

The class and section term paper

Psychology, Success



Part I

Opera: Tosca. Premiered on 14 January 1900 at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome

Composer: Giacomo Puccini. Italian libretto: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Musical styles: melodramatic, verismo (naturalistic, sometimes violent depiction of life), realistic, violent, through-composed (continuous music stream, without division into pieces).

Part II

Tosca is one of the best works of the composer Giacomo Puccini and one of the most brilliant operas of all times. Based on a successful French play by Victorien Sardou, it was converted into an opera to conquer the hearts of many generations all over the world.

In his opera Giacomo Puccini moves away from the idealistic depiction of life, common for the Romanticism period in classical opera, and explores the facets of reality through very vivid and true-to life depiction of events. Tosca has become one of the first representatives of Italian verismo, the opera style known for its naturalistic and in some cases violent portrayal of everyday life. Puccini chooses this style not only as a tribute to the general trend in art of the end of the 19th century, but also as a means to emphasize the depth of the tragedy of the protagonists and allow the audience to relate to their misfortune. The music flow accompanying the action on the stage does not allow making a strict distinction between separate arias, but is perceived as a constant stream, in which different leitmotifs convey the mood of the scene and the sentiments of the characters. It, therefore,

connects acts and scenes together, creating a continuous flow of the storyline, submerging the audience into the life and sufferings of the protagonists.

In order to adhere to the through-composed style and not to disrupt the flow of music Puccini leaves behind the classical opera traditions, where arias may be followed by dialogues and recitatives. Instead, he uses the so called *canto parlando*, a style allowing the characters to sing phrases in turns, in order to create a feeling of a conversation. This approach maintains the integrity of the opera as a continuous music stream.

Although Puccini was trying to separate his work from the classical operas, the use of arias in *Tosca* follows the traditions of Italian opera. They often pause the action on the stage in order to convey characters' feelings and emotional coloration of the scene. *Tosca* is one of the operas, arias from which touch the minds and hearts of the listeners and are known even to those who have never heard the opera from the beginning till the end.

Having heard such arias as *E lucevan le stelle* or *Già, mi dicon venal*, it is hard to believe that the genius of Puccini was revealed even more in the instrumental music than in vocal.

Ensemble numbers are not in the focus of the opera. Although some of the pieces are sung together with a chorus or other characters, Puccini prefers their protagonists to express their feelings solo, or in a dialogue, to illustrate confrontation. The composer does not use dancing in his opera as well. It is consistent with the realistic nature of *Tosca* and the concept of bringing the action on the stage as close to life as possible.

The chorus does not have a central role in the opera. It serves as a background for the parts of the characters. Thus, in the second act, Tosca is singing along with the chorus praying for victory. However, her voice is easily distinguishable; it demonstrates the rebellious character of Tosca and her personal victory on Scarpia.

Tosca is a brilliant yet somewhat shocking opera by Puccini. It reveals the inner demons of human nature and shows the ugliest sides of human soul. The characters in Tosca are so real, that the audience can easily relate to their love, sorrow and lust, their actions and thoughts. Maybe that is one of the ingredients of Tosca's success for more than a century and a vivid illustration of Puccini's genius.