

San Francisco Opera's Puccini's *Tosca*

Curriculum Connections California Content Standards Grade 5 through Grade 12

LANGUAGE ARTS

WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Name Origins:

*Names in the opera are derived from Italian words:

Tosco (Tosca) = poison

Scapa (Scarpia) = shoe

Angelo (Angelotti) = angel

Spoletta = shell or bobbin

Definitions:

Leitmotif: A motif or theme associated throughout a music drama with a particular person, situation, or idea. The significant or leading motive.

Parlando: (Italian – from parlare, which means to speak)

A continuous fabric of music, which is sung or played as though speaking or reciting (a musical direction). See also: Declamation, Recitative.

Declamation: In music, it is the proper enunciation of the words, as in recitative.

Realism:

1) An inclination toward literal truth and pragmatism.

2) The representation in art or literature of objects, actions, or social condition as they actually are, without idealization or presentation in abstract form.

Note: In opera, this movement was a reaction against Wagner.

Verismo: The use of everyday life and actions in artistic works: introduced into opera in the early 1900s in reaction to conventions of the period, which were seen as artificial and untruthful. Origin: "Ver," meaning truth. See also: Realism.

Romanticism:

1. romantic spirit or tendency.

2. (usually initial capital letter) the Romantic style or movement in literature and art, or adherence to its principles.

Note: Contrast to "Classicism"

Political prisoner: Someone who is imprisoned because of political views.

Execution: The infliction of capital punishment or, formerly, of any legal punishment. The process of performing a judgment or sentence of a court.

Mary Magdalene: In the New Testament, a woman whom Jesus cured of evil spirits. Also identified with the repentant prostitute who washed the feet of Jesus.

Sacristan (Also called “sacrist”): An official in charge of the sacred vessels, vestments, etc., of a church or a religious house.

Palazzo: (Italian – from Latin Palātium, imperial residence; palace)
Large splendid residence or public building (i.e. a palace or museum)

Buffo: (Origin: buffoon)

1. (in opera) a comedy part, usually bass.
2. a male opera singer who specializes in comic roles.

Te Deum: An ancient Latin hymn of praise to God, in the form of a psalm, sung regularly at matins in the Roman Catholic Church and, usually, in an English translation, at Morning Prayer in the Anglican Church, as well as on special occasions as a service of thanksgiving. (first two words of the hymn, which begins: Tē Deum laudāmus, we praise thee God).

* Vocabulary Lists: Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms.

READING COMPREHENSION

* Story Development: Use graphic organizers to clarify character desires and motivation; cause and effect: catalyst, sequencing of events, climax, resolution.

Read:

- * About Puccini’s life
- * Source material – *La Tosca* (the play by Victorien Sardou)
- * About the real life architecture and setting of *Tosca* (Chiesa di Sant’ Andrea della Valle, Palazzo Farnese, Castel Sant’ Angelo)
- * Napoleon Bonaparte
- * Political climate in Europe (early 1900s)

CREATIVE WRITING

*Explore conflicts between characters, how jealousy motivates the story, how characters lie to each other, and how characters betray each other.

*Retell the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting.

*Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

*Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view and internal/external conflict.

LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Elements of a story: cause and effect, point of view, character, plot, setting, conflict

Point of View: Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first- and third-person narration; stream of consciousness

Vocabulary:

*Develop descriptive language around the character's emotions, *Study descriptive language of Scarpia's aria in Act I, "Go Tosca. Scarpia now sets loose the roaring falcon of your jealousy."

Genre: Political thriller, suspense, morality tale

Themes:

- *Love vs. desire - jealousy; truth, deception, loyalty and betrayal
- *Power - political, personal, secular and religious, physical, psychological
- *Imprisonment and escape, torture, execution, manipulation
- *The individual (artist) vs. the System (government or church)
- *Good vs. evil, judgment

Character Actions/Motives:

- * How do characters' choices and actions move story along? What are characters' real motives?
- * Game playing

Symbolism/Metaphors:

- *Use of metal
- *Use of color
- *Use of large spaces (to indicate power/ people feel small)
- *Tosca's costumes

Archetypes:

