

## SEARING PASSION, GRISLY VIOLENCE, AND A JEALOUS SOPRANO:

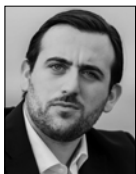
No story is more operatic than *Tosca*, and no opera is more thrillingly dramatic than Puccini’s classic. The opera premiered in 1900, but the riveting story first appeared 13 years prior as a play by the French author Victorien Sardou. With the smoldering actress Sarah Bernhardt in the title role, Sardou’s work toured Europe in a blaze of glory. With the help of his frequent collaborators Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, Puccini set about adapting Sardou’s drama for the opera stage. Equal parts brutal thriller, tragic romance, and musical tour de force, Puccini’s opera shocked and delighted audiences at its premiere and has remained among the world’s most popular operas ever since.

The story unfurls in Rome in June 1800. The Kingdom of Naples rules the city with an iron fist. Napoleon’s armies rattle their sabers to the north. And in the midst of it all, one woman is forced to choose among political allegiance, personal ambition, and love. David McVicar’s production brings the opulence and splendor of the Eternal City to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera, and despite its Napoleonic-era setting, *Tosca*’s story—about love, loyalty, human frailty, and superhuman determination—is as timeless as Rome itself.

This guide presents *Tosca* as a musical thriller, inviting your students to explore how music, poetry, and stagecraft all contribute to a detailed and compelling story. The materials on the following pages will enable students to dive into the art of operatic adaptation, Puccini’s compositional techniques, and the historical people and places that populate this classic work. By presenting *Tosca* as a narrative work that has much in common with the novels, movies, and TV shows that your students consume every day, this guide will help students of all ages develop the confidence to engage with opera even after they leave the theater.



DAVIDSEN



DE TOMMASO



KELSEY



CARFIZZI

## THE WORK

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

Based on the play *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou

First performed January 14, 1900, at the Teatro Costanzi, Rome, Italy

## PRODUCTION

David McVicar Production

John Macfarlane Set and Costume Designer

David Finn Lighting Designer

Leah Hausman Movement Director

## PERFORMANCE

*The Met: Live in HD*

November 23, 2024

Encore December 4, 2024

Lise Davidsen *Tosca*

Freddie De Tommaso *Cavaradossi*

Quinn Kelsey *Scarpia*

Patrick Carfizzi *Sacristan*

Xian Zhang *Conductor*

Production a gift of Jacqueline Desmarais, in memory of Paul G. Desmarais Sr; The Paiko Foundation; and Dr. Elena Prokupets, in memory of her late husband, Rudy Prokupets

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Tosca Educator Guide  
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The Metropolitan Opera Educator Guides offer a creative, interdisciplinary introduction to opera. Designed to complement existing classroom curricula in music, the humanities, STEM fields, and the arts, these guides will help young viewers confidently engage with opera regardless of their prior experience with the art form.

On the following pages, you'll find an array of materials designed to encourage critical thinking, deepen background knowledge, and empower students to engage with the opera. These materials can be used in classrooms and/or via remote-learning platforms, and they can be mixed and matched to suit your students' individual academic needs.

Above all, this guide is intended to help students explore *Tosca* through their own experiences and ideas. The diverse perspectives that your students bring to opera make the art form infinitely richer, and we hope that they will experience opera as a space where their confidence can grow and their curiosity can flourish.

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To access this guide online, including any audio selections and handouts, visit [metopera.org/toscaguide](https://www.metopera.org/toscaguide). All Met Opera on Demand (MOoD) clips referenced in this guide come from the performance on January 27, 2018.

## WHO'S WHO IN TOSCA

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
<b>Floria Tosca</b> A singer	FLOH-ree-ah TOSS-kah	soprano	A tempestuous diva, Tosca is in love with the painter Cavaradossi and jealously suspects him of infidelity.
<b>Mario Cavaradossi</b> A painter	MAH-ree-oh kah-vah-rah- DOS-see	tenor	Tosca's lover, Cavaradossi secretly supports the Napoleonic revolutionary cause and agrees to help Angelotti escape.
<b>Baron Scarpia</b> Rome's chief of police	SCAR-pee-ah	baritone	Cruel and conniving, Scarpia plans to use Tosca's jealousy to destroy his enemies.
<b>Cesare Angelotti</b> A political prisoner	CHEH-zah-reh ahn-jeh-LOT-tee	bass	A Roman revolutionary and sworn enemy of Scarpia, Angelotti escapes from prison and takes refuge in the church where Cavaradossi is working.
<b>Spoletta</b> Scarpia's agent	spohl-LET-tah	tenor	Scarpia's right-hand man, Spoletta helps the vicious police chief carry out his wicked plans.
<b>Sacristan</b>	as in English	bass	Charged with taking care of the church where Cavaradossi is working, the Sacristan provides the few moments of comic relief in the opera.

### Synopsis

**ACT I:** *Rome, June 17, 1800, midday, the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle.* The revolutionary Cesare Angelotti has just escaped from the Castel Sant'Angelo, a prison in the heart of Rome run by the sadistic Baron Scarpia, the corrupt chief of police. Angelotti seeks refuge in a nearby church. As it happens, the artist Mario Cavaradossi, himself a revolutionary sympathizer, has been painting a portrait in the very same church. When Cavaradossi sees Angelotti, he promises to help him escape, but, hearing someone approaching, he tells Angelotti to hide. It is Cavaradossi's girlfriend, the opera singer Floria Tosca. She coldly asks Cavaradossi why the door was locked; she heard him talking to someone and assumes it was a woman. Then she sees Cavaradossi's painting and flies into a jealous rage, since the woman in the painting looks nothing like her. Cavaradossi swears he does not even know the woman, much less love her. His heart belongs to Tosca alone. He manages to placate Tosca by complimenting her shamelessly, and the two plan to meet later that evening.

Tosca departs, and Cavaradossi lets Angelotti out of his hiding place. Angelotti reveals that his sister has hidden women's clothes, a veil, and a fan for him in the church so he can escape Rome in disguise. Cavaradossi says that there is a hiding place in his garden well, and he and Angelotti head to the painter's house. Just then, word arrives: Napoleon has been defeated, and a great celebration has been planned for that evening. The joyful mood is quickly dampened, however, by the entrance of Scarpia. Guessing that Cavaradossi has helped Angelotti flee, he decides to take





John Macfarlane's sketches for the gown Tosca wears in Act II

advantage of Tosca's jealousy to locate the escaped prisoner. Finding the fan left by Angelotti's sister, he suggests to Tosca that Cavaradossi must be having an affair with the owner of the fan. Blind with jealousy, Tosca storms out to confront Cavaradossi. Scarpia sends his agent Spoletta to follow her. As the curtain falls, he revels in the knowledge that not only will Cavaradossi and Angelotti be in his power, but Tosca will soon be his as well.

**ACT II:** *That evening, the Palazzo Farnese.* Scarpia waits in his chambers. Soon, Spoletta enters. He found no trace of Angelotti, he says, but he did find and arrest Cavaradossi, who adamantly denies any knowledge of Angelotti's whereabouts. Tosca arrives just as Cavaradossi is being dragged away to the torture chamber. As Cavaradossi's screams reach her ears, Tosca becomes desperate. Scarpia says only she can save her beloved—by revealing where Angelotti is hidden. Confused and exhausted, Tosca reveals the location of the political prisoner: in the well in the garden. When a bloody Cavaradossi is brought back from the torture chamber, he is horrified to learn that Tosca has betrayed Angelotti. Just then, a messenger arrives to announce that Napoleon was not, in fact, defeated at Marengo; rather, his forces have taken northern Italy. Cavaradossi exults in Napoleon's victory as he is dragged away to prison.

Alone with Tosca, Scarpia offers her a deal: He will release Cavaradossi if Tosca will succumb to his advances. Tosca is disgusted; she'd rather die than accept Scarpia's offer. Spoletta enters, and tells Scarpia that Angelotti killed himself before he could be



captured, and Cavaradossi's execution has been planned for the following morning at dawn. Tosca realizes that with Angelotti already dead, Scarpia has no reason to keep Cavaradossi alive. Left with no other choice, she accepts Scarpia's offer, demanding Cavaradossi's immediate release and papers guaranteeing his safe escape from Rome. Scarpia replies that he cannot simply open the prison door and let Cavaradossi walk away; instead, he will order a mock execution, following which Cavaradossi will be able to escape unnoticed. Tosca watches as Scarpia gives instructions for the "execution" and signs the transit papers. On the table near her is a knife. When Scarpia turns to embrace her, she grabs the knife and plunges it into his heart.



