

2025/26 SEASON LIVE AT THE ROYAL THEATRE

PUCCINI'S  
**Tosca**

FEBRUARY 18, 20, 24  
AT 7:30PM

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FEBRUARY 22  
AT 2:30PM



HOST HOTEL



PRODUCTION SPONSOR

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VICTORIA



# Welcome to the Opera

In reimagining Puccini's *Tosca*, we are not merely staging a period piece; we are holding a mirror to our own fractured reality. The political turmoil that consumes Rome (the suffocating surveillance, the abuse of power, and the crushing of dissent) brings forward echoes of the world we navigate today. In this production, the stakes are visceral and immediate.

Yet, amidst the brutality of Scarpia's regime, the heart of the opera is a profound testament to the human spirit. Floria Tosca and Mario Cavaradossi remind us that in an era of instability, love and sacrifice are not just romantic ideals, but radical acts of defiance. Their devotion and love serves as the ultimate resistance against tyranny. We aim to show that while the shadows of oppression are long, the light of human connection is what truly endures. This is a *Tosca* for the now—urgent, raw, and deeply resonant.

## BRENNA CORNER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

From the very first three chords, you know you're in for a wild ride. Those thunderous opening chords, resounding like great church bells, soon reveal themselves as the musical embodiment of the corrupt power of the state—personified by Rome's chief of police, Baron Scarpia. After a syncopated, descending chromatic passage, Puccini throws us immediately into the action. He wastes no time.

Puccini's score for *Tosca* is, in many ways, cinematic. It vividly underscores the grandeur of Rome, the passionate love between Tosca and Mario in Act I, the harrowing suspense of Scarpia's interrogation and torture scene in Act II, and the luminous soundscape of dawn over Rome that opens Act III.

It is a beautifully crafted score—immediate, lean, and utterly compelling.

## GIUSEPPE PIETRAROIA, MUSICAL DIRECTOR

When audiences see *Tosca*, they experience about three hours of story. What they don't see are the years, months, and thousands of hours of work it takes to make that world appear. Long before the orchestra plays a note, hundreds of hours are spent by the director and designers imagining and refining every detail. That vision is then carried forward by an extraordinary team across all production departments, turning drawings and ideas into something real, stable, and safe to perform on, with over 3,500 labour hours in the Opera Shop and another 1,300 in the theatre to build, install, rehearse, and perform this production.

Those hours represent decades of skill, experience, and care. I'm proud of all of it, and of the people who make it happen. When the curtain rises, I hope you feel the same sense of awe we did during its making.

## MICHAEL SLEMON, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

MADE IN VICTORIA,  
CANADA



A CO-PRODUCTION  
WITH VANCOUVER  
OPERA

# Tosca

**Music by** Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by** Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, based on the 1887 play *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou

First Performance on January 14, 1900, at the Teatro Costanzi, Rome

**Dates** February 18, 20, 24 at 7:30 pm

February 22 at 2:30 pm | The Royal Theatre

**Sung in** Italian with English surtitles

*This performance is approximately 2 hours 20 minutes (including one 20 minute intermission)*

## CAST

Tosca ..... Catherine Thornsley  
Cavaradossi..... Yongzhao Yu  
Scarpia..... Brett Polegato  
Angelotti..... Alex Halliday  
Sacristan..... Peter Monaghan  
Spoletta..... Asitha Tennekoon  
Sciarrone..... Matthew Li  
Shepherd Boy..... Finlay Green  
Shepherd Boy..... Andriy Yaremyn  
Jailer..... Louis Dillon

## ENSEMBLES

Victoria Symphony  
Pacific Opera Chorus & Supernumeraries  
Victoria Children's Choir

## CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor ..... Giuseppe Pietrarroia  
Stage Director..... Brenna Corner  
Set & Video Designer..... Scott Reid  
Lighting Designer..... Michael Walton  
Chorus Director & Principal Coach ... Kimberley-Ann Bartczak  
Fight & Intimacy Director..... Geoff Malcolm  
Stage Manager ..... Collette Berg  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Kelsey Cain  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Katerina Sokyrko  
Apprentice Stage Manager ..... Lourdess Summers  
Royal Theatre Stage Employees and Running Crew,  
Members of IATSE Local 168  
Costumes supplied by the Canadian Opera Company (Kevin Knight, Designer)

*Cast and programme are subject to change*

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**House Programme Design** Trapeze Communications | **Synopsis** Robert Holliston

**Production & Editor** Rhonda Ganz



# Synopsis

The events take place in Rome on a single day in the year 1800.

