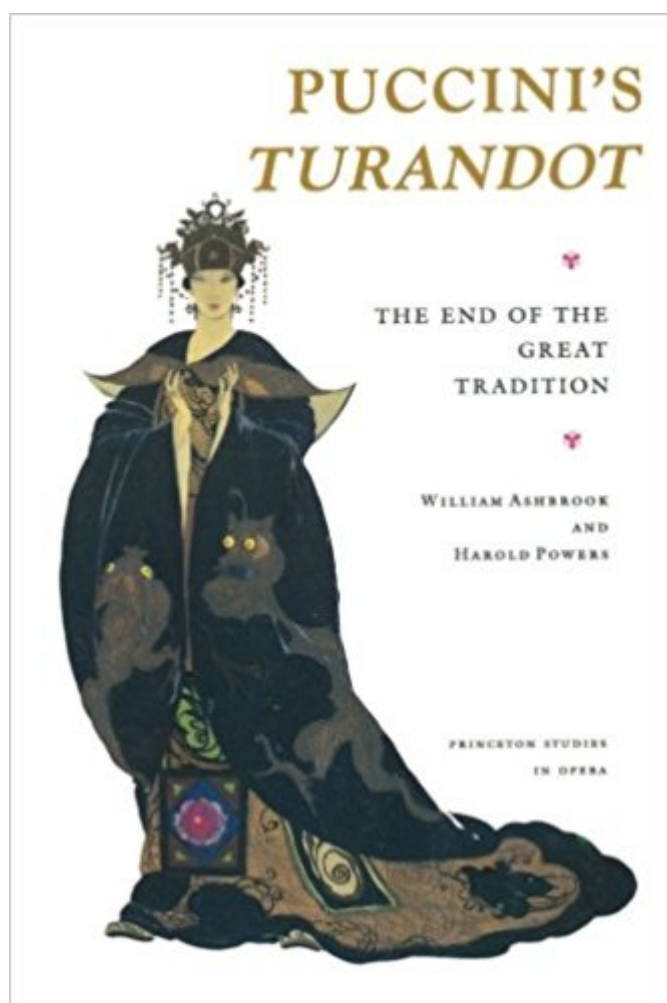


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Puccini's Turandot : The End Of The Great Tradition (Princeton Studies In Opera)



Synopsis

Unfinished at Puccini's death in 1924, *Turandot* was not only his most ambitious work, but it became the last Italian opera to enter the international repertory. In this colorful study two renowned music scholars demonstrate that this work, despite the modern climate in which it was written, was a fitting finale for the centuries-old Great Tradition of Italian opera. Here they provide concrete instances of how a listener might encounter the dramatic and musical structures of *Turandot* in light of the Italian melodrama, and firmly establish Puccini's last work within the tradition of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi. In a summary of the sounds, sights, and symbolism of *Turandot*, the authors touch on earlier treatments of the subject, outline the conception, birth, and reception of the work, and analyze its coordinated dramatic and musical design. Showing how the evolution of the libretto documents Puccini's reversion to large musical forms typical of the Great Tradition in the late nineteenth century, they give particular attention to his use of contrasting Romantic, modernist, and two kinds of orientalist coloration in the general musical structure. They suggest that Puccini's inability to complete the opera resulted mainly from inadequate dramatic buildup for *Turandot*'s last-minute change of heart combined with an overly successful treatment of the secondary character.

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Customer Reviews

Puccini's final work, *Turandot* (1926), which was completed posthumously, is the last of the great Italian operas to enter the standard repertoire. Puccini had heard Stravinsky and Schoenberg by the

1920s, and he incorporated artistic trends of the day into his new opera. Ashbrook (humanities, Indiana State Univ.) and Powers (music, Princeton Univ.) examine the use of dissonance and exotic themes as well as Puccini's more melodic previous works in relation to the characters, with special emphasis on the two soprano-tenor duets. Turandot's literary and musical roots, staging, and performance histories are investigated with convincing, richly detailed insights. Yet the many musical examples will be of little significance to readers not familiar with music scores and music theory. For collections supporting serious opera studies.- James E. Ross, Seattle, Wash. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The book begins with a philosophical discussion of different styles of opera--comedy, tragedy, melodrama, verismo. I was completely lost during that chapter. The bulk of the book goes over the opera with a fine-tooth comb. I thought I knew the opera well, but through much of this discussion, I could not understand which passage in the opera the author was referring to. He gives musical examples, but not often enough. The discussion on the last 59 pages of the opera is interesting, however. He points out which contributions were from Puccini and which were from Alfano. If you don't know every word and every note of the opera, be prepared to hold this book in one hand and a score of the opera in the other hand.

Indeed, this book reinforced what I always maintained: that Puccini was the heir to Verdi going down the line of great Italian opera composers all the way back to Monteverdi in 1600. But after Turandot and Puccini's death in 1924, who was the heir apparent? It was then and still is obvious in 2013 that no one composer took the mantle from Puccini. The great Italian operatic tradition ended with Turandot. Well researched and well analyzed.

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