**ACT III:** *The following morning, the prison at the Castel Sant'Angelo.* Believing he will never see Tosca again, Cavaradossi bribes the jailer to deliver a letter of farewell. To his surprise, however, Tosca enters, carrying the papers that will guarantee their safe escape from Rome. Hurriedly, she tells Cavaradossi about the mock execution that has been planned: At the sound of the guns, Cavaradossi must fall to the ground as though dead. Then, after the soldiers leave, they will be able to flee together. Tosca watches breathlessly as the firing squad gets into position. They fire. Cavaradossi falls. She rushes to him—only to discover Scarpia's final cruel trick. The execution was all too real, and Cavaradossi is dead. As soldiers storm in to arrest her for Scarpia's murder, Tosca climbs to the top of the battlements and throws herself to her death.

## The Play *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou



Victorien Sardou's play *La Tosca* premiered at Paris's Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1887. With a shamelessly thrilling plot and Sarah Bernhardt—the most famous actress in the world—in the lead role, its commercial success was all but assured. Puccini must have come across the play shortly after its premiere, since he tried to secure the rights for an operatic adaptation as early as 1889. But it was not until he saw Bernhardt perform the play in 1895 (in French) that Puccini seriously set to work. While the opera sticks closely to Sardou's plot, Puccini's librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica excised much of the political backdrop to Sardou's play; the result is an opera utterly saturated with drama and emotion.

In his work, Sardou included biographical details for the main characters that provide further insight into their backgrounds and motivations. Angelotti and Cavaradossi hail from the Roman nobility, although both are supporters of Napoleon and the French Revolution. Angelotti's ancestors helped found the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, where Angelotti takes refuge at the beginning of the opera. Cavaradossi was raised by Roman parents in Paris, where he studied art with the revolutionary painter Jacques-Louis David. Scarpia is a Sicilian, sent by the Queen of Naples to quell the revolutionary movement in Rome. And then there is Floria Tosca, the riveting heroine. Unlike the male leads, she is not of noble birth: She spent her childhood raising goats. After being taken in by a convent of Benedictine nuns, her musical talents were discovered by the (real-life) composer Domenico Cimarosa; he was so impressed by her singing that he convinced the pope to let her leave the convent and pursue a musical career.

### The Creation of *Tosca*

**1858** Giacomo Puccini is born on December 22 in Lucca, a town on the western edge of Tuscany. As the oldest son in a family of seven children, Puccini is expected to go into the business at which his family has excelled for four generations: music.

**1874** After completing a classical education, Puccini begins formal music studies with his uncle.

**1880** Given his family background, Puccini's career in Lucca is all but assured. But the young composer has higher aspirations, and he moves to Milan to further his studies.

**1883** The publisher Sonzogno announces a competition for young composers and Puccini submits his first opera, *Le Villi*. To his chagrin, he receives no prize at all, not even an honorable mention.

**1884** Despite his disappointment in the Sonzogno competition, Puccini manages to find sponsors for a performance of *Le Villi* at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan's second most important opera house after La Scala. In the audience is Giulio Ricordi, head of the Ricordi publishing house, who is so taken with Puccini's work that he immediately signs an exclusive contract with the young composer.

**1887** *La Tosca*, a new play by the French writer Victorien Sardou, premieres at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in Paris on November 24. In the title role is Sarah Bernhardt, one of the leading actresses of the day. Designed to showcase the dramatic acting style of its star, the play features many scenes of depravity and trauma: torture, attempted rape, execution, and suicide.



A large, stylized handwritten signature of Giacomo Puccini in a dark ink, written in a cursive script.



**1889** Puccini's second opera, *Edgar*, premieres at La Scala; it is the only true flop of Puccini's career. Puccini's sights are already set on other things, however, and he asks Ricordi to secure the rights to an opera based on Sardou's *La Tosca*.

**1895** Sardou's *La Tosca* is performed in Florence, with Bernhardt in the lead role and Puccini in the audience. Deeply impressed, Puccini finally begins thinking seriously about an opera based on Sardou's play.

**1896** Puccini's opera *La Bohème* premieres to resounding acclaim. It is the first of three operas that Puccini will write with the librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, and they soon begin work on their next opera, *Tosca*.

**1898** Giacosa and Illica complete the *Tosca* libretto. Puccini takes the libretto to Paris for Sardou's approval, which Sardou happily grants.

**1900** On January 14, *Tosca* premieres in Rome. Despite a chilly critical reception, it is an instant hit with audiences. Two months later, it premieres at La Scala, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. In June, it receives its first international performance, in Buenos Aires; this is followed by a performance in London on July 12. And on February 4, 1901, it has its American premiere at the Metropolitan Opera.

**1904** *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini's final opera with Giacosa and Illica, premieres at La Scala.

**1924** In October, Puccini is diagnosed with cancer and travels to Brussels for treatment. When he dies on November 29, the unfinished score of *Turandot* is still lying on his bedside table. His body is taken to Milan and temporarily interred in the Toscanini family crypt before being transferred to his estate at Torre del Lago.



Sarah Bernhardt as Tosca in Victorien Sardou's stage play, photographed by Nadar



Croatian soprano Milka Ternina was the Met's first Tosca in 1901.

**MATERIALS**

Handout

**COMMON CORE****CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6–11-12.1**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C**

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D**

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

**Philosophical Chairs**

Philosophical Chairs is an activity designed to foster critical thinking, active inquiry, and respectful dialogue among students. To play, participants agree or disagree with a series of statements, but the game doesn't end there. The most crucial element is what happens next: Participants discuss their point of view and can switch sides if their opinions change during the discussions.

Each topic statement is deliberately open ended yet ties into several of the themes present in *Tosca*—including political conflict, corruption and exploitation, the abuse of power, and doomed romance. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or hard—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *Tosca*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

**A NOTE TO FACILITATORS:** Between statements, provide some clarity as to why that statement was chosen. Explain to students where and how each theme shows up in the opera, or invite students to offer their own explanations.

**STEP 1. INQUIRE**

Distribute the included handout with guidelines and statements, making sure to review the rules of engagement as a group. Next, invite students to read one of the statements—out loud as a class, to themselves, or in small groups. As they read, they should ask themselves:

- Do I understand the statement?
  - If not, what questions might clarify it for me?
- What immediately comes to mind when I read the statement?
  - What is my initial reaction: Do I agree or disagree?
- What led me to that decision?
  - What opinions do I hold about this statement?
  - What life experiences may have led me to think this way?

## STEP 2. RESPOND

Read the statements again out loud and ask students to commit to one side. They can agree or disagree, but there is no middle ground. (Many will not be completely comfortable committing to one side over the other—that’s part of the game. It will help foster conversation and debate.)

## STEP 3. DISCUSS

Start a conversation! Use the following questions to guide discussion:

- Does anyone feel very strongly either way? Why or why not?
- Does anyone feel conflicted? Why or why not?
- Give voice to what you thought about in the first step:
  - What led me to make my decision?
  - What opinions do I hold with regard to this statement?
  - What life experience may have led me to think this way?
- What might you have not considered that others are now bringing up in the discussion?
- Did any new questions arise during the discussion?

As the conversation continues, students are free to change their minds or develop more nuanced perspectives.

*Repeat steps 1 through 3 for each statement.*

## CRITICAL INQUIRY

Unlike many operas, the female protagonist in Puccini’s *Tosca* is a famous opera singer. At the beginning of Act II, she is heard performing a cantata at a royal gala at the Farnese palace, just below the room where Scarpia maintains his offices. What are the narrative and theatrical effects of this focus on opera? How does the story of *Tosca*—and the portrayal of its titular diva—get us to reflect more broadly on its construction as an operatic work?

## Murder, They Wrote

### CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Drama and theater history, adaptation, creative writing, English/language arts, music

### MATERIALS

Handouts  
Audio tracks  
Synopsis  
Illustrated synopsis (optional)  
MOoD clips (optional)

### COMMON CORE

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7**

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3**

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9**

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

### CORE ARTS

#### **TH:Cn11.2.6.a**

Research and analyze two different versions of the same drama/theatre story to determine differences and similarities in the visual and aural world of each story.

#### **MU:Cn11.1.7.a**

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

#### **MU:Re8.1.H.8.a**

Identify and support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical selections, citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, context, and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.

Operatic subjects and plots are drawn from many sources: plays, fairy tales, novels—even the lives of tabloid celebrities. In all cases, however, an opera librettist is faced with challenges unique to the art form, since the libretto must be sung rather than spoken or read.

In this activity, students will examine how the libretto for Puccini’s *Tosca* compares to its source play, *La Tosca* (1887) by Victorien Sardou, through an acting exercise, guided close reading, and an optional creative writing assignment—thereby inviting them to consider the dramatic priorities of different art forms.

### STEP 1. REVIEW

Begin by briefly explaining the many tasks that go into creating an opera.