- * Avenging Angel, artist, buffo, revolutionary, powerful villain, diva

Character development

- *Character traits (i.e. jealous)
- *Tosca's back-story from the play (Is she naïve? Does she develop?)
- * Extreme emotions (i.e. elation vs. despair)

Figurative Language:

*Nature imagery in Cavaradossi's aria in Act III, "Lucevan le stelle": "And the stars shining, and the earth smelled sweet, the garden gate scraped and a step brushed the sand"

WRITING STRATEGIES

* Analysis and Interpretation of *Tosca* production materials, artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

* Using written language conventions, write your own version of the safe-conduct letter of transit that Scarpia writes for Tosca and Cavaradossi or Spoletta's orders for the mock execution.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- Reflection: What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *Tosca*.
- Debates and Mock Trials based on the actions of the characters in *Tosca*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

* Giacomo Puccini (composer) biography

- * Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (librettists) biographies and timeline of works

ACTIVITIES

- * Create back stories for characters (what brought them to the point of the opera?)
 - * Create power games.
 - * Create persuasive card games.
 - * Create a character sketch.
 - * Story writing: Adapt existing source material; create story/characters. Or write new endings, deleted scenes.
 - * Write a letter from one character to another; choose a moment in the story
 - * Create written copy: program, poster design, advertising, biography, etc.
 - * Read and report on *Tosca* program articles and reviews
 - * Write your own review of a performance of *Tosca*
 - * Compare and contrast two different versions of *Tosca* available on DVD
 - * Design a Facebook or MySpace page for a character
 - * Write twitter log for characters (over the course of 24 hours)
 - * Read newspaper, magazine and web society pages and gossip columns:
 - Create a society magazine, web magazine, talk show/entertainment program detailing the lives and intrigues of characters
 - Create diary/blog pages/Twitter blasts/web avatars for the characters in *Tosca*
 - * Conduct debates between characters
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MATHEMATICS

MEASUREMENT:

- * Scale – Turning proportions of actual buildings into sets
- * Time of day when scenes take place (How many days pass during opera?)
- * Measure velocity of bullet
- * Population per square foot (then vs. now)
- * Distance between actual locations in Rome
- * Figure out perimeter and area of Rome
- * Height of buildings depicted in reality and on stage

NUMBER SENSE

- * How many years ago did the opera take place? How old was Puccini when he wrote *Tosca*?

STATISTICS

- * Calculate number of people imprisoned for political reasons during times of upheaval, average length of imprisonment time for men and women

ACTIVITIES

- * Create a board game based on *Tosca*
 - * Research geometry of spaces (shapes height, domes, arches, passageways)
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SCIENCE

EARTH SCIENCE

- * Identify what substances Cavaradossi would use for his paint colors. (Plants, rocks, etc.)

- * How would Cavaradossi have made his paints? What are the processes involved? Is he making a fresco?
- * Research how the physical conditions of buildings in Rome have changed due to environmental pollution (past vs. present)
- * Explore how the locales have changed since then.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

- * Night and Day: How does time pass? What time of day are scenes set and why?

PHYSICS

- * Study the use of physics of buildings (materials they are made of, design, etc.)

ACTIVITIES

- * Formulate your own recipe for paint and create a color chart.
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SOCIAL STUDIES

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Explore:

- * Rituals: Religious rituals (processions) and performance/artistic rituals
- * Self-Identity & Cultural Identity
- * Family (Immediate & Extended), Friends & Community
- * Time: Past, Present, Future
- * Place: Neighborhood, City, State, Continent, World, Universe

CIVICS

Explore:

- * Forms of government
- * Power (use of power, use of uniforms to indicate power)
- * Corruption
- * Leaders
- * Systems: church, politics, royalty, republic

GEOGRAPHY

Explore:

- * Napoleon's conquests of Europe and unification of Italy
- * Rome at the time of Napoleon
- * Three specific locations (Chiesa di Sant' Andrea della Valle, Palazzo Farnese, Castel Sant' Angelo) Plot latitude and longitude. Use Google Earth to create a movie of the distance traveled between the locations in Act I, Act II and Act III.

