Puccini Heroines
Sondra Radvanovsky

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO
ENRIQUE MAZZOLA

MANON LESCAUT
G. PUCCINI
LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST
LE VILLI

Giacomo Puccini (1858—1924)

Le Villi (1884)

1	Prelude	2. 44
2	Act I · Se come voi piccina	5. 29

La Bohème (1896)

3	Act I · Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì	5. 35

Madama Butterfly (1904)

4	Intermezzo	7. 58
5	Act II · Un bel dì vedremo	5. 27

Tosca (1900)

6	Act II · Vissi d'arte	3. 59

Manon Lescaut (1893)

7	Intermezzo	6. 00
8	Act IV · Sola, perduta, abbandonata	5. 42

La fanciulla del West (1910)

9	Prelude	1. 19
10	Act I · Laggiù nel Soledad	2. 49

Suor Angelica (1918)

11	Senza mamma	5. 06

Edgar (1889)

12	Prelude	3. 35
13	Act III · Addio, mio dolce amor!	4. 24

La rondine (1917)

14	Act I · Chi il bel sogno di Doretta	3. 11

Turandot (1926)

15	Act II · In questa reggia	6. 21

La Bohème

16	Act II · Quando me'n vo'	2. 49

Gianni Schicchi (1918)

17	Act I · O mio babbino caro	2. 43

Total playing time: 76. 03

Sondra Radvanovsky, soprano
Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra
Enrique Mazzola, conductor

Sondra Radvanovsky's history at Lyric Opera of Chicago is a long and storied one. In many ways, it reflects the trajectory of her international career, which for three decades has seen her on the world's most prestigious stages, lauded by audiences and critics for her interpretations of a repertoire that ranges wide but always finds her returning to Verdi and Puccini. She first sang at Lyric in the 2002/03 Season, making her debut in the title role of American composer Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. Subsequent appearances have seen her in a variety of Verdi roles (the Trovatore Leonora, Elvira in *Ernani*, Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera*, Aida, and Lady Macbeth), several bel canto projects (*Anna Bolena*, *Norma*, and "The Three Queens," a project featuring scenes from *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux* that premiered at Lyric and was recorded by Pentatone and released in 2022), as well as Lisa in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and, most recently, the title role in Sir David McVicar's production of Cherubini's *Medea*. "The Puccini Heroines" represents another musical Everest of sorts for the dramatic soprano. Over the course of three performances in February 2025, audiences at Lyric sat spellbound as Sondra essayed "the" soprano scene — and in some cases, more than that — from each of Puccini's ten operas. It was an astonishing feat, a *tour de force* from an artist at the absolute height of her powers, accompanied magnificently by the Lyric Opera Orchestra conducted by our Music Director, Enrique Mazzola. I'm so thrilled that we could preserve it with this recording, made live during that run of concerts.

Sondra grew up in Chicago's western suburbs and experienced some of her first opera at Lyric. She has recently returned, and all of us here at Lyric look forward to our deepening relationship, which will see her on our stage in seasons to come, as well as working with the young singers in our Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center.

We are so fortunate here at Lyric to be able to add entries to a story of artistic collaboration that stretches back to those Susannahs in the fall of 2002. It is a joy to share this latest chapter with all of you.

John Mangum
General Director, President & CEO
Lyric Opera of Chicago
The Women's Board Endowed Chair

I'm very excited to share this particular musical journey with you—arias from a traversal of Giacomo Puccini's operas, spanning from his first (*Le Villi*) to his last (*Turandot*) and including nearly all the masterpieces in between. Of course, Giuseppe Verdi remains a touchstone for opera audiences and singers alike — but has any composer contributed as many chestnuts to the repertoire as the man who gave us "O mio babbino caro," "Un bel dì," and "Nessun dorma" — all still beloved by the public throughout the world whether at royal gala performances, televised talent shows, and even sporting events?