- An existing story is selected, or an original story is written; the story may exist in any form: play, novel, movie, video game, etc. In the case of Puccini’s opera, the source story comes from Sardou’s play *La Tosca*.
- A script is crafted for the opera; this opera script is called a libretto, and the person who writes it is a librettist.
- A composer takes the libretto and writes melodies for all the words to be sung, as well as music for the orchestra.





Costume sketches for Cavaradossi and Scarpia

In the course of this activity, students will follow this same creative process from beginning to end: Step 1 focuses on the storyline, steps 2–3 on the libretto, and steps 4–5 on the music.

To ensure that students have an adequate understanding of *Tosca*'s plot, distribute the synopsis to your students and ask them to take turns reading it aloud. For younger students, the *Tosca* illustrated synopsis ([metopera.org/tosca-illustrated](http://metopera.org/tosca-illustrated)) will be more accessible.

## STEP 2. EXPLORE

Explain that writing a libretto presents special challenges because of opera's unique characteristic: Its words are sung rather than spoken. Students should consider these important points regarding singing:

- It is much easier to sing rhymed poetry with a regular rhythm than it is to sing irregular poetry or prose. By way of example, have your students sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Then, have them use the following text when singing the same tune:

Galileo watched the stars  
 Through a telescope he built.  
 For this reason he's been called  
 "Father of astronomy."  
 Galileo watched the stars  
 Through a telescope he built.

## REVOLUTIONARIES, ROYALISTS, AND ROME: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *TOSCA*

### The Battle of Marengo. Consul of the Roman Republic. General Melas.

The historical references in *Tosca* pass so quickly that listeners are sometimes left scratching their heads. Yet knowing the intricacies of the turbulent politics of the late 1790s is crucial for understanding the opera's plot.

In 1796, an ambitious young French general named Napoleon Bonaparte launched his first military campaign in Italy. His progress was swift, and the French soon established satellite republics around Milan (the Cisalpine Republic, est. 1797), Genoa (the Ligurian Republic, est. 1797), Rome (the Roman Republic, est. 1798), and Naples (the Parthenopean Republic, est. 1799).

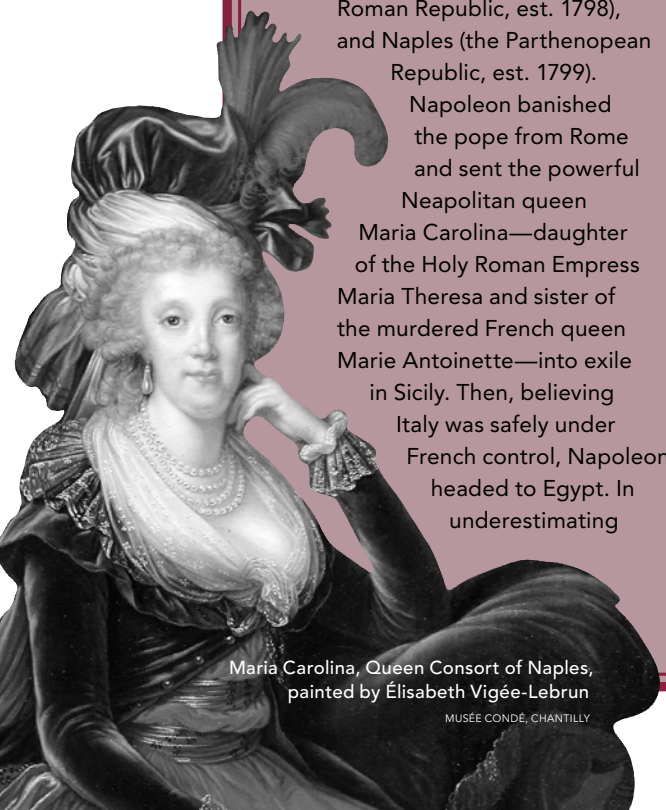
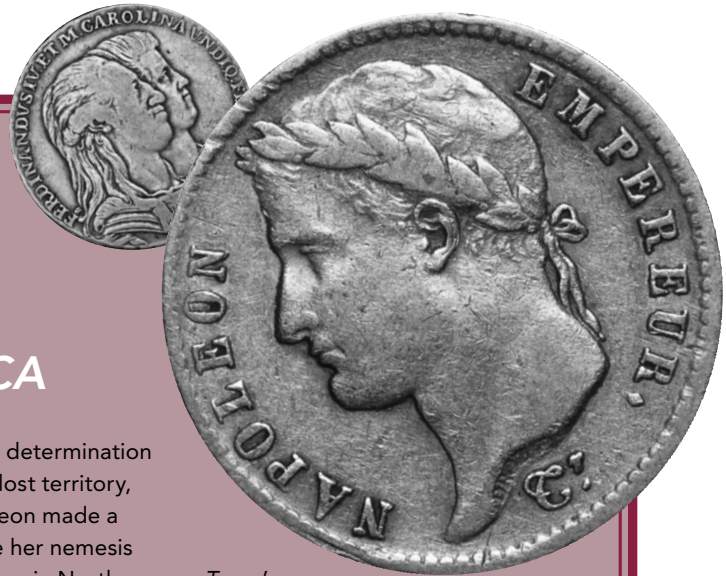
Napoleon banished the pope from Rome and sent the powerful Neapolitan queen

Maria Carolina—daughter of the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa and sister of the murdered French queen Marie Antoinette—into exile in Sicily. Then, believing Italy was safely under French control, Napoleon headed to Egypt. In underestimating

Maria Carolina's determination to win back her lost territory, however, Napoleon made a fatal error. Once her nemesis was out of the way in North Africa, Maria Carolina attacked Naples with the full might of her army. She retook her home city and then turned her sights toward Rome. When the Roman Republic fell to Maria Carolina in September 1799, retribution against the Republic's supporters was swift. Thousands of people were rounded up and imprisoned or killed in the Castel Sant'Angelo. Rome was now governed from Naples, and the Neapolitan court sent (in Sardou's telling) the brutal Scarpia to bring the city to heel.

A few months later, Napoleon returned to Paris from Egypt. His first order of business was acquiring political power. He wrangled (through not entirely honest means) an appointment as First Consul of the French Republic, the most powerful position in France. Then he set about planning a military victory that would enhance his public image. In May 1800, he led his troops across the Swiss Alps and set up camp at Marengo, some 30 miles outside of Genoa, where he planned to meet the Austrian army in battle.

*Tosca's* contradictory reports of the battle's outcome may seem like only a clever narrative ploy, yet the reality was just as dramatic as anything Sardou could write. The expected battle came on June 14—but it was the Austrians who attacked the French, not the other way around. Due to faulty intelligence, Napoleon was caught completely off guard. As the battle drew to a close it seemed that the Austrians, led by General Michael von Melas, had won a decisive victory. A messenger was dispatched to Vienna to share the good news. Napoleon asked his general, Louis-Charles Desaix, for an opinion: "It's three o'clock, the battle is lost," the general reportedly said, "but there's still time to win another battle." Napoleon turned his army around and launched a surprise attack on the exhausted Austrians. After many more hours of brutal fighting, the Austrian army capitulated, and Napoleon's victory was declared.



Maria Carolina, Queen Consort of Naples,  
painted by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun

MUSÉE CONDÉ, CHANTILLY

- It takes much longer to sing a line of text than it takes to say it. Have one of your students read the “Galileo” text above while the rest of the class times how long it takes. (Or have several students read the passage aloud and then calculate the average of all their times.) By way of comparison, have a group sing “Twinkle, Twinkle” and time how long that takes. Both the spoken and sung text have exactly the same number of syllables, but singing “Twinkle, Twinkle” will likely take much longer than reading about Galileo.

### STEP 3. COMPARE

Distribute the handouts included with this guide to compare the text of a real play with a real opera libretto. The scene depicted in both versions is Scarpia’s murder, but one comes from Sardou’s play while the other comes from Giacosa and Illica’s libretto. Note that the opera libretto includes text in both Italian and English; students should focus only on the English portion for now.

In small groups, have your students act out the two versions, assigning individual parts as well as stage directions and narration, and ask them to consider how the two versions differ, specifically:

- Which version feels more dramatic?
- Which version is longer? What material was added or cut?
- Which version is easier to follow?

### FUN FACT

After Puccini moved to Milan, he briefly shared a room with Pietro Mascagni, composer of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The two men were poor, and their abode was humble. Cooking in their small room was strictly forbidden, so the clever young musicians came up with a plan to avoid detection: While one handled the pots and pans, the other would bang loudly at the piano to drown out the noise.





COURTESY MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF FRANCE, VERSAILLES

### FUN FACT

Jacques-Louis David, the real-life artist with whom the fictional Mario Cavaradossi studied painting, was one of the most important painters of the Napoleonic era. Among his best-known works is a painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps on horseback, on his way to the Battle of Marengo. However, the glamorous image of Napoleon on the back of a rearing horse is not entirely accurate: due to harsh weather conditions, Napoleon actually crossed the mountain pass much less heroically on the back of a donkey.