## **ACT ONE**

### **The church of Sant' Andrea della Valle**

Cesare Angelotti, an escaped political prisoner and ex-consul of Rome, enters the church furtively. He lets himself into the Attavanti Chapel after finding a key that his sister has hidden for him.

The artist Mario Cavaradossi enters to resume work on his portrait of Mary Magdalene, whose face is that of a blue-eyed, golden-haired woman often seen praying in the church. Although he admires the beauty of his model, he thinks only of his true love, the dark-haired, dark-eyed singer Floria Tosca.

Angelotti tries to sneak away but recognizes his friend Cavaradossi who, hearing Tosca's voice outside, gives him a basket of food and forces him back into the chapel to hide.

Tosca enters, and having heard voices, is suspicious of her love and accuses her lover of entertaining a woman when he should be working. Mario assuages her fears and agrees to meet her later that night at his villa near the edge of the city. When she has gone, Cavaradossi offers his villa to Angelotti as a hideout, and the two men flee together.

Baron Scarpia, the head of judicial and religious enforcement (and police) arrives with his henchmen, in search of Angelotti. They quickly discover clues that connect Cavaradossi to the woman in the painting, who is really Angelotti's sister.

Tosca leaves, focused on finding Cavaradossi who she believes is being unfaithful to her at his villa, not realizing that she has been tricked and is leading Scarpia's agents directly to her lover.

## **INTERMISSION**



*Scan for extended  
notes and more  
Tosca  
content online.*



## **ACT TWO**

### **Scarpia's offices in the Palazzo Farnese**

Having followed Tosca to Cavaradossi's villa, Baron Scarpia has the painter secretly arrested for sheltering Angelotti (still hidden within the villa). Cavaradossi is brought before Scarpia for interrogation but is led to the torture chamber when he refuses to reveal Angelotti's whereabouts.

Tosca arrives, and Scarpia questions her as Cavaradossi's cries of agony are heard in the adjoining room. Though Cavaradossi implores her to keep silent, Tosca agrees to reveal Angelotti's hiding place if her lover is freed. Cavaradossi, angered by Tosca's betrayal of his friend, openly defies Scarpia, who orders his execution.

As news arrives of Angelotti's discovery and subsequent suicide, Tosca begs for her lover's life. Scarpia names his price: her submission to his lecherous advances. Desperate, she agrees so long as Scarpia writes a letter of safe conduct for herself and Cavaradossi. Scarpia insists that there must be at least a mock execution and arranges the details with his aide that this execution will take place as they did when they "shot" Count Palmieri.

Alone with Tosca, Scarpia advances amorously towards her. She stabs him with a knife she has found, takes the safe conduct pass, and rushes out to free Cavaradossi.

## **ACT THREE**

### **The Battlements of the Castel Sant' Angelo**

As dawn approaches, Cavaradossi arrives at the prison of Castel Sant' Angelo to be executed by firing squad. He sings of his love for Tosca, a love which has finally given him reason to live. Tosca appears unexpectedly with the news that his execution is to be a fake one, and that when he is "shot" he must feign death. They share a moment of joy as they look forward to their life together.

The execution takes place and Cavaradossi falls to the ground. After the firing squad marches off, Tosca is horrified to discover that her lover is actually dead—she was tricked by Scarpia, and the fake firing squad death "like Count Palmieri's" was all a ruse.

Shouting is heard from inside the castle: Scarpia's body has been discovered. Trapped, Tosca cries out, consigning both herself and Scarpia to God's judgement, and leaps from the building to her death.

# Artist Profiles



## **CATHERINE THORNSLEY | Tosca**

Mexican-American soprano Catherine Thornsley makes her Pacific Opera Victoria debut as Tosca. A two-time Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition National Semifinalist, she was a Resident Artist at the Glimmerglass Festival (2023–2025), covering Mimì, Nedda, and Tosca, and creating roles in two world premieres. Trained at Northern Arizona University and UBC, Catherine is passionate about accessibility, community collaboration, and amplifying underrepresented voices in classical music.