This program has personal meaning to me, as it traverses my own career as well; I made my stage debut as Mimi in *La Bohème*, while nearly 30 years later I sang *Turandot* for the first time. And I'm thrilled that yet another Puccini role will bring me back to Lyric in just a few years. How fortunate I am to have presented this concert for the first time with the formidable Lyric Opera Orchestra in my beloved Chicago — my native city, my current residence, and my artistic home.

Sondra Radvanovsky

Since my childhood, Puccini's world has been closely intertwined with my musical life. Singing in the children's chorus of La Scala, I shared the stage with his larger-than-life female leads in operas such as *La Bohème*, *Turandot*, and *Manon Lescaut*. From those moments, I have always admired the female characters in Puccini's operas, who show a resilience that is often missing in the male lead characters. Years later, the very first opera I ever conducted, *Suor Angelica*, made even more clear to me how strong and revolutionary Puccini's female characters are, with Suor Angelica's tragic youth, the separation from and loss of her son, and the ultimate decision to abandon this world to reconnect with him. Meeting Sondra in this project has been like a final exploration of the depths of these characters. We dive not only into the famous and more notorious titles, but also discover Puccini's younger and lesser-known works such as *Le Villi* and *Edgar*.

Puccini uses his most personal musical language for these roles, which is a mix of beautiful melodic lines (reminiscent of a late *bel canto* style) and a direct, strong, declamatory style which gives an inner truth (*verità*, hence the term *verismo*) to the women's voices. These elements, added with Puccini's strongest operatic and dramaturgical instincts, elevate these female characters to deserve being called, recognized, and beloved as true "heroines."

Enrique Mazzola
Music Director
Lyric Opera of Chicago
The John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Endowed Chair

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This disc documents a genuine *tour de force*: the all-Puccini program presented by Sondra Radvanovsky in February 2025 at Lyric Opera of Chicago. What makes the world-renowned American soprano's achievement so memorable is not only her stunning vocal mastery, but also the extraordinary persuasiveness and conviction with which she takes on notably varied characters meant for multiple voice types, from light lyric to full lyric, spinto, and dramatic. Numerous celebrated sopranos have recorded all-Puccini discs, but taking on a program like this in a live performance is surely unique.

Collaborating with Lyric's distinguished music director, Enrique Mazzola, and the Lyric Opera Orchestra, Radvanovsky is heard here in excerpts from several operas that have not figured in her stage repertoire to date. Her Chicago audience was thrilled to encounter her in those roles (Anna, Fidelia, Mimì, Minnie, Magda, Lauretta), while also savoring the glorious freshness and individuality she brought to her more familiar portrayals.

Radvanovsky's singing repeatedly reminds us of the brilliance with which Puccini employed the voice for ideal revelation of drama and character. Like Richard Wagner two generations previously, Giacomo Puccini was uninterested in displaying the voice for its own sake. At the time of his rise to prominence, the advent of *verismo* style in Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890) had initiated a new compactness in Italian operatic composition. In other words, phrases were simply getting shorter; in contrast to the length and breadth of a classic *bel canto* scena, now the singer had less time to register a particular feeling and develop it within an aria. It's a tribute to Puccini's skill as an editor of his own work that invariably, even in his early days as an opera composer, he could distill any heroine's aria to an average of about five minutes, covering the absolute essentials

of what the audience needed from the character at that particular moment.

Following the charming Act One prelude from Puccini's first opera, ***Le Villi*** (1884) — music that exudes grace, sweetness, and gentleness — we hear Radvanovsky first as Anna, that opera's warm-hearted heroine. Although characterization was insufficiently developed in *Le Villi* and the individual numbers failed to add up to a memorable totality, the 25-year-old composer already knew how to shape an instantly appealing melody. The glowing, "full lyric" instrument required for Anna would become the quintessential Puccini soprano sound. In this scene, Anna and Roberto's upcoming marriage is being celebrated. He has been given an inheritance and must leave for the big city to take care of the details. Anna hopes he won't forget her.