- How important are the stage directions in helping you understand what is going on? Would the words alone suffice?

Reconvene as a class and invite students to share their observations. Can they apply what they learned in the “Twinkle, Twinkle” exercise to explain some of the differences?

### STEP 4. LISTEN

The final step in creating an opera is to add the music. Play for your students the scene that they have just acted out (**Tracks 1–2 or MOoD clips 23–24**), and ask them to follow along with the Italian text on their handout. As they listen, they should keep in mind everything they discovered and discussed in steps 2 and 3. Encourage students to consider the following questions:

- Does the Italian text rhyme?
- Is the singing constant, or are there moments when only the orchestra is playing? What happens during those moments? Does the music seem to follow the action described in the stage directions?
- Does the music make the scene more exciting?
- Tosca is considered to be a role for a “dramatic soprano.” Why might this be?

### STEP 5. REFLECT

To bring the activity to a close, ask your students to consider how the libretto might have to change if the opera were set to a different kind of music: pop, hip-hop, or country. Would they like to hear a version of *Tosca* that used music from another genre?

**DIVING DEEPER:** Divide your students into groups and ask them to pick a dramatic scene from a novel, movie, or other kind of storytelling medium and turn it into an operatic scene. They will need to craft a libretto and come up with basic melodies, all while considering the many issues outlined above. (Should the libretto rhyme? What should the music sound like?) Finally, ask them to perform their new scene for the class.



## The Rooms Where It Happened: *Tosca's* Real-Life Settings

THE CHURCH OF SANT'ANDREA DELLA VALLE (pictured below), where Cesare Angelotti hides after escaping from the Castel Sant'Angelo in *Tosca's* Act I, was built between 1591 and 1665. Like many churches, its floor plan is in the shape of a cross. The long portion of the cross (known as the “nave”) has chapels on either side. As was typical in the large churches and cathedrals of Europe, the decor and appointments for these side chapels were financed by noble families. In the world of *Tosca*, Angelotti’s ancestors helped pay for the church’s construction, and his in-laws, the Attavantis, funded one of the chapels. The church still stands to this day and boasts the second largest dome in Rome after St. Peter’s Basilica.

THE PALAZZO FARNESE, where Scarpia interrogates Cavaradossi in Act II, was built for the Farnese family, one of the most powerful clans of Renaissance Italy. (In 1534, for instance, Alessandro Farnese became Pope Paul III; one of his major claims to fame was excommunicating the English king Henry VIII in 1538.) The building’s main architect was Antonio da Sangallo, who began work on the palace in 1514; after Sangallo’s death, it was continued by Michelangelo. Due to the convoluted laws of inheritance among noble families, the palace became the property of the Bourbon family of Naples in the 18th century. Since 1935, it has been the seat of the French embassy in Rome.

THE CASTEL SANT'ANGELO, an imposing building looming over the banks of the Tiber river, was built in the second century C.E. as a mausoleum for the Roman emperor Hadrian (76–139). After the fall of the Roman Empire, its (almost) impenetrable walls were repurposed: Beginning in the ninth century, it was used by popes as a safe haven when Rome was under siege. In the 16th century, Popes Alexander VI and Paul III (the Farnese pope mentioned previously) installed luxury private apartments in the fortress, and Pope Sixtus V used it as a treasury. Its cellar was used as a prison, and, as such, it held many notable enemies of the Inquisition—including Galileo Galilei. When Napoleon’s troops took Rome in 1798, the Castel Sant’Angelo was overrun for the first time in its history. When the Royalists retook the city the following year, it held many supporters of the Napoleonic republic, including *Tosca's* fictional characters of Cesare Angelotti and later Mario Cavaradossi. The structure’s name, which means “Castle of the Holy Angel,” comes from the imposing statue of the Archangel Michael on its roof, clearly visible in the Met production’s set for Act III.



### Like a Prayer

Tosca's Act II aria "*Vissi d'arte*" (Track 19 or MOoD clip 22)—oddly enough, the only solo piece granted to a heroine who is herself an opera diva—has been alternately critiqued and celebrated since the work's premiere in 1900. Audiences and commentators alike have remarked that the aria seems dramatically ineffective, as it grinds the second act to a halt just when the action is ramping up. Indeed, "*Vissi d'arte*" occurs just when Tosca has found herself in an impossible situation. In the preceding scenes, she has learned that, after being interrogated and tortured in an adjoining room, her lover Cavaradossi has been sentenced to death. Meanwhile, the corrupt police chief Scarpia makes violent advances at her, offering Cavaradossi's freedom in exchange for her acquiescence.

It is at this point that Tosca launches into the descending, plaintive first phrases of the aria: "I have lived for art. / I have lived for love. / I have never harmed a living soul." This introspective reflection reveals an altogether new aspect of Tosca's character. Previously defined by her jealous outbursts, erratic behavior, and emotional turbulence, here the eponymous character poignantly recalls her past, insists upon her moral goodness, and vows her devotion to God. As the harp accompanies her with

Maria Jeritza's performances as Tosca at the Met in 1921 were a sensation.



arpeggiated triplets and the flute assumes long, melodic phrases—first heard upon the singer’s initial entrance in Act I—Tosca continues almost haltingly, as if muttering to herself: “I prayed with true devotion at the holy tabernacles. / I gave flowers to place upon the altars.”

From here, the aria builds into a full-throated lament as Tosca decries her predicament. The melody heard earlier in the flute is taken up by the string section, and the soprano repeats the phrase, “Now in my hour of grief, Lord, why do You repay me this way?” The second utterance of this plea leads into the dramatic highpoint of the aria, a high B-flat on the word “*Signor*,” followed by an equally affecting diminuendo on the subsequent syllable (“*ah!*”), bringing the aria to a subdued close.

If “*Vissi d’arte*” slows the dramatic propulsion of Act II, it is for good cause. The piece freezes narrative time in order to cleave space for its protagonist, for the first time in the entire opera, to consider her circumstances and articulate—if only for herself—the unjust hand she has been dealt. It also provides a welcome vehicle for the diva at the center of the action to be, well, a diva. The history of the aria indicates as much: Moravian soprano Maria Jeritza, who performed the piece at the Vienna State Opera in 1920, sang “*Vissi d’arte*” lying prone, having been “thrown” to the ground in her attempt to fend off Scarpia’s advances. The aria can thus take on added dimension as a kind of meta-theater, allowing the diva to portray a diva being a diva and affirming the enduring power of art in a world debased by corruption, greed, and violence—a power encapsulated in Tosca’s resounding declaration, “I sang to the stars and the heavens shone more brightly.”

### CRITICAL INQUIRY

As of the beginning of the 2024–25 season, *Tosca* is the fifth most performed opera in Met history, with more than 1,000 performances since its 1901 premiere. What do you think accounts for the work’s enduring popularity? Why might audiences be drawn to this particular story? Do you think the opera will continue to be performed as frequently in another 100 years? Why or why not?

**CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

Music/ear training, drama and theater, public speaking, media arts, English/language arts

**MATERIALS**

Handouts  
Audio tracks  
Synopsis  
Illustrated synopsis (optional)

**COMMON CORE****CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4**

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2**

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2**

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text

**CORE ARTS****MU:Re7.2.6.a**

Describe how the elements of music and expressive qualities relate to the structure of the pieces.

**MU:Re8.1.H.5.a**

Identify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical selections, referring to the elements of music, context (personal or social), and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.

**MU:Re7.2.C.HSI.a**

Analyze aurally the elements of music (including form) of musical works, relating them to style, mood, and context, and describe how the analysis provides models for personal growth as composer, performer, and/or listener.

**CSI: Tosca**

Murder, torture, suicide—*Tosca* has been called a thriller for good reason. Yet much of the opera’s power lies not in the blood and gore of the plot but in the subtle drama of human emotions created by Puccini’s riveting music. In this exercise, students will examine how Puccini’s music illuminates—and complicates—the multiple facets of the plot. Taking on the role of musical “detectives,” they will investigate evidence in the “case file” of *Tosca*’s murders and thereby develop familiarity with the plot and music of this scandalous operatic blockbuster.

In so doing, students will learn to recognize four musical motifs that occur in *Tosca* and analyze how recurring musical themes complicate the trajectory and deepen the drama of the plot. They will be introduced to new musical vocabulary and develop listening skills that will not only help them engage with the opera, but also with music in film, theater, and even video games.

