Puccini’s *Tosca*: Musical, Theatrical, and Social Perspectives Syllabus

**Instructor**
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**Modality**
Remote learning

**Quarter: Summer 2023**
**Start – end date:** July 8

**Session day/time:** Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. CST

**Course Code and Section:** HUAS78078, 23U1

**Course Overview**
We open this course by placing *Tosca* in aesthetic and stylistic context alongside Puccini’s other stage works, the conventions of Italian verismo opera, and the repertoire of the Teatro Costanzi at which *Tosca* premiered. We also discuss the opera’s inspiration in Victorien Sardou’s 1887 French drama of the same title and actor Sarah Bernhardt’s diffuse but undeniable influence on Puccini’s operatic heroine. As a celebrated public figure making impossible choices in the sordid, blood-soaked world of Puccini’s opera, the eponymous Tosca challenged late nineteenth-century conceptions of women and public life. We discuss gendered aspects of the music, libretto, and stage production in connection with the volatile political climate and social unrest that characterized Puccini’s Rome: indeed, *Tosca* premiered amid bomb threats against the Teatro Costanzi. We conclude by analyzing several key scenes of the opera in depth, bringing our discussion of social and political issues to life through guided listening and viewing: from the heroine’s heart-rending aria *Vissi d’arte* to Baron Scarpia’s dastardly desecration of the *Te Deum* procession, Puccini’s *Tosca* poses fascinating questions about music, theater, and society.

**Note to students:**
You will have access to audio and video recordings as well as the libretto with English translation and additional materials, either via email or the course website.

**Recommended texts and listening (optional)**


Accessing remote courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: https://canvas.uchicago.edu.

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If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zme1@uchicago.edu.