



## Summer of Puccini

Puccini is the name on every Roman opera lover's lips this month. **Tiffany Parks** explains why.

If this year's summer concert series at the ancient Baths of Caracalla were to name a single protagonist, it would have to be Giacomo Puccini. In fact, the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma has eschewed all other composers to stage not one but three of Puccini's works this month—and it's no surprise. No other composer wrote passion quite like Puccini. Active during the apex of operatic romanticism, Puccini deftly combined heart-wrenchingly romantic stories with poignant melodies that stay with you long after the curtain has come down.

The Puccini extravaganza begins on 6 July with a new staging of the perennial tear-jerker, *Madama Butterfly*. Set in Nagasaki, Japan in 1904, *Butterfly* features one of opera's most tragic heroines. Married to an American naval officer at 15, only to find herself quickly deserted and pregnant, Cio-Cio San never gives up hope that he'll return one day. It's when he finally does that tragedy strikes.



If you've always dreamed of hearing the unmistakable strains of *Nessun Dorma* soaring into the Italian summer sky, *Turandot*, opening 15 July, is the opera for you. Set in ancient Peking, the opera tells the story of the eponymous princess who refuses to marry any suitor who cannot answer her series of baffling riddles, sending all who fail to their deaths. When one finally answers correctly, she must examine her own motives behind her impossibly high standards.

Rounding out the month is *La Bohème*, opening on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Set in Paris' Latin Quarter in the 1840s, *Bohème* is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most performed opera worldwide. And is it any wonder? The story of love, jealousy, reconciliation, and loss is universally relatable; a young couple who knows they should split up but just can't manage to do it is an achingly familiar situation for many. Add soul-stirring arias like *Che Gelida Manina*, and you have yourself the recipe for an enduring masterpiece. (p53)