**STEP 1. REVIEW**

Distribute the opera synopsis to your students and ask them to read it carefully. For younger students, the *Tosca* illustrated synopsis ([metopera.org/tosca-illustrated](http://metopera.org/tosca-illustrated)) will be more accessible. Alternatively, you may choose to introduce the plot in a more active or game-based method. Regardless, it is important that students begin by having an understanding of *Tosca*’s plot. Next, begin an open discussion: What are some of the literary themes they see in the opera’s plot? Ask for specific moments in the action that demonstrate these themes, and make a list on the board of the themes your students have identified. Possible examples may include love, jealousy, self-sacrifice, betrayal, lust, and more.

**STEP 2. EXPLORE**

Write a new vocabulary word on the board: **leitmotif**.

Explain that leitmotifs (the word means “leading motif,” from the German verb *leiten*, “to lead”) are short snippets of music that represent specific ideas, characters, emotions, objects, or places in an opera. Composers use leitmotifs to allude to important themes, create connections between different moments in the plot, and foster a sense of musical recognition. In this way, leitmotifs add an extra dimension to the story, allowing for more subtle



allusions and connections than those explicitly stated by the characters through the words of the libretto.

### STEP 3. LISTEN

The students' job is to figure out the "meaning" of the four leitmotifs in *Tosca*. They should think of themselves as detectives: They will listen to 12 excerpts from *Tosca*, each of which represents a piece of "evidence." First, begin by playing each of the motifs (**Tracks 3–6**) several times, asking them to describe what they hear—but don't give away what each represents. It may be helpful to have them sing along with the melodies. Since the remainder of this activity relies on your students' ability to recognize the motifs when they occur, make sure that they feel comfortable identifying the excerpts before you move on.

Below are the four motifs, identified by number. Although musical excerpts are provided for those who wish to use them, it is far more important for your students to relate to the music in a way that will be meaningful to them: volume, speed, whether the excerpt sounds "happy" or "sad," etc. You may wish to teach your students more technical terms (such as "major," "minor," and "chord") to help them describe what they hear.

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#### Motif 1: Scarpia Chords (Track 3)



The musical score for Motif 1: Scarpia Chords (Track 3) is presented in a grand staff format. It consists of three measures. The first measure is marked with a forte dynamic (*fff*) and features a B-flat major chord. The second measure is marked with a forte dynamic (*fff*) and a *tutta forza* instruction, featuring an A-flat major chord. The third measure is marked with a forte dynamic (*fff*) and features an E major chord. The score includes various musical notations such as stems, beams, and dynamic markings.

- Three heavy major chords
- Harmonically distant chords; B-flat, A-flat, and E
- Loud dynamics
- Full orchestra, emphasis on brass
- Possible adjectives: Harsh, blaring, imposing





### FUN FACT

The painter Jacques-Louis David is not the only historical figure in Sardou's play. According to Sardou, Tosca was "discovered" by the composer Domenico Cimarosa and sang her debut in an opera by Giovanni Paisiello (pictured above). Cimarosa (1749–1801) and Paisiello (1740–1816) were both highly successful composers of opera. Paisiello actually appears in Sardou's play, conducting Tosca's performance of one of his cantatas at the Palazzo Farnese. His presence at the event—meant to celebrate the (inaccurate) news of Napoleon's defeat—is rather puzzling: Paisiello had revolutionary tendencies himself, and was one of Napoleon's favorite composers.

## Motif 2: Tosca's Theme (Track 4)

ANDANTINO SOST<sup>to</sup>  $\text{♩} = 56$   
*dolcissimo e con tutta l'espressione*

- Major key
- An arc shape in the melody: first rising, then falling
- Triplet accompaniment
- Possible adjectives: tender, elegant, sweet

## Motif 3: Love Duet Theme (Track 5)

CAV. Mia To - sca ido - la - tra - ta, o - gni  
 co - sa in te mi pia - ce;

- Major key
- A large leap down, a step up, another large leap down, then a rising scale
- Ascending arpeggios in the orchestra
- Possible adjectives: soaring, ardent

## Motif 4: Murder Theme (Track 6)



- Minor key
- Melody in the strings
- Very soft dynamics
- Possible adjectives: Agitated, solemn, dramatic

### STEP 4. ANALYZE

Distribute the “evidence” handouts included with this guide. Explain that all of the lyrics come directly from the *Tosca* libretto; when no sung text is present, there are stage directions, or an explanation of the action happening on stage. Ask your students to guess where each excerpt fits in the opera’s plot. (If you like, you may give students a hint that the excerpts are listed in the order that they appear in the opera.)

Moving on to the musical excerpts that incorporate the motifs, play each of the excerpts in order. Ask your students to identify the motif they hear in the excerpt and write the number of the motif in the space provided. Also ask them to circle, underline, or otherwise mark which words the motif accompanies (for instance, the word “love”). They may need to listen to each excerpt a few times before they can confidently identify the motif; an answer key is provided below for your reference.

Excerpt #1 (Track 7)	Motif 1
Excerpt #2 (Track 8)	Motif 2
Excerpt #3 (Track 9)	Motif 2
Excerpt #4 (Track 10)	Motif 3
Excerpt #5 (Track 11)	Motif 1
Excerpt #6 (Track 12)	Motif 3
Excerpt #7 (Track 13)	Motif 4
Excerpt #8 (Track 14)	Motif 1
Excerpt #9 (Track 15)	Motif 4
Excerpt #10 (Track 16)	Motif 3
Excerpt #11 (Track 17)	Motif 3
Excerpt #12 (Track 18)	Motif 4

### FUN FACT

The Italian authors Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica are now remembered primarily for their work writing plays and librettos, yet as young men neither seemed to be destined for the literary arts. Giacosa attended law school. Illica’s early years were far more colorful: As a young man, he ran away from home to become a sailor, and in 1876, he even fought in a sea battle against the Ottoman Army.



John Macfarlane’s sketches for a background character’s costume in Act I

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

### Tosca: The Queen of Big Feelings

The beautiful soprano at the center of Puccini's work is the famous opera singer (and drama queen!) Floria Tosca. A true diva, the tempestuous Tosca has some big feelings, which sometimes cause her to lose control of herself. Consider some of the more complicated feelings Tosca struggles with during the opera:

- > Jealousy
- > Rage
- > Fear
- > Self-Pity

We can only imagine how differently Tosca's life might have gone if she had a set of tools to help shrink some of her big emotions. One way to do so is to describe exactly how that emotion feels in your body. Ask students to turn to a neighbor and discuss each of Tosca's big feelings and how those same emotions have felt to them personally using the phrase, "This emotion makes my body feel...." Have them share with the class and look to find commonalities in the way other students feel big emotions in their bodies. Use this discussion to help students develop awareness of their own bodies so that the next time they experience a big feeling, they will be better equipped to respond to it.

## STEP 5. INVESTIGATE

Now distribute the "Case File" handouts included with this guide. Have your students cut out the "evidence cards" from the previous handouts and attach them to the correct "Case File" (i.e., gather together all of the excerpts that include Motif 1, all of the excerpts with Motif 2, etc.).

Placing your students in small groups, ask them to work together to figure out the meaning of each motif. You may wish to assign specific motifs to each group or ask each group to work on all four motifs. Using the board, write the following questions out for the class so that students may use them to facilitate discussion and guide their analysis:

- Does the motif seem to be associated with a particular character? If so, does it occur when that character appears? When he or she is singing? When he or she is mentioned by another character?
- Are the melodies sung by characters on stage? Do they occur as background music?
- Do the excerpts for each motif come from a single scene or act, or are they distributed across the opera?
- Do the motifs ever seem to indicate that a character is remembering something from their past? Do they ever seem to foretell something that will happen in the future?

Space is provided on students' "Case File" handouts for them to make notes on their observations and deductions.

## STEP 6. REFLECT

Have each group of students present their findings. Write these on the board next to the original list of themes. Invite them to compare the two lists. Has their musical analysis added anything to their interpretation of the plot? Has it made any characters seem more interesting or complex? Has it clarified anything? Ask whether they have any final observations they'd like to make.

**DIVING DEEPER:** Leitmotifs are not only used in opera. As an additional assignment, ask students whether they can think of any other storytelling media that also use leitmotifs. Film is a good example (think of the theme that accompanies Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, the Mordor theme in *The Lord of the Rings*, or the tune that indicates the shark in *Jaws*), but students will likely also think of examples from TV shows, video games, and plays or musicals. How does a repeating theme affect their experience of those art forms and media? Finally, point out that opera is not all that different from movies and the other forms of entertainment they enjoy every day: It may be in a foreign language and feature a particular style of singing, but its methods of storytelling and demonstrating character are not all that different than the media that students engage with every day!