In 1889, five years after *Le Villi*'s successful world premiere, Puccini's second opera, ***Edgar***, proved a fiasco, thanks in no small part to its wretched libretto. Even after three attempts to revise the work (additions included the elegant prelude, dating from 1892), Puccini continued to use the word "trash" to describe it. Still, Fidelia's aria — expressing the hope that she and her beloved Edgar will meet again in heaven-soars in the most uplifting manner. The aria poses a formidable test for most Puccini sopranos, due to the leaps in the line and the vocally grandiose conclusion.

It was ***Manon Lescaut*** (1893) that finally confirmed Puccini's potential and brought him fame seemingly overnight. Musically and dramatically he reveled in depicting the heroine, whose desire for luxury leads to her ruin. Puccini's great achievement in this opera is to inspire considerable sympathy for the frivolous Manon herself. The composer moves his opera in that direction initially by placing an intermezzo — that is, an orchestral interlude — between Acts Two and Three. We already know

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that Manon is on her way to prison, and no doubt she's full of longing for what she's lost (the possibility of ever seeing her beloved Des Grieux again). We sense this throughout the intermezzo, beginning with the exceptionally somber opening for solo cello. That's followed by a surging, long-sustained development of the passionate theme that had been heard previously in the Act Two love duet.

In the last act, Manon — deported to America and now dying in the desert there — sings her harrowing monologue, which painfully reveals the terror consuming her. Earlier in the opera, much of her music lies halfway between lyric and spinto, but in Act Four, she's a spinto through and through. The few moments of comparative intimacy give way to a vocal line that bursts forth with in aggressive, hair-raisingly intense phrases, before reaching a climactic, blockbusting *fortissimo* high A.

Puccini took further steps forward with ***La Bohème*** (1896), incomparable in its spontaneity and naturalness, as well as in the composer's ability to sustain his audience's deep empathy for the protagonists from first note to last. That applies, above all, to the heroine, Mimì, profoundly touching in her revelation of what means the most to her in life. Her Act One aria clearly shows that there's nothing grand or dramatic about her; she's warm, direct, and utterly sincere. The completely natural, conversational textual delivery coloring much of her aria — and, indeed, *Bohème* as a whole — constitutes a key element of Puccini style.

Four years later, in January 1900, Puccini gave the world ***Tosca***, the first great opera of the twentieth century. The public was enraptured by the glamorous heroine, and of course, by the magnificent music the composer created for her. Every soprano longs to portray this woman, Rome's most celebrated diva, who is also a marvelously

brave, warm, loving human being. An unforgettably heartfelt aria, ideal for a spinto voice, "Vissi d'arte" catches Tosca in a moment of emotional crisis: she's looking to God, wondering how — after she's lived for art and for love — He can repay her with such suffering. She begins very inwardly, before moving into several pages of fervent, deeply felt phrases, slowly building to that sustained high B-flat that every *Tosca* audience eagerly awaits.

Alas, after the triumphs of *Manon Lescaut*, *Bohème*, and *Tosca*, Puccini endured another disaster with the premiere of ***Madama Butterfly*** (1904). It took extensive revisions a few months later for the tide to turn for this opera. It was now noticeably more concise, eliminating extraneous characters and keeping the focus squarely on the heroine, where it belonged. Puccini provided the former geisha Cio-Cio-San — a.k.a. "Madam Butterfly" — with a genuine emotional arc, illuminating her through the smallest details. Addressed to her skeptical maid Suzuki, "Un bel dì" presents Cio-Cio-San's vision of what it will be like when her long-absent American husband finally returns to her. The aria is all line-by-line storytelling, with the slow increase of intensity carefully gauged by Puccini. After so much quiet, intimately scaled singing in most of the aria, the final pages suddenly demand a significantly broader, grander sound, very much spinto territory.

Puccini was ambitious with the intermezzo that precedes *Butterfly*'s last act. It uses the orchestra's full resources on a scale that some critics have likened to Richard Strauss, but this is a unique blend of both intimacy and passion, thoroughly in keeping with the character of Cio-Cio-San herself.