## **YONGZHAO YU | Cavaradossi**

Yongzhao Yu, praised for his “ardent vocal power” (*DC Theater Arts*) and “bright, clarion high notes” (*Opera Today*), makes his Pacific Opera Victoria début as Cavaradossi in *Tosca*. He recently appeared as the Duke in *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera, and has sung with the Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Irish National Opera. Recent highlights include Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Alfredo in *La traviata*, and Cavaradossi at the Glimmerglass Festival.



## **BRETT POLEGATO | Scarpia**

One of today’s most sought-after lyric baritones, Canadian-Italian Brett Polegato has performed over fifty operatic roles at the world’s most prestigious venues, including La Scala, the Met, l’Opéra National de Paris, the Glyndebourne Festival, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, the Teatro Real, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and Carnegie Hall. Highlights in the 2025/26 season include a recital with pianist Stephen Hargreaves at the Salle Bourgie Montréal, and a return to Grange Park Opera.



**ALEX HALLIDAY | Angelotti**

Named one of CBC's 2025 30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30, bass-baritone Alex Halliday's 2025/26 sees débuts with Pacific Opera Victoria, Vancouver Opera (*La bohème*), and Edmonton Opera (*Siegfried*), alongside his return to the Canadian Opera Company for Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Additional engagements this season include concerts with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, as well as performances of Beethoven's Ninth at Toronto's Koerner Hall.



**PETER MONAGHAN | Sacristan**

Canadian bass-baritone Peter Monaghan has earned praise for his "lush, full voice that soared through the hall" (*Schmopera*). Recent seasons have seen him as Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Edmonton Opera, Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Pacific Opera Victoria, and Snug in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Vancouver Opera. Future engagements include the title role in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* with Lethbridge Symphony, and Fauré's *Requiem* with Vox Musica.



**ASITHA TENNEKOON | Spoletta**

Sri Lankan tenor Asitha Tennekoon has established himself as one of Canada's most versatile singing artists; he sang Remendado in Pacific Opera Victoria's *Carmen*. Asitha is sought after for performances spanning from Baroque to experimental repertoire. Asitha has performed principal roles throughout Canada. Recent highlights include Bill (*Flight*) with Vancouver Opera, Peter Quint (*Turn of the Screw*) with Opera 5, and Devon in *Missing: In Concert* with Toronto Summer Music Festival.



**MATTHEW LI | Sciarrone**

Possessing a "vibrant stage presence and a rich, commanding voice" (*La Scena Musicale*), bass Matthew Li makes his Pacific Opera Victoria début this season. A proud alumnus of the Atelier Lyrique at Opéra de Montréal and The Rebanks Family Fellowship Program, his roles include Leporello, Masetto, and Il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Dulcamara (*Elisir d'amore*), Seneca (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Colline (*La bohème*).





### **GIACOMO PUCCINI | Composer**

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was an Italian composer and one of opera’s greatest masters of melody and emotional realism. A central figure of the verismo tradition, he created some of the most enduring operas in the repertoire, including *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, and *Tosca*. Puccini’s music is celebrated for its sweeping lyricism, vivid orchestration, and deep compassion for human passion and suffering.



### **LUIGI ILLICA | Librettist**

Luigi Illica (1857–1919) was an Italian librettist and dramatist known for his strong sense of theatrical structure and pacing. A key collaborator of Giacomo Puccini, Illica helped shape the dramatic frameworks of *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. His libretti are marked by vivid characterization and taut dramatic momentum, providing a powerful foundation for Puccini’s emotionally charged music.



### **GIUSEPPE GIACOSA | Librettist**

Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906) was an Italian poet, playwright, and librettist celebrated for his refined language and lyrical sensitivity. Working alongside Luigi Illica and Giacomo Puccini, he helped create works like *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Giacosa’s elegant verse and emotional nuance helped elevate these operas, ensuring clarity, beauty, and poetic depth within Puccini’s dramatic storytelling.



### **VICTORIEN SARDOU | Original Author**

Victorien Sardou (1831–1908) was a French playwright renowned for his meticulously crafted dramas and historical thrillers. His play *La Tosca* (1887) was a major international success, admired for its suspense, political intrigue, and strong female protagonists.

