

**Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup> 2019**  
**REX Movie Theatre of Agios Nikolaos**  
**Time 16:30**  
**Admission: 15€ (General)**

## **Metropolitan Opera of New York**

### **Turandot (Giacomo Puccini)**

Two of opera's most thrilling dramatic sopranos, Christine Goerke and Nina Stemme, reprise their fierce portrayals of the title princess. Yannick Nézet-Séguin takes the podium to conduct Franco Zeffirelli's dazzling production of Puccini's final masterpiece, which also features tenors Yusif Eyvazov and Riccardo Massi as Calâf, sopranos Eleonora Buratto and Hibla Gerzmava as Liù, and bass-baritone James Morris as Timur.

### **Synopsis: Turandot (Giacomo Puccini)**

*World premiere: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 1926.* Puccini's final opera is an epic fairy tale set in a China of legend, loosely based on a play by 18th-century Italian dramatist Carlo Gozzi. Featuring a most unusual score with an astounding and innovative use of chorus and orchestra, it is still recognizably Puccini, bursting with instantly appealing melody. The unenviable task of completing the opera's final scene upon Puccini's sudden death was left to the composer Franco Alfano. Conductor Arturo Toscanini oversaw Alfano's contribution and led the world premiere.

### **Act I**

*Peking, in the mythic past.* Outside the Imperial Palace, a mandarin reads an edict to the crowd: Any prince seeking to marry Princess Turandot must answer three riddles. If he fails, he will die. The most recent suitor, the Prince of Persia, is to be executed at the moon's rising. Among the onlookers are the slave girl Liù, her aged master, and the young Calâf, who recognizes the old man as his long-lost father, Timur, vanquished King of Tartary. Only Liù has remained faithful to him, and when Calâf asks her why, she replies that once, long ago, Calâf smiled at her. The mob cries for blood but greets the rising moon with a sudden fearful silence. As the Prince of Persia goes to his death, the crowd calls upon the princess to spare him. Turandot appears in her palace and wordlessly orders the execution to proceed. Transfixed by the beauty of the unattainable princess, Calâf decides to win her, to the horror of Liù and Timur. The three ministers of state, Ping, Pang, and Pong, appear and also try to discourage him, but Calâf is unmoved. He reassures Liù, then strikes the gong that announces a new suitor.

### **Act II**

Within their private apartments, Ping, Pang, and Pong lament Turandot's bloody reign, hoping that love will conquer her and restore peace. Their thoughts wander to their peaceful country homes, but the noise of the crowd gathering to witness the riddle challenge calls them back to reality.

In the royal throne room, the old emperor asks Calâf to reconsider, but the young man will not be dissuaded. Turandot arrives. She recounts the story of her beautiful ancestor, Princess Lou-Ling, who was abducted and killed by a conquering prince. In revenge, Turandot has turned against men and determined that none shall ever possess her. Trumpets then herald the beginning of the riddles. Turandot poses her first question to Calâf: What is born each night and dies each dawn? "Hope," Calâf answers correctly. Turandot continues: What flickers red and warm like a flame, yet is not a flame? "Blood," Calâf replies after a moment's thought. Shaken, Turandot delivers the third riddle: What is like ice but burns, and if it accepts you as a slave, makes you a king? Tense silence prevails until Calâf triumphantly cries "Turandot!" The crowd erupts in joy, and the princess vainly begs her father not to give her to the stranger. Hoping to win her love, Calâf offers Turandot a challenge of his own: If she can learn his name by dawn, he will forfeit his life.

### **Act III**

At night in the Imperial Gardens, Calâf hears a proclamation: On pain of death, no one in Peking shall sleep until Turandot learns the stranger's name. Calâf is certain of his victory, but Ping, Pang, and Pong try to bribe him to leave the city. As the fearful mob threatens him to learn his name, soldiers drag in Liù and Timur. Calâf tries to convince the crowd that neither of them knows his secret. When Turandot appears, commanding Timur to speak, Liù replies that she alone knows the stranger's identity and will never reveal it. Soldiers torture her, but she remains silent. Impressed by her fortitude, Turandot asks what gives Liù the strength to resist. It is love, she replies. When the torture intensifies, Liù tells Turandot that she, too, will know the joys of love. Then she snatches a dagger and kills herself. The crowd forms a funeral procession, and Timur follows as they take away her body. Turandot remains alone to confront Calâf, who impetuously kisses her. Knowing emotion for the first time, Turandot weeps. Calâf, now sure of winning her, reveals his identity.

Once again before the emperor's throne, Turandot declares she knows the stranger's name: It is Love.