Following the orchestra's performance of the brief but stirring prelude to ***La fanciulla del West*** (1910), Radvanovsky takes on the "girl" of the title, Puccini's

only American heroine. A voice that can excel as Minnie seems to move during the opera from spinto to dramatic soprano and back again. A saloonkeeper in Gold-Rush California, Minnie is a real treasure *herself*, and something of an older sister to the miners. Sheriff Jack Rance longs to marry her, but she feels nothing for him beyond a sort of restrained affection. In her aria, "Laggiù nel Soledad," she tells him about her parents, who ran the tavern where she grew up. This is, again, pure storytelling — quiet, sweet, unfailingly endearing — yet with the challenge of the buildup to a full-voice high C in the final moments.

No one expected operetta from Puccini, but that's what ***La rondine*** (1917) was meant to be: his first operetta, written for Vienna. Once World War I sabotaged the premiere, the piece ended up as a full-scale opera, charming and ultimately bittersweet. Much of the heroine's music is lighter than that of Cio-Cio-San, but Magda needs that kind of warmth in the voice, and the same ability to soar at the top. The character, a courtesan in Paris (like Violetta in *La traviata*), sings her aria to entertain guests at her home. "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta" exudes an elegant but lushly romantic aura.

Following *La rondine* came Puccini's trio of one-act operas collectively entitled ***Il trittico*** (1918). The middle work of this "triptych" is ***Suor Angelica***, an intimate and singularly touching tragedy. A young girl has been exiled to a convent by her family after giving birth to a son out of wedlock. Having just learned from her aunt that the child has died, Sister Angelica imagines her son as an angel and wonders when death will reunite her with him. Her aria, plaintive at the start but soon flowing in dignified yet profoundly affecting legato lines, builds very gradually but then pulls back so that Angelica can "float" the concluding phrase on an ethereal, long-sustained high A. As with Cio-Cio-San, the emotional demands for the soprano in this role are immense.

Radvanovsky then turns to the title character of the composer's final opera, ***Turandot***, which he never finished (Franco Alfano completed it, and it premiered in 1926, two years after Puccini's death). Where Puccini sopranos are concerned, Turandot herself is a whole different ballgame, needing a dramatic-soprano instrument from her first note to her last. She's also an atypically *cool* Puccini heroine, particularly in her entrance scene, in which she explains why she will only marry the suitor who can correctly answer her three riddles.

In her storytelling here, Turandot must constantly reiterate how painful it is for her to remember the suffering of her ancestor, Princess Lo-u-Ling. Although much of the vocal writing offers a flow of suitably regal phrasing, those sections are interrupted by spectacular leaps to the top of the voice. As she proceeds, the singer must keep pouring on that grandiose, almost sword-like sound. Radvanovsky's Turandot officially concluded the concert program, but she returned for two encores playing to the lighter side of her voice and personality: Musetta's irresistibly seductive waltz from *La Bohème*; and then the aria of Lauretta, heroine of *Gianni Schicchi,* in which the girl truly speaks from her heart, begging her father to give his consent for her to marry her beloved Rinuccio.

Sondra Radvanovsky's astonishing voice and artistry are at their most triumphant in the challenges of this superb program. In every way, her journey through the gamut of Puccini arias offers pleasure of a very rare kind.

Roger Pines

Roger Pines writes regularly for Opera *magazine (U.K.), programs of America's most distinguished opera companies, and major recording labels. A faculty member of Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, he has also been heard many times as a panelist on the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts' "Opera Quiz."*

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Texts and translations

Le Villi (1884)

Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana (after Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr)
Act I · *Se come voi piccina*

Anna
Se come voi piccina io fossi,
o vaghi fior, sempre sempre
vicina potrei stare al mio amor.
Allor, dirgli vorrei:
"Io penso sempre a te!"
Ripeter gli potrei:
"Non ti scordar di me!"
Voi, di me più felici,
lo seguirete, o fior;
per valli e per pendici
seguirete mio amor.
Ah, se il nome che avete
menzognero non è,
deh, al mio amor ripetete:
"Non ti scordar di me!"