## It Sounds So Natural: *Tosca* and Verismo

*“Last night I went to see Puccini’s opera Tosca. ... What a work! In the first act there is a religious parade accompanied by the endless clanging of bells. ... In the second act a man is tortured (horrible screams!), while another is stabbed by a sharp bread knife. In the third act we see, from the roof of a citadel, a view of Rome—accompanied by more bing-bang-bonging of bells—and then a man is shot by a firing squad.”*

This is how the composer and conductor Gustav Mahler described *Tosca* in a 1903 letter to his wife. The description was not meant to be complimentary. Mahler, like many critics in the years after *Tosca*’s premiere, found the opera to be filled with cheap thrills. Yet to focus on the pejorative tone of the description is to overlook a fascinating aspect of *Tosca*, one that Mahler himself clearly noticed—the inclusion of “natural” sounds.

Many Italian opera composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries subscribed to an aesthetic philosophy known as verismo, or “realism” (from the Italian word “vero,” meaning “true”). The idea was adopted from French literature, which in the 19th century took special pains to tell “realistic” stories of poverty and the deprivations of the destitute. For opera composers, this new ideal was a major departure from the status quo: Since its inception, the genre had been neatly split into “serious opera,” which focused on mythological figures and ancient nobility, and “comic opera,” which depicted clever members of the lower classes outwitting their idiotic rich counterparts. Composers of verismo opera, on the other hand, sought to show the urban poor as they “really” lived, and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: in addition



Édouard Manet’s *Execution of Emperor Maximilian*

COURTESY KUNSTHALLE MANNHEIM

to the poor, the lower class and the criminal. As in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*—one of the paradigms of verismo opera—such characters could be driven by passion to defy reason, morality, and the law.

Yet *Tosca* is not a story of dire poverty or social ills, as most of the characters come from noble families. Nevertheless, Puccini wished to tell his story as realistically as possible, and in this case, that meant including sounds that would make the opera seem true to life. In addition to the bells, gunshots, and screams that Mahler mentions, audiences hear a cannon shot (when Angelotti’s escape is discovered) and a shepherd boy singing on

the hills outside Rome. In fact, Puccini took pains to make the sounds as realistic as possible. He asked a priest for details about the Te Deum, the celebratory sacred hymn sung at the conclusion of Act I. He asked a musician at the Vatican about the exact pitches of the bells at St. Peter’s and even took a special journey to hear what Rome’s bells sounded like from the roof of the Castel Sant’Angelo. And the song of the shepherd boy in Act III (which, along with the morning bells, signals to Cavaradossi and the audience that dawn is approaching) is not in standard Italian but in the Roman dialect that would have been spoken by a simple local boy minding his flock of sheep.

## Philosophical Chairs

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue (even when we disagree about something) are learned skills. Everyone can learn them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about the opera.

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone who has a different answer from your own. That’s okay! Take your time with each statement, embrace uncertainty, and know that changing your mind when you learn new information is a sign of strength, not weakness. Before you begin your discussion, take some time to review the rules of engagement:

**Be sure you understand the statement.** If something is unclear, ask!

**Face each other.** Body language helps show that you’re listening carefully and respectfully.

**Only one speaker at a time.** Everyone will get their turn to speak.

**Think before you speak.** Be sure that what you’re going to say is what you really mean.

**Summarize the previous person’s comments before adding your own.**

**Address ideas, not the person.** Challenging ideas or statements is good only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.

**Three before me.** To make sure everyone’s voice is heard, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

### The Statements

- Jealousy knows no bounds
- Envy is easily managed.
- Power is status.
- Power is always balanced.
- Power is often abused.
- Having power comes with consequences.
- All politicians are corrupt.
- All relationships require trust.
- Love and desire are the same feelings.
- Desire fuels relationships.
- Infidelity (cheating) is an act of betrayal.
- The use of torture is morally permissible.
- Vengeance and retribution are always justifiable.
- Two wrongs make a right.
- Revenge is always motivated by justice.
- The ends always justify the means.
- Bribery is a form of corruption.
- Deceit and betrayal have been normalized in society.
- In the end, everyone gets what they deserve.

## Murder, They Wrote | Play Excerpt

### *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou: Act IV, Scene 4

Spoletta appears at the door

SPOLETTA: Should I go get Cavaradossi?

TOSCA: Oh, no! No!

SCARPIA: *(to Spoletta)* Wait!... *(he approaches Tosca, who recoils, and addresses her)* You have one minute to make up your mind!

TOSCA: *(cowering on the sofa)* It's all over! ... Everything is against me! ... It's over!

SCARPIA: *(whispering in her ear)* Well?

*Silence.*

TOSCA: *(after a pause, in a weak voice)* Yes!

She bursts into tears, and presses her face into the cushions on the sofa.

SCARPIA: *(standing up)* Captain, I've changed my mind. The executioner can go to bed. We will not hang Cavaradossi, leave him in his cell.

Spoletta turns back to the policemen who accompany him, and at his command they depart. He alone remains in the room.

TOSCA: *(quietly, to Scarpia)* I want him freed immediately.

SCARPIA: *(just as quietly)* Calm down, Tosca! We need to be more subtle than that! Here is the prince's order, which I must obey. *(showing her the paper)* My only choice in the matter is the means of execution, and we will turn that to our advantage. To everyone—excepting this man, my trusted servant—Cavaradossi must appear to be dead.

TOSCA: And you promise that afterwards... you'll help him escape?

SCARPIA: This is the order I will give. *(to Spoletta)* Spoletta, close the door! *(Spoletta does so)* Now listen carefully! Cavaradossi will not be hanged, but shot by firing squad... *(Tosca jumps up)*...in the courtyard of the Castel Sant'Angelo, just like we did with Palmieri.

SPOLETTA: So, Sir, an execution?

SCARPIA: A fake execution... Exactly like you did for Palmieri!

SPOLETTA: I understand perfectly, Sir.

SCARPIA: Get twelve men from your company, and load their guns yourself—but powder only, no bullets, and do it very carefully...

SPOLETTA: Yes, Sir.

SCARPIA: Cavaradossi will be told exactly how to play his role. He will be led to the platform, with no witnesses present but you and your men. The firing squad will shoot and he will fall to the ground as though dead. You yourself will check the body to confirm that he is dead, and that there is no need to finish the job with a pistol; then you will dismiss your men. Then, with a cloak over his shoulders and a hat pulled down over his eyes, you will lead Cavaradossi out of the castle and into the carriage which the lady here will have waiting. You'll climb into the carriage with him, and it will carry you to the city gate, which will be opened for you on my order. Once outside the city walls you'll leave them to go their own way and you will return home. I'll take care of everything else. Understand?

SPOLETTA: Yes, Sir!

SCARPIA: The guns...?

SPOLETTA: I will load them myself. Should I go do it now?

SCARPIA: Not yet! Let him wait.

TOSCA: *(in a low voice)* I want to see him, and tell him myself what we've agreed on.

SCARPIA: Very well. *(to Spoletta)* The lady may move freely about the castle and leave when she pleases. Place a man at the bottom of the stairs, he will lead her to the prison. Only after she has spoken with Cavaradossi and gotten back to her carriage will you proceed with the execution... as I explained...

SPOLETTA: I understand, Sir.

SCARPIA: Then go... Don't forget any detail. I am not to be disturbed unless I call.

Spoletta salutes and leaves, closing the door, which Scarpia immediately locks.

## Murder, They Wrote | Play Excerpt (CONTINUED)

### *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou: Act IV, Scene 5

As the door slams shut and the bolt rattles into place, Tosca shudders and rises shakily to her feet.

SCARPIA: (*sitting back down on the couch*) Is that everything you wanted?

TOSCA: (*weakly, her voice trembling*) No!

SCARPIA: What else?

TOSCA: (*with great effort*) I want a letter of transit, which will assure us safe passage out of Rome and out of the Papal States.

SCARPIA: Fair enough!

He goes to the writing desk. Tosca approaches the dinner table and, with a trembling hand, takes Scarpia's wine glass. As she raises the glass to her lips she sees on the table a sharp knife.

SCARPIA: (*reading aloud what he has written*) "To whom it may concern: allow Madame Floria Tosca and the gentleman who accompanies her to freely leave the city of Rome and the Papal States. Signed, Vitellio Scarpia, Chief of Police of Rome." Satisfied?

He hands her the paper, which she stares at with lowered gaze. He stands beside her, very close. Tosca, pretending to read, places the glass back on the table and begins to move her hand slowly toward the knife.

TOSCA: Yes, fine.

SCARPIA: Well then, I get my reward! (*coming forward to embrace her.*)

TOSCA: Here's your reward! (*She plunges the knife into his heart.*)

SCARPIA: Oh! Curse you! (*He falls onto the sofa.*)

TOSCA: (*with a ferocious laugh*) Finally! It's done! At last! At last! Oh, it's done!

SCARPIA: Help me! I'm dying!