# Creative Team



## **GIUSEPPE PIETRARROIA | Conductor**

Canadian conductor Giuseppe Pietrarroia has earned a national reputation for his versatility, musicality, and leadership across both orchestral and operatic stages. Based in British Columbia, he is the Principal Conductor of Pacific Opera Victoria, where he has held leadership roles since 2003. He previously served as Associate Conductor with both Pacific Opera and the Victoria Symphony, and was Music Director of the Victoria Choral Society from 2005 to 2012.



## **BRENNA CORNER | Stage Director**

Brenna Corner is an international stage director and Artistic Director of Pacific Opera Victoria. She made her company debut with *The Little Prince* and is known for bold, emotionally clear storytelling across Canada, the US, and Europe. Past directing credits include *Hansel & Gretel* (Vancouver Opera), *Il Trovatore*, and *Macbetto* (Washington National Opera), *Madama Butterfly* (Los Angeles Opera), *Dead Man Walking* (Israeli National Opera), and *Carmen* (The Atlanta Opera). She is also a certified Fight Director.



## **SCOTT REID | Set & Video Designer**

Scott Reid is making his Pacific Opera debut. He is a set, lighting, and projection designer who has been designing for theatre, opera, and dance for over 30 years. Although based in Calgary, Scott's designs have been seen across North America. He has enjoyed designing for such diverse projects as theatre for young audiences, touring shows, new plays, and large-scale operas and ballets. Scott has been nominated for awards across Canada.

[scottreiddesign.com](http://scottreiddesign.com)





**MICHAEL WALTON | Lighting Designer**

Michael's lighting design credits span opera, theatre, and musical theatre over the last 30 years, across Canada and beyond. He has designed for the Stratford Festival for the last 21 seasons, where he is also the Head of Design. Recent opera credits include; *Jenůfa* (Opéra de Montréal), *Bluebeards Castle* (COC), *Così fan tutte* (COC and Israeli Opera), and numerous productions with Pacific Opera Victoria, such as *Il Trittico*, *Jenůfa*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Albert Herring*.



**KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK | Chorus Director & Principal Coach**

A native of Montreal, Kimberley-Ann Bartczak is a conductor, pianist, and vocal coach. Currently Principal Coach and Music Administrator of Pacific Opera Victoria, conductor at the Victoria Children's Choir, musician with the Victoria Symphony, and music staff at The Glimmerglass Festival. A very active performer, she has performed and conducted across Canada, United States, Mexico and Europe. Always with a smile, she has a passion for sharing music with the younger generation.



**FIGHT & INTIMACY DIRECTOR | Geoff Malcolm**

Geoff is thrilled to be joining the creative team of *Tosca*. Locally you've seen Geoff's work with Ballet Victoria, Pacific Opera Victoria, Kaleidoscope Theatre for Young People, and Langham Court Theatre. Fun fact, you might remember Geoff as the Ostrich in Pacific Opera's production of *The Birds*!



*Read extended bios and meet our artists online.*



**COLLETTE BERG | Stage Manager**

Collette is thrilled to be making her Pacific Opera Victoria début. Collette has worked extensively in opera, musical theatre, and events in Vancouver and is now a stage manager with San Francisco Opera, where recent favourite credits include Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*, Matthew Ozawa's production of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*. Collette holds a BFA from UBC, where she has also served on faculty.



**KATERINA SOKYRKO | Assistant Stage Manager**

Katerina is thrilled to be returning to Pacific Opera, where she has worked on 15 productions, most recently *The Turn of the Screw*, *Rigoletto*, *The Little Prince*, and *La clemenza di Tito*. Elsewhere, recent shows include *A Wonderheads Christmas Carol* (Wonderheads); *1979* (Belfry Theatre); *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Jersey Boys*, *Anne of Green Gables* (Charlottetown Festival); *Hurry Hard* (Chemainus Theatre Festival); *Hamlet-911* (Stratford Festival); and five seasons at the Blyth Festival.



**KELSEY CAIN | Assistant Stage Manager**

Kelsey is thrilled to return to Pacific Opera Victoria as Assistant Stage Manager for *Tosca*. A Victoria local and UVic BFA Theatre graduate, her Pacific Opera Victoria credits include *Odyssey* (SM), *The Turn of the Screw*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Die Walküre* (ASM). She looks forward to continuing with Pacific Opera this season as Assistant Stage Manager.