HISTORY

Explore:

- * Role of church, religion in opera, history of Italy at this time
- * Roman Republic and Napoleonic conquest
- * History of prisons, torture, political prisoners, political crimes (also current-day); development of secret police.
- * Art and culture of the time period

ARCHITECTURE

- * Research purpose and symbolism of various buildings (church, chapel, castle, palace, etc.)
 - * *Tosca* was the first opera performed in War Memorial Opera House. Research the design and building of the Opera House.
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PHYSICAL EDUCATION

MOVEMENT

- * Walking, dancing, jumping, balancing, leaping, lifting, etc. Ex. Move your body in different ways using the example of each character
- * Choreograph interpretive dances for different scenes in *Tosca*
- * Explore games and activities played in the early 19th century

PHYSICALITY OF PERFORMING

- * Endurance & strength, posture, breathing techniques

TEAM-BUILDING

- * Act as team members, staging scenes where performers have to be conscious of safety (choreographed stage fights)
 - * Explore social dancing and dance etiquette of the time period
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HEALTH EDUCATION

- * Discuss bullying and torture, putting on a brave face, self-esteem, safety around weapons, violence prevention, conflict resolution, mental/emotional health
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CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

- * Jobs at the Opera
 - * Organizational chart
- Explore:
- * Life of an artist
 - * Political activism
 - * Function of government, military and law enforcement
 - * Famous singers who have played the parts in *Tosca*
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FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ACTIVITIES

- * Translate Latin sung by Sacristan (Angelus)
 - * Translate Latin in church procession in Act I
 - * Study Italian words in opera
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VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC

STORYTELLING AND MUSIC: WHAT IS AN OPERA

- * Key plot points: The composer and librettist determine the placement of arias within the libretto to heighten emotion in the story.
- * Character and plot development through musical themes
- * One note to each syllable
- * Orchestra as a character
- * Organs and bells typically used for church music

VOCABULARY

- * Leitmotif (see “Vocabulary”)
- * Underscoring (In theater and film production, it is the act of playing music quietly under a dialogue or a visual scene)
- * Musical Structure: Solos, duets, trios, choral numbers
- * Composition: Arias, recitative, overture, incidental music
- * Musical Instructions: Tempo, legato; pianissimo; crescendo, etc.
- * Voice ranges: Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, countertenor, bass

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- * Puccini as an author, not just composer (writing less due to involvement in producing work, writing for himself and not just hired)
- * Puccini’s emphasis on accuracy (real church music, pitch of bells...)
- * Verismo style: Comparison of Handel operas with *Tosca*
- * History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program
- * Research famous sopranos and tenors who have played roles in *Tosca*
- * Puccini: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres

ACTIVITIES

- * Listen to multiple recordings of *Tosca* and study different interpretations
- * Learn and memorize songs from *Tosca*
- * Create and perform songs for the characters/events of *Tosca* using instruments and voices
- * Study score of *Tosca*

VISUAL ARTS

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *Tosca*?

COLOR

- * Symbolism of color; color associated with particular characters.
- * Color Value – hot (ex: firelight, candlelight, starlight, moonlight) vs. cold (stone, marble, metal)
- * Examine contrast of light and dark; use of lighting. SHAPE

SHAPE

- * The use of shape in character design.
- * Understand the use of geometry in composition to create tension and harmony (ex: triangles, circles)
- * Positive & Negative Space—the stage is a frame.

TEXTURE

- * Texture: Material used in sets and costumes.
- * Techniques used to create the illusion of 3D on 2D surfaces (ex: faux finishing, trompe l’oeil, surface treatment of fabrics, perspective)

- * Lavish designs vs. stark stone/marble creating 3-d on 2-d surfaces
- * Visual Texture: Pattern and repetition in sets and costumes.

SPACE

- * Explore architectural environments in which opera takes place
- * Scale of real and inferred settings (prison, hiding place in well, church) in *Tosca* in relation to people
- * Set design: From 2D plans to 3D construction.