TOSCA: As you should, assassin! You put me through a long night of torture; now it's my turn! (*She leans over him, staring*

*him in the eyes.*) Look me in the eyes, you scoundrel! See me exult in your agony! And you, you coward, here you are dying at the hand of a woman! Die, animal! Die desperate and mad! Die!... Die!... Die!...

SCARPIA: (*on the sofa, grabbing the knife. He and Tosca face each other over the back of the couch, and he says in a strangled voice*) Help me! Help!

TOSCA: (*rising and going toward the door*) Scream all you want! Your blood will choke you! No one can hear you!

Scarpia makes one final effort to rise. Tosca leaps toward the sofa and grabs the knife again. They lock eyes for another moment, he dying, she full of fury. Scarpia falls back onto the sofa, groans, and slips to the floor. She places the knife on the table, coldly.

TOSCA: At last! (*She moves the candle to look at Scarpia's face. He dies.*) Now I absolve you.

Without taking her eyes off Scarpia, she wipes her fingers on the edge of the table cloth. She takes a water pitcher, dampens a napkin, and tries to wipe a spot of blood off her dress, then tosses the napkin to the floor beside the fireplace. She goes to the mirror, takes a candle, and fixes her hair.

TOSCA: And to think that a whole city used to tremble before him! (*In the distance bells begin to sound reveille.*) The bells! Dawn!... Already?

She crosses between the table and Scarpia's dead body, then blows out the candle nearest her. She takes the transit papers from the table and slips them into her dress. She listens at the door. She is about to walk out, but sees one candle is still burning. She relights the other candle and places them both on the floor on either side of the dead body. She spots a crucifix on the wall, takes it down, and places it on Scarpia's chest. She stands, opens the door quietly, and slips into the dark hallway. She listens carefully, then closes the door just as the drums in the citadel begin to sound.

## Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt

“Vedi, le man giunte io stendo a te!”/“Io tenni la promessa”

(Track 1 or MOoD clips 23–24)

Someone knocks at the door

SCARPIA: Chi è là?

SPOLETTA: (*entering in a hurry*) Eccellenza, l'Angelotti al nostro giungere si uccise.

SCARPIA: Ebbene, lo si appenda morto alle forche! E l'altro prigionier?

SPOLETTA: Il cavalier Cavaradossi? È tutto pronto, eccellenza!

TOSCA: (*to herself*) Dio m'assisti!

SCARPIA: (*to Spoletta*) Aspetta. (*softly, to Tosca*) Ebbene?

Tosca nods, then bursts into tears and presses her face into the cushions on the sofa.

SCARPIA: (*to Spoletta*) Odi...

TOSCA: (*interrupting him*) Ma libero all'istante lo voglio!

SCARPIA: (*to Tosca*) Occorre simular. Non posso far grazia aperta. Bisogna che tutti abbian per morto il cavalier. (*indicating Spoletta*) Quest'uomo fido provvederà.

TOSCA: Chi m'assicura?

Who goes there?

Your honor, Angelotti killed himself as soon as we arrived.

That's just fine. Hang his dead body from the prison gate. And the other prisoner?

The Cavalier Cavaradossi? He is all ready, your honor!

God help me!

Wait. And so?

Listen...

I want him freed immediately!

We still have to put on a show of it. I can't be so obvious. Everyone needs to think that he has died. We can trust this man to make it happen...

How can I be sure?



John Macfarlane's designs for Scarpia's costume

## Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt (CONTINUED)

**SCARPIA:** L'ordin ch'io gli darò voi qui presente. (*turning to Spoletta*) Spoletta: chiudi. (*Spoletta closes the door quickly and comes back to Scarpia.*) Ho mutato d'avviso... (*Scarpia gives Spoletta a meaningful look. He nods his head to indicate that he has guessed Scarpia's meaning.*) Il prigionier sia fucilato. (*Tosca jumps up*) Attendi... Come facemmo del conte Palmieri...

**SPOLETTA:** Un'uccisione...

**SCARPIA:** (*right away, with marked intention*) ...simulata! Come avvenne del Palmieri! Hai ben compreso?

**SPOLETTA:** Ho ben compreso.

**SCARPIA:** Va'.

**TOSCA:** (*who has been listening closely, interrupts*) Voglio avvertirlo io stessa.

**SCARPIA:** E sia. (*to Spoletta, indicating Tosca*) Le darai passo. Bada: all'ora quarta...

**SPOLETTA:** (*with a knowing nod*) Sì. Come Palmieri... (*He exits. Scarpia listens as Spoletta's footsteps die away. Then his features and demeanor turn lecherous as he approaches Tosca.*)

**SCARPIA:** Io tenni la promessa...

**TOSCA:** Non ancora. Voglio un salvacondotto onde fuggir dallo stato con lui.

**SCARPIA:** Partir dunque volete?

**TOSCA:** Sì, per sempre!

**SCARPIA:** Si adempia il voler vostro. (*Scarpia goes to his desk.*) E qual via scegliete?

**TOSCA:** La più breve!

**SCARPIA:** Civitavecchia?

**TOSCA:** Sì.

I will give him his orders right here in front of you. Spoletta, shut the door. I've changed my mind.

The prisoner will be shot. But wait...Just like we did for Count Palmieri.

An execution...

...a fake one! Just like what happened to Palmieri. You understand?

I know just what you mean.

Go.

I want to warn him myself.

Go ahead. Let her through. Just watch: at four o'clock...

Yes. Just like Palmieri...

I kept my end of the bargain...

Not yet. I want passports so that I can flee the country with him.

You really want to leave?

Yes, forever.

Your wish is my command. Which road will you take?

The shortest!

To Civitavecchia?

Yes.

As he writes the transit papers, Tosca approaches the dinner table and, with a trembling hand, takes Scarpia's wine glass. When she raises the glass to her lips, she notices on the table a sharp knife. She glances at Scarpia, who is focused on his writing, and very cautiously reaches toward the knife, takes it and hides it behind her as she leans against the table. She never takes her eyes off Scarpia. He finishes writing, places the seal on the letter, and then turns toward Tosca, opening his arms to embrace her.

## Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt (CONTINUED)

### “Io tenni la promessa”

(Track 2 or MOoD clip 24)

**SCARPIA:** Tosca, finalmente mia!... *(His lustful boast suddenly changes into a terrible scream—Tosca has plunged the knife into his chest)* Maledetta!

**TOSCA:** Questo è il bacio di Tosca!

**SCARPIA:** *(with a strangled voice)* Aiuto! Muoio! *(He sways on his feet and tries to grab Tosca, but she steps back, horrified.)* Soccorso! Muoio!

**TOSCA:** *(with hatred in her voice)* Ti soffoca il sangue? *(Scarpia tries to pull himself upright, grabbing the sofa.)* E ucciso da una donna! M'hai assai torturata!... Odi tu ancora? Parla!... Guardami!... Son Tosca!... o Scarpia!

**SCARPIA:** Soccorso, aiuto! Muoio! *(Choking on blood, he makes one final effort to rise, then falls back, dead.)*

**TOSCA:** *(leaning over Scarpia)* Muori dannato! Muori, Muori! È morto! Or gli perdono!

Without taking her eyes off the dead body, Tosca goes to the table, takes a carafe of water, and, wetting the tablecloth, uses it to wipe off her fingers. She gazes into the mirror and fixes her hair. She remembers the transit papers. She searches for them on the desk but can't find them. She looks around—then she sees them, in Scarpia's clenched hand. She kneels down, lifts his arm, takes the papers, and lets his arm fall, limp and lifeless, back onto the floor.

**TOSCA:** E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

She heads toward the door, then thinks for a moment and goes to take the two candles that stand on the mantelpiece and lights them at the candelabra on the table, which she then extinguishes. She places a lighted candle at each side of Scarpia's head. She looks around once again, takes a crucifix from the wall, and, carrying it solemnly, kneels to place it on Scarpia's chest. Drums sound in the distance. Tosca rises and walks out of the room, carefully closing the door behind her.

Tosca is finally mine!

Damn you!

This is Tosca's kiss!

Help! I'm dying!

Help me!

I'm dying!

Are you choking on your own blood?

Killed by a woman!

You tortured me so much! Can you still hear me? Speak!

Look at me! I am Tosca, Scarpia!

Help! Help! I'm dying!

Die, you devil! Die! Die!

He's dead! Now I forgive him!

All of Rome covered before him!

## CSI: Tosca | Evidence

### TRACK 7

#### Excerpt #1

The opening chords of the opera, played as the curtain rises.

Motif Identification:

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### TRACK 8

#### Excerpt #2

TOSCA: (*a voice heard from outside*) Mario!

Mario!

CAVARADOSSI: (*Pretending to be calm, he opens the door for Tosca.*)  
Son qui!

Here I am!

TOSCA: (*entering, looking suspiciously around*) Perché chiuso?

Why was the door closed?