**VICTORIA CHILDREN'S CHOIR**

Now in its 25th season, the Victoria Children's Choir is recognized as one of the leading choral organizations in Western Canada. Led by Artistic Director David Stratkauskas and an outstanding team, 150 choristers aged 7–20 receive world-class music education in a supportive environment. Performing diverse repertoires from around the world, the choir tours internationally and regularly collaborates with artists and organizations, including the Victoria Symphony, Pacific Opera Victoria, and Victoria Baroque.



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## Soprano

Jenny Hofmeister  
 Chelsea Kutyn  
 Nadia Lurie  
 Tarané Noruzi  
 Cheryl Pocklington  
 Olivia Smart  
 Allison Ward  
 Laura Widgett

## Alto

Heather Byford  
 Michaela Dickey  
 Rebekah Janzen  
 Carol Pudwell  
 Shelby Scott  
 Cassidy Stahr  
 Noreen Smith

## Tenor

Peter Bailey  
 Stephen Cropper\*  
 Graeme Linton  
 Carter Martin  
 Brian Holgate  
 Allen Reynolds  
 Justin Swanson

## Baritone/Bass

Brian Andiel  
 Steve Barker  
 Naomi-Mitchell Bauer  
 Alex Chen  
 Louis Dillon  
 Gerald Schieven  
 Ron Skelton

\* Appearing with permission of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association

Pacific Opera Chorus and Supernumeraries



# Children's Chorus



David Stratkauskas **VCC Artistic Director**

Carla Tadla **VCC Executive Director**

Kimberley-Ann Bartczak **VCC Children's Chorus Director & Collaborative Artist**

Lindsey Schneider **VCC Concert Choir & Youth Ensemble Manager**

Charlotte Biggs

Eric Bulman-Fleming

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Dale Friesen  
Frank Morin  
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Giuseppe Pietraroia **Conductor** | Christian Kluxen **Music Director** | Matthew White **CEO**

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Christi Meyers,  
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Kimberly Durflinger,  
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Cory Balzer  
Müge Büyükçelen  
Michele Kwon  
Jeremy Potts  
Emily Salmon  
Julian Vitek  
Barb Gilroy  
Misako Sotozaki

### **Viola**

Kenji Fusé, Principal  
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Russell Bajer

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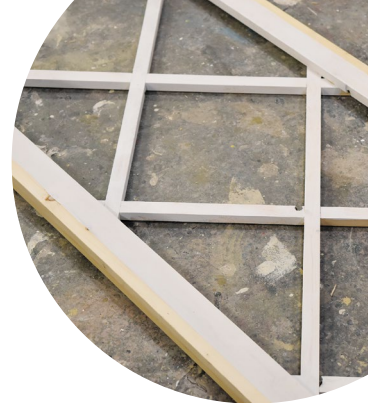
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Aaron Mattock

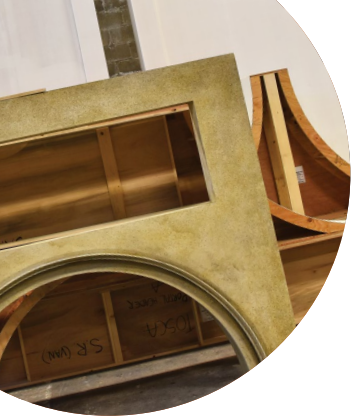
### **Harp**

Annabelle Stanley, Principal

### **Organ**

Kimberley-Ann Bartczak





# Pacific Opera Victoria

Brenna Corner, Artistic Director  
Giuseppe Pietrarroia, Principal Conductor  
Ian Rye, Chief Executive Officer

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# Spotlight On Robert Holliston

## CURATOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

From his early work as répétiteur, chorus master, and principal coach, to his current role as Curator of Public Engagement, Robert Holliston has shaped how opera is understood and shared.

As host of Inside Opera with Robert Holliston and Pacific Opera Victoria's pre-performance Lobby Lectures, and contributing writer to the Keynotes newsletter, he invites audiences into the score and the stories that bring opera to life.



**With gratitude, we celebrate Robert and the extraordinary impact of his artistry and leadership!**



You can enjoy past Inside Operas and Lobby Lectures online at [pacificopera.ca](http://pacificopera.ca), and experience the wisdom and witticisms of Robert Holliston wherever you are, whenever you want.

Inside Opera  
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This Spotlight of Robert Holliston is generously supported by Barbara Hubbard, Artist Patron.

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