Anna
If I were small like you,
lovely flowers, I could always, always
be close beside you, my beloved.
Then I'd want to say,
"You're forever in my thoughts!"
I'd be able to repeat,
"Forget me not!"
Oh flowers, you're so much happier
than I am, that you'll be following him;
in the valleys and the foothills,
you'll follow my beloved.
Ah, if the name you have
isn't lying,
then repeat this to my beloved:
"Forget me not!"

La Bohème (1896)

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (after Henri Murger)
Act I · *Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì*

Mimì
Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì
ma il mio nome è Lucia.
La storia mia è breve.
A tela o a seta
ricamo in casa e fuori.
Son tranquilla e lieta
ed è mio svago far gigli e rose.
Mi piaccion quelle cose
che han sì dolce malìa,
che parlano d'amor, di primavere,
di sogni e di chimere,
quelle cose che han nome poesia...
Lei m'intende?
Mi chiamano Mimì,
il perché non so.
Sola, mi fo
il pranzo da me stessa.
Non vado sempre a messa,
ma prego assai il Signore.
Vivo sola, soletta

Mimì
Yes. They call me Mimì,
but my name is Lucia.
My story is brief:
On satin or silk,
I embroider at home and outside.
I'm quiet and happy,
and it's my pastime to make lilies and roses.
I find pleasure in those things
that offer a gentle charm,
that speak of love, of spring,
of dreams and fantasies,
those things that can be called "poetic."
Do you understand me?
They call me Mimì,
I don't know why.
I make my dinner
by myself.
I don't always go to Mass,
but I often pray.
I live alone, all by myself,

là in una bianca cameretta:
guardo sui tetti e in cielo.
Ma quando vien lo sgelo
il primo sole è mio,
il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!
Germoglia in un vaso una rosa,
Foglia a foglia la spio!
Cosi gentile il profumo d'un fiore!
Ma i fior ch'io faccio,
Ahimè! non hanno odore.
Altro di me non le saprei narrare.
Sono la sua vicina che la vien
fuori d'ora a importunare.

upstairs in a little white room:
I look out over rooftops, and into the sky.
But when the thaw comes,
the first sunlight belongs to me,
the first kiss of April belongs to me!
When a rose blooms in a vase,
I see it emerging, leaf by leaf!
How sweet the scent of a flower can be!
But sadly, the flowers that I make
have no perfume.
I don't know what else to tell you.
I'm your neighbor who's come
at this impossible hour to inconvenience you.

Madama Butterfly (1904)

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (after John Luther Long)
Act II · *Un bel dì vedremo*

Cio-Cio-San
Un bel dì, vedremo
levarsi un fil di fumo
sull'estremo confin del mare
E poi la nave appare.
Poi la nave bianca
entra nel porto,

Cio-Cio-San
One lovely day we'll see
a thread of smoke rising
at the farthest edge of the sea,
and then the ship appears.
The white ship
comes into port,

romba il suo saluto. Vedi? È venuto!
Io non gli scendo incontro. Io no.
Mi metto là sul ciglio del colle e aspetto,
e aspetto gran tempo
e non mi pesa,
la lunga attesa.
E uscito dalla folla cittadina,
un uomo, un picciol punto
s'avvia per la collina.
Chi sarà? chi sarà?
E come sarà giunto
che dirà? che dirà?
Chiamerà Butterfly dalla lontana
Io senza dar riposta
me ne starò nascosta
un po' per celia
e un po' per non morire
al primo incontro;
ed egli alquanto in pena
chiamerà, chiamerà:
"Piccina mogliettina
olezzo di verbena,"
i nomi che mi dava al suo venire.
Tutto questo avverrà,
te lo prometto.

thundering its salute. See? He's returned!
I don't go down to meet him. Not I.
I stay at the top of the hill and wait,
I wait a very long time
and it doesn't bother me,
that long wait.
Then, out of the crowded town
a man, a little speck,
climbs the hill.
Who will it be? Who will it be?
And when he arrives,
what will he say? What will he say?
From a distance he'll call, "Butterfly."
I won't reply,
I'll be hiding —
partly so that I can tease him,
and partly so that I won't die
at that first meeting;
and he, a bit worried,
will call, he'll call:
"Little wife,
perfume of verbena,"
the names he gave me when he came here.
All this will happen,
I promise you.