CAVARADOSSI: (*with feigned indifference*) Lo vuole il Sagrestano...

The Sacristan wants it that way.

TOSCA: A chi parlavi?

Who were you talking to?

CAVARADOSSI: A te!

To you!

TOSCA: Altre parole bisbigliavi. Ov'è?

You were whispering something else. Where is she?

CAVARADOSSI: Chi?

Who?

TOSCA: Colei! Quella donna!

Her! That woman!

Motif Identification:

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### TRACK 9

#### Excerpt #3

TOSCA: (*sweetly chiding Mario for kissing her in a church*)

Oh! innanzi alla madonna... no, Mario mio, lascia pria che la  
preghi, che l'infiori...

Oh! In front of the Madonna... no, Mario! Leave me alone  
so I can pray to her and leave her flowers.

She approaches the painting of the Virgin Mary, and carefully arranges on the altar the flowers she brought with her. She kneels and prays with great devotion, and then crosses herself and stands.

Motif Identification:

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## CSI: Tosca | Evidence (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 10

#### Excerpt #4

CAVARADOSSI: (*tenderly*) Mia gelosa!

My jealous darling!

TOSCA: Sì, lo sento... ti tormento senza posa.

Yes, I feel it... I'm constantly tormenting you

CAVARADOSSI: Mia gelosa!

My jealous darling!

TOSCA: Certa sono del perdono  
se tu guardi al mio dolor!

I'm sure that you would forgive me  
if only you could understand my pain

CAVARADOSSI: Mia Tosca idolatrata,  
ogni cosa in te mi piace;  
l'ira audace  
e lo spasimo d'amor!

Tosca, my goddess,  
I love everything about you:  
your raging anger  
and your passionate love!

TOSCA: Dilla ancora  
la parola che consola...  
dilla ancora!

Say it again,  
those three little words...  
Say it again.

CAVARADOSSI: Mia vita, amante inquieta,  
dirò sempre: "Floria, t'amo!"  
Ah! l'alma acquieta,  
sempre "t'amo!" ti dirò!

My life, my restless love,  
I will always say to you, Floria, "I love you!"  
Oh my restless love,  
I'll always tell you, "I love you!" I'll always say it.

Motif Identification:

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### TRACK 11

#### Excerpt #5

News has just arrived of Napoleon's defeat, and there is  
great rejoicing in the church.

ALL: Viva il re!... Si festeggi la vittoria!

Long live the King! Let us celebrate this victory!

As the shouts and laughter reach a peak, a cruel  
voice cuts through the clamor. It is Scarpia; behind  
him stand his agent Spoletta and a number of police  
officers.

SCARPIA: (*with great authority*) Un tal baccano in chiesa!  
Bel rispetto!

Such a commotion in church!  
A fine way to show respect!

Motif Identification:

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## CSI: Tosca | Evidence (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 12

#### Excerpt #6

Scarpia has just convinced Tosca that her beloved Cavaradossi is involved with another woman. She flies into a rage then begins to weep. Now she rushes from the church, intent on confronting Cavaradossi. Scarpia accompanies her to the exit, pretending to feel sorry for her.

Motif Identification:

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### TRACK 13

#### Excerpt #7

As Scarpia writes the transit papers, Tosca approaches the dinner table and, with a trembling hand, takes Scarpia's wine glass. When she raises the glass to her lips, she sees on the table a sharp knife; she glances at Scarpia, who is focused on his writing, and very carefully reaches toward the knife, responding to Scarpia's questions as she does so.

SCARPIA: E qual via scegliete?

Which road will you take?

TOSCA: La più breve!

The shortest!

SCARPIA: Civitavecchia?

To Civitavecchia?

TOSCA: Sì.

Yes.

Tosca finally has the knife in her hand, and she hides it behind her as she leans against the table. She never takes her eyes off Scarpia. He places the seal on the letter and then turns toward Tosca, opening his arms to embrace her.

Tosca, you are finally mine!

SCARPIA: Tosca, finalmente mia!

His statement of victory suddenly changes into a terrible scream—Tosca has plunged the knife into his chest.

SCARPIA: Maledetta!

Damn you!

TOSCA: Questo è il bacio di Tosca!

This is Tosca's kiss!

Motif Identification:

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## CSI: Tosca | Evidence (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 14

#### Excerpt #8

SCARPIA: (*with a choked voice*) Aiuto! Muoio! (*He sways on his feet and tries to grab Tosca, but she steps back, horrified.*) Soccorso! Muoio!

TOSCA: Ti soffoca il sangue? E ucciso da una donna! M'hai assai torturata!... Odi tu ancora? Parla! Guardami! Son Tosca, o Scarpia!

SCARPIA: (*Choking on blood, he makes one final effort to rise.*) Soccorso, aiuto! Muoio! (*He falls back, dead.*)

TOSCA: (*leaning over Scarpia*) Muori dannato! Muori, Muori!

Help! I'm dying!  
Help me!  
I'm dying!

Are you choking on your own blood? Killed by a woman!  
You tortured me so much! Can you still hear me? Speak!  
Look at me! I am Tosca, Scarpia!

Help! Help! I'm dying!

Die, you devil! Die! Die!

Motif Identification:

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### TRACK 15

#### Excerpt #9

TOSCA: È morto! Or gli perdono!

He's dead! Now I forgive him!

Without taking her eyes off the dead body, Tosca goes to the table, takes a bottle of water, and, wetting the tablecloth, uses it to wipe off her fingers. She gazes into the mirror and fixes her hair. She looks around for the transit papers, but they are not on Scarpia's desk—then she sees them, clasped in Scarpia's dead hand. She takes the papers, and watches as his arm falls, limp and lifeless, back onto the floor.

TOSCA: E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

All of Rome covered before him!

Motif Identification:

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## CSI: Tosca | Evidence (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 16

#### Excerpt #10

Cavaradossi has bribed the jailer to take a letter to Tosca, and the jailer has left him alone to write. Soon, however, he breaks off writing, as memories of his beloved float to his mind.

CAVARADOSSI: E lucevan le stelle...  
e olezzava la terra,  
stridea l'uscio dell'orto...  
e un passo sfiorava la rena...  
Entrava ella, fragrante,  
mi cadea fra le braccia...

The stars were shining...  
and the earth smelled sweet.  
The garden gate creaked open,  
and one single step left its print in the sand.  
In she walked, in a cloud of perfume,  
and fell into my arms.

Motif Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

### TRACK 17

#### Excerpt #11

Cavaradossi begins to weep as he recalls his happy days with Tosca. Much to his surprise, she suddenly rushes in.

Motif Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

## CSI: Tosca | Evidence (CONTINUED)

### TRACK 18

#### Excerpt #12

Tosca shows Cavaradossi the transit papers, and Cavaradossi expresses his surprise: “It’s the first good thing Scarpia ever did,” he tells Tosca. “Yes,” she replies, “and the last.”

tosca: Rullavano i tamburi...  
rideva, l’empio mostro... rideva...  
già la sua preda pronto a ghermir!  
“Sei mia!” —Sì. —Alla sua brama  
mi promisi. Lì presso  
luccicava una lama...  
ei scrisse il foglio liberator,  
venne all’orrendo amplesso...  
io quella lama gli piantai nel cor.

The drums were rolling  
and that cruel monster laughed,  
ready to seize his prey!  
“You are mine!” Yes. I pledged  
I would satisfy his desire.  
A blade glistened close by.  
He wrote out the passports,  
he came over to embrace me...  
and I plunged that blade deep in his heart.

Motif Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

## CSI: Tosca | Case Files

### Motif 1

Observations:

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What the motif means:

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### Motif 2

Observations:

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What the motif means:

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## CSI: Tosca | Case Files (CONTINUED)

### Motif 3

Observations:

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What the motif means:

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### Motif 4

Observations:

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What the motif means:

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# Opera Review: *Tosca*

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Tosca*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what would you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about the opera and this performance at the Met!

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Angelotti comes to the church to hide. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cavaradossi paints a portrait. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cavaradossi promises that he loves only Tosca. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cavaradossi agrees to help Angelotti. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
A religious procession enters the church. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Scarpia arrives, hot on Angelotti's trail. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Scarpia ignites Tosca's jealousy. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Scarpia awaits Tosca's arrival at the Palazzo Farnese. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Scarpia accuses Cavaradossi of hiding Angelotti. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆



THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Scarpia questions Tosca while Cavaradossi is tortured. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The bloodied Cavaradossi cheers Napoleon's victory. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Scarpia makes a deal with Tosca. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Tosca laments her predicament. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Tosca accepts Scarpia's deal. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Tosca murders Scarpia. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cavaradossi waits for his execution. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Tosca tells Cavaradossi about the escape plan. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cavaradossi is executed, and Tosca leaps to her death. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