ACTIVITIES

- * Portrait painting
- * Assign a shape and color to the characters in *Tosca* and create a visual composition
- * Create an abstract sculpture representing one of the characters in *Tosca*
- * Create a triptych; each panel represents the three acts of *Tosca*
- * Create your own paints from your own recipes and paint with them
- * Explore the use of different kinds of perspective (one-point, two-point, three-point)
- * Design costumes for the characters in *Tosca*
- * Create a light and shadow production of *Tosca*
- * Create frescoes, murals and altar panels
- * Design a board game based on *Tosca*
- * Make props from metal (represents metal props in opera)

PRODUCTION DESIGN

- * Background Information on the production
- * Research actual settings – How do settings have psychological impact?
- * *Tosca* costumes: Why go from white to red? How do uniforms designate power?
- * Discuss influence of David paintings on *Tosca* costumes.
- * Discuss commissioning (Cavaradossi's painting in the church was commissioned.)
- * Discuss adaptation of 1932 SFO *Tosca* sets in current production.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

- * Church art, early 19th century Romantic painting
- * Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Napoleon on his Imperial throne* (1806)
- * Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), *The coronation of Joséphine de Beauharnais* (1806-07)
- * Paul-Jacques-Aimé Baudry (1828-1886), *Charlotte Corday*, 1860
- * Peter Anton von Verschaffelt (1710–1793), The bronze statue of Archangel Michael, 1753
- * Raffaello da Montelupo (1504–1566), Original Angel sculpture now in the “Angel Hall”
- * Explore images of woman in art - painting and sculpture (Frida Kahlo, Elizabeth Catlett, Kathe Kollwitz, Louise Nevelson)
- * Explore the use of trickery and illusion in styles of art: Trompe l’oeil, surrealism, Op art

THEATRE

STAGING

- * Stage vocabulary: Upstage, downstage, levels, blocking
- * Stage etiquette & audience behavior
- * How do you stage action that happens offstage?
- * How do you stage violence?
- * Compare to Greek staging (violence happens offstage)
- * How do you protect performers during stunts?

* Tosca takes place in three different locations, one for each Act. Create a stage plan for the transitions in Act I, Act II and Act III.

ACTIVITIES

- * Explore different types of anger (helpless, jealous, hurt, vengeful, disappointed, thwarted, cornered, misunderstood, scared...)
 - * Theater Exercises: Tableaux, pantomime, improvisation, vocal projection
 - * Discuss “putting on a brave face” (Cavaradossi has to “act” in execution scene)
 - * What goes into a convincing death scene?
 - * Create tableaux of Acts in *Tosca*
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DANCE

ACTIVITIES

- * Study dances based on marches (promenade, cake walk)
 - * Create procession of students
 - * Interpret emotions through dance/movement. Ex. Joy, fear, sadness...
 - * Create a defining gesture for a character
 - * Using the defining gesture, create a dance motif, performing to Puccini’s musical motifs
 - * Explore volume (degrees of emotional intensity) through gesture (expansive vs. minimal, forceful vs. weak)
 - * Interpret the instruments (drums, bells, violins, etc.) through dance/movement
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MEDIA ARTS

- * Research how innovations in technology have influenced the development of Opera: Acoustics and Lighting, Audio Recording, Film and Video, the development of Supertitles, Internet.
- * Learn about technology currently used by SF Opera: Technology used in staging, SFO’s Media Suite, podcasts, cinemacasts, simulcasts, opera vision, etc.
- * Learn about experiments in future technology use involving opera, such as the development of
- * Personal Opera @ MIT Media Lab, *Death and the Powers*.
- * Use television, films, web content to teach media literacy.
- * Opera & Popular Culture: Cartoons (Bugs Bunny in *What’s Opera, Doc?*, *The Wabbit of Seville*); Television (*Sesame Street*); Movies (*Pretty Woman*); Commercials (Nike’s 1993 ad *Charles Barkley of Seville*); Event themes (“Nessun Dorma” - 1994 World Cup).
- * Films & DVD of *Tosca* and other operas, related films

ACTIVITIES

- * Create video game of Angelotti’s escape from prison
- * PowerPoint presentations of characters or acts (storyboard)
- * Use drawings to create a digital story set to music from *Tosca*
- * Create sounds in the opera (i.e. bells); record your surroundings and identify every day sounds. Incorporate those sounds into a new musical composition
- * Update an aria digitally
- * Film and Animation: Explore photographic stopmotion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *Tosca*.
- * Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.
- * Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, and/or a *Tosca* activities website.