

## *Turandot*

### **The Plot**

*The action takes place in Beijing at the time of fairy tales.*

#### **Act I**

In front of the walls of the imperial palace in Peking, the Mandarin reads an imperial decree: princess Turandot, emperor Altoum's daughter, will marry the prince who succeeds in solving three riddles proposed by her. The suitors who won't arrive at the solution will be executed. Eleven young men have already been beheaded, and the last one, the prince of Persia, is going to be executed. The crowd hasten and run over a blind old man, held up by a girl.

Having rushed to the help of him, Calaf recognizes in him his old father Timur, the dethroned Tartar king, and in his companion the slave-girl Liù. One day Calaf smiled at her, and she fell in love with him. Calaf and his father embrace each other, and, conscious of the danger that still impends over them, they promise to keep their identities secret.

The moon rises and the prince of Persia is being led to the scaffold. The crowd beg for mercy for him, but the icy Turandot, having appeared at the imperial loggia, refuses it.

The princess' beauty deeply strikes Calaf. Though his father, Liù, Ping, Pang and Pong, ministers of the Kingdom, try to dissuade him, he decides to attempt the trial of the three riddles. Three strokes of a gong announce his decision.

#### **Act II**

In a pavilion, the three ministers recall the story of the merciless princess - for whom twelve princes died - and bewail the serenity of the past and of the life they used to spend in the small houses in the countryside.

A large crowd gather in the square of the royal palace in order to be present at Calaf's trial. He introduces himself as the Unknown Prince. A blare announces Turandot's appearance. The princess explains the reasons for her cruel demands: she wants to avenge the insult suffered by Lo-u-Ling, an ancestress of hers. The emperor uselessly tries to dissuade the Unknown Prince from attempting the dreadful trial. Turandot addresses the three riddles to the suitor and gets in reply the three solutions "Hope", "Blood", "Turandot".

Having been defeated, the princess falls into despondency and asks her father not to give her in marriage to the stranger, but she is reminded by Altoum of the importance of her oath. Then Calaf declares he'll be ready to die if she can find out his name before dawn.

#### **Act III**

During the night the heralds scour the town for somebody who can reveal the Unknown Prince's name. Calaf, sure of his victory, waits hopefully for the dawn. Ping, Pang and Pong in vain offer him gold and girls in order him to forgo the wedding.

Timur and Liù, having been recognized as those who spoke to the Prince, are led, bound and bloodstained, before Turandot to be questioned.

In order to save the old king and protect the man she loves, the slave-girl declares she is the only person who knows that name, but she isn't going to reveal it because she prefers death to betrayal. Liù predicts that Turandot will fall in love with the prince too, then she steals a dagger from a soldier and kills herself.

It's dawn. It seems that the princess, upset about Liù's death, has been defeated. Calaf approaches and sweetly kisses Turandot, revealing his name to her. With a last spark of pride, she invites him to appear before the crowd for the sentence. Then, overcome by passion, she declares before the Emperor and the people that the stranger's name is Love.