demanding aria "In questa reggia," recounting the story of Lou-Ling, the princess who was raped and murdered by an invading army. Turandot has sworn to avenge Lou-Ling.

The ceremony of the riddles proceeds, with the drama of each deadly question intensified by three anguished, brass-accented chords. Calaf answers the first two, but the third one initially baffles him: "What is the ice that makes you burn?" He suddenly realizes that the answer is Princess Turandot herself. His triumph horrifies her. Calaf, now with the upper hand, offers to submit to execution if she can discover his name before daybreak. The act ends in a tumultuous emotional climax as the joyful crowd hails Emperor Altoum, who is now hopeful that his daughter will finally wed.

ACT III

Night has fallen in the palace gardens, where heralds can be heard echoing Princess Turandot's decree that no one in Peking may sleep until the Prince's name is discovered. He, too, repeats the decree in his swooningly romantic aria "Nessun dorma"—no one sleeps—asserting the power of his kiss to vanquish Turandot's coldness and asserting "I will win." But when the imperial guards appear with Timur and Liú, Turandot confronts Timur; Liú protects him by insisting that only she knows the prince's identity. In the face of torture, the frail Liú resists revealing it. When the princess asks how she finds the strength to keep silent, Liú credits the power of love. And when that finally begins to fail her, she takes a dagger from an imperial guard and stabs herself rather than speak the name of Calaf. Amid the sad procession that bears away her body, the blind Timur must be told it is Liú who has died.

Provoked by the suicide of the innocent Liú, Calaf confronts the haughty Turandot in a fiery duet, addressing her as "princess of death." At first she is resolutely unrepentant, but when he embraces and kisses her, she stands poised between passionate love and abject terror. She begs him to leave with the secret of his identity intact. Instead he acts even more boldly, revealing that he is Calaf, son of Timur—an act of masculine defiance.

Turandot ends as it began, with crowds of Chinese subjects assembled in the courtyard of the imperial palace in Peking. But this time, Calaf stands alongside Princess Turandot in the victory he predicted in "Nessun dorma." The princess declares that she knows his name: It is "Love."

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. Operahound.com