

## TOSCA

by Giacomo Puccini

Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts  
September 16, 19, 21, and 23, at 7:30 pm

## AN OPERA THRILLER

Presented by



**Desjardins**

[Musical excerpts / TV Ad](#)

Montreal, August 23, 2017 – The Opéra de Montréal opens its 38<sup>th</sup> season on a grand scale with a work that embodies the very essence of opera: Giacomo Puccini’s passionate melodrama *Tosca*. Love, jealousy, political intrigue, and constant tension... all the elements of an opera thriller are in place in this new co-production by the Opéra de Montréal and the **Cincinnati Opera**, given a classic treatment that immerses us in the story’s context and historical setting (Rome, 1800), and features the refined stage direction of **Andrew Nienaber**, a rising star in the United States.

### CAST

After giving us her moving *Butterfly*, American soprano **Melody Moore** returns to the Opéra de Montréal to perform her intense signature role, Floria Tosca. Moore is today one of the world’s finest interpreters of *Tosca*. Chilean tenor **Giancarlo Monsalve**, making his company debut, will portray her lover, the painter Mario Cavaradossi. Appearing alongside them, Canadian baritone **Gregory Dahl** (*Aida* – 2016) portrays the sinister police chief Scarpia, American bass **Valerian Ruminsky** (*Otello* – 2016) sings the Sacristan, and Canadian baritone **Patrick Mallette** (*Les Feluettes* – 2016) takes on the role of Cesare Angelotti. Other cast members: **Rocco Rupolo** (Spoletta), **Nathan Keoughan** (Sciarrone)—who will also be singing Pink in the revival of *Another Brick in the Wall* in Cincinnati in 2018—, **Max Van Wyck** (a Jailer), and **Chelsea Rus** (a Shepherd). Sets and costumes for this production are designed by **Robert Perdziola** and lighting is by **Thomas C. Haze**. The **Orchestre Métropolitain** and the **Opéra de Montréal Chorus** (prepared by **Claude Webster**) will be under the direction of Italian conductor **Giuseppe Grazioli**.

### THE STORY: A FATAL KISS...

Singer Floria Tosca is the mistress of painter Mario Cavaradossi, who is aiding the fugitive Angelotti. Scarpia, the chief of police, plays on Tosca’s jealousy and passion to snare Cavaradossi. Following the painter’s arrest, Scarpia despicably attempts to blackmail Tosca: she must give in to his advances to save the man she loves. When she accepts, Scarpia gives an order to carry out a mock execution of Cavaradossi, while discretely ordering that the execution actually be carried out. Once the lovers’ safe-conduct has

been signed, Scarpia approaches Tosca and stabs him, crying out, "This is Tosca's kiss!" She runs off to Castel Sant'Angelo to reassure her lover and help him feign his death. But Cavaradossi has been shot and Tosca arrives to find his bullet-riddled body...

#### **THE WORK: THE PLOT, FIRST AND FOREMOST**

Puccini began thinking of setting Sardou's play *La Tosca* to music as early as 1889, barely a month after the premiere of his first opera, *Edgar*. The project was set aside until 1895, when he saw a performance of *La Tosca* with the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt in the title role. In 1896, a few months after the premiere of *La bohème*, Puccini fought to get permission from the author, who had in the meantime given the rights to another composer. When he finally obtained the required permission, Puccini also had to convince librettist Giuseppe Giacosa of the play's operatic potential.

Why so much wilfulness and persistence in setting *Tosca* to music? While Puccini was never especially interested in political intrigue, he immediately recognized the dramatic prospects in the story of Tosca. Giacosa and Illica responded to this potential by focusing the action on the confrontation between Tosca, Cavaradossi, and Scarpia. Puccini's music contributed to bringing the drama to the foreground, sometimes going against the wishes of his publisher Ricordi and current operatic conventions. For example, he refused to write a love duet for Tosca and Cavaradossi because, as musicologist Julian Budden has written, Puccini maintained that Tosca "would be far too preoccupied with the outcome of events to be able to indulge in a time-wasting effusion."

