



Fondazione
ARENA DI VERONA

**This is the program booklet
in easy language
for the opera Turandot
by Giacomo Puccini**



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Title

The title of this opera is Turandot.

Opera is a way to tell a story
with music, characters, lyrics
and sometimes with dance.

Composer

The composer of Turandot is Giacomo Puccini.

A composer writes the music for an opera.

Libretto

Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni
wrote the lyrics of Turandot.

The lyrics of an opera are called librettos
and the writer is called a librettist.

Characters

The characters in an opera sing songs.
Some of the songs are for voices in a high pitch.
They are called sopranos and mezzo-sopranos.
Some are in low pitch for tenors, baritones and bass.

- **Princess Turandot**

She is the daughter of Emperor Altoum.
Turandot is a soprano.

- **The Emperor Altoum**

He is the Emperor, the king of China.
Altoum is a tenor.

- **Timur**

He was the King of the people called Tatars
but has been removed from power by force.
Timur is a bass.

- **Calaf or the Unknown Prince**

He is the son of Timur.
Calaf is a tenor.

- **Liù.**

She is Timur's young slave.
Liù is a soprano.

Ping, Pang and Pong are three wise men
and ministers in the government.

- **Ping**
He is the Grand Chancellor,
the Emperor's main advisor.
Ping is a baritone.
- **Pang**
He is the Chief Administrator.
Pang is a tenor.
- **Pong**
He is the Head Chef or Cook.
Pong is a tenor.
- **The Mandarin**
He is an official of the Chinese Empire.
The Mandarin is a baritone
- **The Prince of Persia**
He is a tenor.
- **The Executor**
He is the person who kills a person
who has been sentenced to death.

Other characters in an opera or a play
are called extras.

Extras are often in the background
and do not have names.

Some of the extras in Turandot are:

- The Imperial Guards
- The executioner's servants
- Boys
- Priests
- Mandarins
- Important people with a high ranking
- The Eight Wise Men
- Turandot's maids
- Soldiers
- Flag bearers
- Musicians
- Shadows of the dead
- The crowd

Photos from Turandot

Here you will find some photos of the characters and scenes from the opera Turandot.



In this photo you can see:
The Mandarin tells the crowd the news about what a prince must do to marry Princess Turandot.



In this photo you can see:
Emperor Altoum sits on a throne.
The throne is in the courtyard
in front of the palace.



In this photo you can see:

- **Ping**, the Grand Chancellor
- **Pang**, the Chief Administrator
- **Pong**, the Head Chef
- **Calaf**, the Unknown Prince.



In this photo you can see
many of the characters and the crowd.



In this photo you can see:

- **Princess Turandot**
- **Calaf, the Unknown Prince.**

The story of Turandot

Turandot is based on an old Chinese story.
It is a story about love and leadership.

The opera of Turandot has three acts.
An act is a part of an opera or a play,
like the chapter of a book.

Turandot has five different scenes.
The scenes are parts of the acts.
When a new scene begins
the scenography and the characters change.

Act 1

The scene is the city of Beijing in China.
The Mandarin tells the crowd:
Princess Turandot will only marry
a prince who can solve three riddles.
A riddle is a trick question.
Every prince who cannot solve the riddles
will be killed.

The riddles are:

1. What is born each night
and dies each morning?
2. What burns as warm as a fire?
3. What is the ice
that gives you fire?

The Prince of Persia tries the riddles
but he gives the wrong answers.
He will be killed.

Timur is in the crowd.
He was the king of the Tartars
but he was removed from power by force.
He had to flee from his country.

Timur is old and blind.
He stumbles and falls.
His slave Liù asks the crowd for help.

Calaf comes to help.
Only Timur and Liù know
that Calaf is Timor's son.
If anyone discovers who Calaf is,
Calaf must flee.

Liù loves Calaf
but she has never told him.

Calaf sees Princess Turandot.
He falls in love with her
and wants to marry her.
Calaf decides to solve the three riddles.
Timur, Liu and Ping, Pang and Pong
try hard to change Calaf's mind.
Calaf does not change his mind.

Calaf asks Liù
to take care of his father.
Then he takes on the challenge
to solve the riddles.

Act 2

The three ministers Ping, Pang and Pong are tired of Turandot's horrible challenge with the riddles.

Too many people are being killed.

Emperor Altoum asks Calaf three times to give up the challenge of riddles.

Calaf keeps saying that he wants to solve them.

Turandot arrives and explains why she decided about this challenge. It is her revenge.

A foreign king had killed one of her ancestors.

Prince Calaf solves the riddles. The answers are:

1. Hope
2. Blood
3. Turandot

Turandot does not want to marry Prince Calaf. The Emperor tells her that she must keep her promise.

Calaf says to Turandot:
If she finds out his name
before the sun has risen,
he will accept to be killed.

If Turandot does not find out Calaf's name
before the sun has risen,
she must marry him.

Act 3

It is night in the palace garden.
There is information that
everyone must try to find out Calaf's name.

The three ministers ask Calaf his name.
He does not tell them.

Some guards saw Timur and Liù with Calaf.
They think Timur and Liù must know
the Unknown Prince's name.
The guards take them.

Liù is so afraid she will say Calaf's name.
She loves him so much
that she kills herself with a knife.

Calaf and Turandot are alone.
He kisses her.
Turandot falls in love with him.
Calaf tells her his name.
He also tells Turandot that if she wants
she can have him killed.

Turandot says to her father
and to the crowd
that she knows the name
of the Unknown Prince.
Turandot says his name is Love.

This is how the story of Turandot ends.

The Director

The director of this performance of Turandot is Franco Zeffirelli.

He was from the city of Florence in Italy.

A director decides how an opera or a theater should be played.

The lyrics and music are still almost the same

But the director can change parts of an opera.

For example:

- the characters' costumes
- the scenography,
which is the décor and objects on the stage

Franco Zeffirelli's version of Turandot has been performed since 2010.

He died in 2019

but the Arena di Verona keeps performing his version of the opera.

Franco Zeffirelli made Turandot like a fairy tale full of fantastic details.

The director got inspiration from a fairy tale by Carlo Gozzi.

Arena di Verona and Turandot

Turandot is Giacomo Puccini's last opera and it was not finished when he died. Other people have completed Turandot.

Turandot was the first opera by Giacomo Puccini to be played at the Arena di Verona. It was in 1928, almost 100 years ago.



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The program booklet in Easy English for the opera Turandot by Giacomo Puccini

You can find the online version of this booklet
on the website of the “Arena for All” project

<https://www.arena.it/en/arena-verona-opera-festival/arena-per-tutti/>



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