Tienti la tua paura —
io con sicura fede l'aspetto.

Keep your fears to yourself —
it's with unshakeable faith that I await him.

Tosca (1900)

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (after Victorien Sardou)
Act II · *Vissi d'arte*

Tosca
Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore,
non feci mai male ad anima viva!
Con man furtiva
quante miserie conobbi aiutai.
Sempre con fè sincera
mia preghiera
ai santi tabernacoli salì.
Sempre con fè sincera
diedi fiori agl'altar.
Nell'ora del dolore
perchè, perchè, Signore,
perchè me ne rimuneri così?
Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,
e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel,
che ne ridean più belli.
Nell'ora del dolor
perchè, perchè, Signor,
ah, perchè me ne rimuneri così?

Tosca
I lived for art, I lived for love,
never did I harm a living creature.
It was with a secret hand that I would
help anyone that I knew was suffering.
Always, with a faith that was truly heartfelt,
my prayer would rise up
to the holy tabernacles.
Always, in all sincerity,
I would offer flowers at the altar.
At this painful moment,
why, why, Lord,
why do you repay me like this?
I offered jewels for the Madonna's mantle.
I offered my singing to the stars, to heaven,
which shone even more radiantly.
At this painful moment,
why, why, Lord,
ah, why do you repay me like this?

Manon Lescaut (1893)

Libretto by Marco Praga, Domenico Oliva, Giulio Ricordi, Luigi Illica, and Giuseppe Giacosa (after Abbé Prévost)
Act IV · *Sola, perduta, abbandonata*

Manon
Sola, perduta, abbandonata
in landa desolata!
Orror! Intorno a me s'oscura il ciel.
Ahimè, son sola!
E nel profondo deserto io cado,
strazio crudel, ah! sola abbandonata,
io, la deserta donna!
Ah! non voglio morir!
No! non voglio morir!
Tutto dunque è finito.
Terra di pace mi sembrava questa!
Ahi! mia beltà funesta,
ire novelle accende —
strappar da lui mi si volea; or tutto
il mio passato orribile risorge,
e vivo innanzi al guardo mio si posa.
Ah! di sangue s'è macchiato!
Ah! tutto è finito!
Asil di pace ora la tomba invoco,
No! non voglio morir! Amore, aita!

Manon
Alone, lost, abandoned,
in this bleak land!
What horror! The sky is darkening around me.
Alas, I'm alone!
I've fallen into the deep desert,
such cruel torment! Ah, alone, abandoned,
I, the forsaken woman!
Ah, I don't want to die!
No, I don't want to die!
Everything has come to an end.
This seemed to me a place of peace!
Ah, my fatal beauty,
it ignites a new anger —
they wanted to tear me from him; now all
of my past rises up,
alive before my eyes.
Ah, it's stained with blood!
Ah, everything has ended!
Now I call on death to be a haven of peace.
No, I don't want to die! My love, help me!

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La fanciulla del West (1910)

Libretto by Guelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini (after David Belasco)

Act I · *Laggiù nel Soledad*

Minnie

Laggiù nel Soledad, ero piccina,
avevo una stanzuccia affumicata
nella taverna sopra la cucina.
Ci vivevo con babbo e mamma mia.
Tutto ricordo: vedo le persone
entrare e uscire a sera.
Mamma facea da cuoca e cantiniera,
babbo dava le carte a faraone.
Mamma era bella, aveva un bel piedino.
Qualche volta giuocava anch'essa; ed io,
che me ne stavo sotto al tavolino
aspettando cader qualche moneta,
la vedevo serrar furtiva
il piede al babbo mio.
S'amavan tanto! Anch'io così vorrei
trovare un uomo: e certo l'amerei.