#### **THE MUSIC**

The music is very much in keeping with the passionate nature of the story. The atmosphere is dark (Puccini chose lower registers and just one female voice) and oppressive, and Puccini's fine music does not give way to any excess. The work's dramatic turning point, Act 2, involves the behind-closed-doors confrontations of the three protagonists, where Puccini keenly depicts the constriction, the trap closing in around the lovers. In *Tosca*, Puccini is highly effective and delivers an emotional punch; one need only think of Tosca's lamentation in the second act, where she expresses her pain (*Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore*), or Cavaradossi's despair at the beginning of the third act (*E lucevan le stelle*).

Among the most famous singers to portray Tosca, a special place must be held for Maria Callas who debuted in the role on August 27, 1942, and brought her stage career to an end with this signature portrayal on June 5, 1965. She is considered to be the "Tosca of the century."

**Opera:** *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini

**Genre:** Tragic drama

**Structure:** 3 acts

**Language:** Italian with English and French surtitles

**Libretto:** Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica (after the play by Victorien Sardou)

**Premiere:** Rome, Teatro Costanzi, January 14, 1900

**Production:** Opéra de Montréal and Cincinnati Opera

**Last presented at the Opéra de Montréal:** February 2010

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## SEPTEMBER AT THE OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL

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### LET'S TALK OPERA – FREE

The Opéra de Montréal emerges from its confines to talk to you about opera. Let's Talk Opera! is a new series serving as an introduction to each opera in our season. Join musicologist Pierre Vachon (Ph.D.), a pianist, and singers to get to the heart of each work in just 90 minutes (including a coffee break): history, music, voices, cultural context, composer, style...

**First event:** *Tosca* by Puccini

ENGLISH: Sunday, September 10 at 10:30 am

Venue: Victoria Hall

[Info](#)

FRENCH: Sunday, September 10 at 2 pm

Venue: Grande Bibliothèque Auditorium

[Info](#)

### FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA LITTÉRATURE

The Opéra de Montréal is pleased to contribute to the FIL for a third year with the presentation of STREET OPERA – HUMANITUDES: OPERA AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION. Le Sac à Dos and the Opéra de Montréal have joined forces for an innovative project that uses opera to promote the social reintegration of individuals who have experienced homelessness. The project, spread over a one-year period, has allowed for the creation of an opera based on the stories of homeless people, introducing them to all aspects of opera under the guidance of a team of performing arts professionals. This event features a concert version performance of the work and a round table discussion with composer Éric Champagne, librettist José Acquelin, and project initiator Nicole Blouin. Host: Pierre Vachon.

Date: September 29, at 7 pm

Venue: Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur

[Info](#)



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All operas are performed in their original language with bilingual surtitles projected above the stage.

### SALLE WILFRID-PELLETIER, PLACE DES ARTS (PDA)

PUCCINI – *TOSCA* | September 16, 19, 21, 23, 2017 at 7:30 pm

ROSSINI – *La Cenerentola* | November 11, 14, 16, 18, 2017 at 7:30 pm

LITTLE/VAVREK – *JFK* | January 27, 30, February 1, 3, 2018 at 7:30 pm

GOUNOD – *Roméo et Juliette* | May 19, 22, 24, 26, 2018 at 7:30 pm

### ESPACE GO

SOKOLOVIC – *Svadba (Wedding)* | March 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 2018 at 7:30 pm

Graphic design for the Opéra de Montréal's 2017-2018 campaign: Brad

### TICKETS

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## Opéra de Montréal

Founded in 1980 and based in Montreal, the Opéra de Montréal is the largest francophone opera company in North America. Each season, close to 50,000 spectators make their way through the company's doors. Under the direction of General Director Patrick Corrigan and Artistic Director Michel Beaulac, the company's season is made up of four to five operas, activities and concerts by the Atelier lyrique, and outreach activities. The Opéra is a key player in the city's economic, cultural, and social development as, each season, it maintains working relationships with over 360 local businesses, and hires no less than 800 artists and craftspeople. Close to 80% of the artists appearing at the company are Canadian.

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