



TEATRO LIRICO DI CAGLIARI
F O N D A Z I O N E

Tosca

The Plot

Rome, June 1800.

Act I

The Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle

Cesare Angelotti, consul of the overthrown Roman Republic and brother of the Marchioness Attavanti, has just escaped from Castel Sant'Angelo prison. After reaching the momentarily deserted church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, he locks himself up inside the Attavanti Chapel, where he is to find a feminine disguise that his sister has arranged for him. The sacristan comes into the church grumbling about the painter Mario Cavaradossi, who has given him the task of washing his paintbrushes. The artist arrives immediately afterwards and resumes painting a Magdalene, inspired by the face of an unknown lady who has been regularly attending the church for the past few days. As soon as the sacristan leaves, Angelotti, exhausted from the suffering he has endured in prison, comes out from his hiding place. The arrival of the celebrated singer Floria Tosca, Mario's mistress, forces the former consul into hiding again in the chapel. After looking closely at the painting, she recognizes the features of the Marchioness Attavanti in the Magdalene's picture and this is cause for a scene of jealousy. Protesting his faithfulness, Cavaradossi manages to dispel her unjustified suspicions and to sea leaves after arranging a rendezvous with him in the evening. Left alone with Angelotti, the painter offers him refuge in his own villa and tells him how to get there across the fields. But a cannon shot announces that the prisoner has been found missing, so Mario decides to accompany the consul in order to hasten his escape. The sacristan, out of breath, lets in a rowdy group of choir singers and pupils who are going to celebrate the news of Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat with a *Te Deum*. Meanwhile Baron Scarpia, the police chief, enters the church with Spoletta, a police agent, and his coppers. In his hasty escape, Angelotti has left some clues behind, including a fan bearing the Attavanti coat of arms, which was part of his disguise. The information he has from the sacristan, who has always disliked Cavaradossi, persuades Scarpia of the painter's complicity. When Tosca comes back to meet her lover, the police chief shows her the fan, finally convincing her that Mario is betraying her with the Marchioness. In a fury, the singer sets off for the painter's villa, followed by Scarpia's men.

Act II

Scarpia's room on the upper floor of Palazzo Farnese

The celebrations called by Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples, for the victory over Napoleon are being held at the Palazzo Farnese. Scarpia is dining in his rooms, already looking forward to the moment when Tosca, in order to save Mario, will be forced to yield to his advances. Spoletta and his coppers, who have raided Cavaradossi's villa without finding any trace of Angelotti, have arrested the painter, but he says he does not know the fugitive's hiding place and gives a sign to Tosca, meanwhile summoned by Scarpia, to keep silent. In order to induce her to speak, the police chief gives orders that Cavaradossi be tortured. At first Tosca resists, then she begs for mercy and finally, distraught at hearing her beloveds moaning, reveals that Angelotti hides in a niche inside the well. When Spoletta is sent in search of the fugitive, Mario realizes that Tosca has confessed and curses her. The gendarme Sciarrone brings the news of Napoleons victory at Marengo. While the painter exults, Scarpia tells him in a scornfully sarcastic tone that his death sentence has already been pronounced, and orders the policemen to rake him away. Tosca is in despair and wants to follow him, but the police chief holds her back and insinuatingly offers to save Cavaradossi in exchange for her love. Meanwhile, Spoletta announces that Angelotti has been caught in his hiding



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place and has killed himself. Cavaradossi's execution is imminent, so Tosca promises to give herself to Scarpia if he spares his life. The chief of the police pretends to arrange a mock firing squad execution and gives the woman a safe-conduct enabling her to leave Rome with her lover. He advances towards Tosca to embrace her, but she stabs him full in the breast.

Act III

The platform of Castel Sant'Angelo

At the break of dawn, Cavaradossi is waiting to be lead to the gallows. After bribing the goaler with his ring, he is allowed to write his beloved a farewell letter, in which he remembers past moments of happiness. Overwhelmed by despair, he receives the unexpected visit of Tosca, showing him the safe-conduct. The woman explains that his execution is going to be a fake, and reveals that she has killed Scarpia. Then, after recommending Mario to act his part convincingly, she waits until the mock execution is over. When the guards finally leave, she anxiously walks up to her lover's body and realizes that it is covered in blood. Hunted by the police, who have meanwhile discovered Scarpia's murder, Tosca, in despair, throws herself from the battlements of the Castle.