Minnie

Down there in Soledad, I was a child,
I had a tiny, smoky room
in the tavern above the kitchen.
I lived there with my dad and mom.
I remember everything: I see the people
entering and leaving in the evening.
Mom was the cook and the bartender,
while Dad dealt the cards for faro.
Mom was beautiful, she had lovely little feet.
Sometimes she'd play cards; and I,
staying there under the table,
waiting to catch some coins,
would see her quietly snuggle
her foot next to Dad's.
They loved each other so much! I'd also like
to find a man: and certainly I'd love him.

Suor Angelica (1918)

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano
Senza mamma

Angelica
Senza mamma,
o bimbo, tu sei morto!
Le tue labbra,
senza i baci miei,
scoloriron
fredde, fredde!
E chiudesti,
bimbo, gli occhi belli!
Non potendo
carezzarmi,
le manine
componesti in croce!
E tu sei morto
senza sapere
quanto t'amava
questa tua mamma!
Ora che sei un angelo del cielo,
ora tu puoi vederla la tua mamma!
tu puoi scendere giù pel firmamento
ed aleggiare intorno a me… ti sento…

Angelica
Without a mother,
oh child, you died!
Without my kisses,
your lips
are faded
and so cold!
And, my child, you
closed your pretty eyes!
You're unable
to caress me,
you folded your little hands
in a cross!
And you're dead,
without knowing
how much your
mother loved you!
Now that you're an angel of heaven,
you can see your mother!
You can come down from the sky
and hover around me… I feel you…

Sei qui…sei qui…mi baci…
m'accarezzi.
ah! dimmi quando anch'io potrò vederti?
quando potrò baciarti!
Oh! dolce fine di ogni mio dolore!
Quando in cielo con te potrò salire?
Quando potrò morire?
Dillo alla mamma, creatura bella,
con un leggero scintillar di stella.
Parlami, amore, amore, amor!

You're here… you're here… you kiss me…
you caress me.
Ah, tell me when I can see you, too?
When shall I kiss you?
Oh, sweet ending of my suffering!
When will I ascend with you to heaven?
When will I be able to die?
Tell your mother, tender creature,
with a gentle sparkle of a star.
Speak to me, my love, my love, my love!

Edgar (1889)

Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana (after Alfred de Musset)
Act III · *Addio, mio dolce amor!*

Fidelia
Addio, mio dolce amor!
Nell'ombra ove discendi,
solenne ed infinita
anch'io verrò… M'attendi!
Dove tu solo regni, o dolore,
la giovinezza non ha più fior!
O Edgar, la tua memoria
sarà il mio sol pensero!
Lassù, nella tua gloria,
M'attendi, Edgar, lassù!

Fidelia
Goodbye, my sweet love!
I, too, will come to join you in the shadows,
so solemn and infinite,
where you've descended…Wait for me!
Where you alone reign, oh sorrow,
youth can never bloom again!
Oh Edgar, the memory of you
will be my only thought!
There, in all your glory,
Edgar, wait for me up there!

La rondine (1917)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami (after Alfred Maria Willner and Heinz Reichert)

Act I · *Chi il bel sogno di Doretta*

Magda

Chi il bel sogno di Doretta
potè indovinar?
Il suo mister come mai
come mai finì
Ahimè! un giorno uno studente
in bocca la baciò
e fu quel bacio
rivelazione:
fu la passione!
Folle amore!
Folle ebbrezza!
Chi la sottil carezza
d'un bacio così ardente
mai ridir potrà?
Ah! mio sogno!
Ah! mia vita!
Che importa la ricchezza
se alfine è rifiorita
la felicità!
O sogno d'or
poter amar così.

Magda

Who can guess Doretta's
beautiful dream?
How will its
mystery ever end?
Alas! One day a student
kissed her on the lips,
and that kiss
was a revelation:
it was passion!
Mad love!
Mad ecstasy!
Who could ever attempt
to describe the gentle caress
of such an ardent kiss?
Ah, my dream!
Ah, my life!
What can wealth matter
if, in the end,
happiness blooms again!
Oh, such a golden dream,
to be able to love like that.

Turandot (1926)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni (after Carlo Gozzi)

Act II · *In questa reggia*

Turandot

In questa reggia, or son mill'anni e mille
un grido disperato risonò.
E quel grido, traverso stirpe e stirpe
qui nell'anima mia si rifugiò!
Principessa Lo-u-Ling,
ava dolce e serena
che regnavi nel tuo cupo silenzio
in gioia pura, e sfidasti
inflessibile e sicura l'aspro dominio,
oggi rivivi in me!
Pure nel tempo che ciascun ricorda,
fu sgomento e terrore e rombo d'armi.
Il regno vinto! E Lo-u-Ling,
la mia ava, trascinata
da un uomo come te,
straniero, là nella notte atroce
dove si spense la sua fresca voce!
O Principi, che a lunghe carovane
d'ogni parte del mondo qui venite
a gettar la vostra sorte,

Turandot

Within this palace, thousands of years ago,
a desperate cry rang out.
And that cry, extending across generations,
found a refuge here in my soul!
Princess Lo—u—Ling,
my ancestor, so gentle and serene,
who reigned in solemn silence,
yet with pure joy, challenging
firmly and unyieldingly the harsh dominion,
today you live again in me!
Then, in that time that everyone remembers,
came dismay, terror, the clash of arms,
the conquered kingdom! And Lo—u—Ling,
my ancestor, dragged away
by a man like you, stranger,
there in the awful night
when her youthful voice was silenced!
Oh, princes, whose long caravans
bring you here from every corner of the earth
to try your luck,

io vendico su voi,
su voi quella purezza,
quel grido e quella morte!
Mai nessun m'avrà!
L'orror di che l'uccise
vivo nel cuor mi sta.
No, no! Mai nessun m'avrà!
Ah, rinasce in me l'orgoglio
di tanta purità!
Straniero! Non tentar la fortuna!
Gli enigmi sono tre, la morte è una!

I have vengeance on you
for that purity,
that cry, and that death!
No one will ever possess me!
The horror of the one who killed her
remains alive in my heart.
No, no! No one will ever possess me!
Inside myself, the pride
of such purity is reborn!
Stranger! Do not tempt fate!
There are three riddles, and death is one!

La Bohème

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (after Henri Murger)
Act II · *Quando m'en vo'*

Musetta
Quando m'en vo' soletta per la via,
la gente sosta e mira
e la bellezza mia tutta ricerca in me
da capo a pie'.
Ed assaporo allor la bramosia sottil,
che da gli occhi traspira
e dai palesi vezzi intender sa
alle occulte beltà.

Musetta
When I'm walking down the street alone,
the people stop and stare,
inspecting my beauty
from head to toe!
And I relish the subtle longing
that shines from their eyes,
as they try to guess the hidden charms
lying beneath what they see.

Così l'effluvio del desìo
tutta m'aggira, felice mi fa!
E tu che sai, che memori e ti struggi
da me tanto rifuggi?
So ben: le angoscie tue non le vuoi dir,
ma ti senti morir!

In that way, the rush of desire
swirls around me and gives me joy.
And you who know, who remember,
and who suffer, how can you avoid me?
I know you don't want to admit your feelings,
but you feel as if you could die!

Gianni Schicchi (1918)

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano (after Dante)
Act I · *O mio babbino caro*

Lauretta
O mio babbino caro
mi piace, è bello, bello.
Vo' andare in Porta Rossa
a comperar l'anello!
Sì, sì, ci voglio andare!
E se l'amassi indarno,
andrei sul Ponte Vecchio,
ma per buttarmi in Arno!
Mi struggo e mi tormento!
O Dio, vorrei morir!
Babbo, pietà, pietà!

Lauretta
Oh, my darling daddy,
I like him, he's so handsome.
I want to go to Porta Rossa
to buy the ring!
Yes, yes, I want to go!
And if I were to love him in vain,
I'd go to the Ponte Vecchio
to throw myself into the Arno!
I'm suffering, I'm in torment!
Oh, God, I want to die!
Father, have pity, have pity!

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