

# PITTSBURGH OPERA

**For Immediate Release**

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**Pittsburgh Opera mounts spectacular new *Turandot***  
*Premiere of never-before-seen production*

- What:** Giacomo Puccini's opera [Turandot](#)
- Where:** Benedum Center  
7<sup>th</sup> Street and Penn Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh
- When:** Saturday, March 26, 8:00 PM      Tuesday, March 29, 7:00 PM  
Friday, April 1, 8:00 PM      Sunday, April 3, 2:00 PM
- Run Time:** 2 hours, 40 minutes, including two intermissions
- Language:** Sung in Italian with English titles projected above the stage
- Tickets:** Start at \$10 for all performances.  
Call 412-456-6666 for more information or visit  
[www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org)

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**Pittsburgh, PA...** Pittsburgh Opera premieres a never-before-seen production of Puccini's opera *Turandot* in 4 performances at the Benedum Center, March 26 through April 3. With its dazzling sets and costumes, large orchestra and cast, and even Puccini's original gongs, Pittsburgh Opera's *Turandot* promises to be an intoxicating opera experience, showcasing spectacular production elements by the French-Canadian production team Renaud Doucet and Andre Barbe. Featuring the famous arias "Nessun dorma" and "In questa reggia", all performances of *Turandot* take place at the Benedum Center in downtown Pittsburgh March 26, March 29, April 1 and April 3. Music Director Antony Walker conducts, returning to the U.S. after garnering enthusiastic reviews conducting *The Barber of Seville* at the Sydney Opera House.

The story of *Turandot*, with origins in ancient Asian lore, is centered on the titular icy princess, who poses impossible riddles to her noble suitors and then cruelly beheads them when they guess the answers incorrectly. A long-lost prince answers her questions, though, and wins her heart. The leading roles in *Turandot* are sung by returning favorites Susan Neves (*Tosca*, 2006) and Frank Porretta (*Samson & Dalila*, 2008), as Turandot and Calaf, respectively. Celebrated Chinese bass Hao Jiang Tian (*Turandot*, 1994) returns as Timur, with former Resident Artist NaGuanda Nobles as Liù. The Emperor's ministers

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Ping, Pang, and Pong will be sung by former Resident Artist Craig Verm (*The Grapes of Wrath*, 2008), current Resident Artist James Flora (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2010), and Joseph Gaines (*The Marriage of Figaro*, 2010), respectively.

*Turandot's* production team (director/choreographer Renaud Doucet, and set/costume designer Andre Barbe) is known for intricate integration of multiple production elements into a spectacular, dynamic whole. "Renaud and Andre have honored the larger-than-life scale of the opera itself, and have brought highly-wrought detail to the costumes, movement, and presentation," said Pittsburgh Opera General Director Christopher Hahn. "Everything is conceived at the same time, and their productions are rich with color and imagination." Pittsburgh Opera's production will include "assistants" shadowing Ping, Pang, and Pong, and handing them props, evoking Kabuki theater technique. The Executioner, a non-singing role traditionally filled by a man, will be a woman, suggesting *Turandot's* imagined inner world. (The Executioner will also have a band of assistants.)

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Adding more luster to this sensational production, a set of 13 tuned gongs commissioned by Puccini himself for the premiere of *Turandot* will be used in Pittsburgh Opera's performances. Although Puccini died before the premiere, the gongs, made by the Tronci family, were part of that first performance. The gongs are from the collection of [Howard Van Hyning](#), longtime percussionist for New York City Opera and collector of vintage percussion instruments.

[Attack Theatre](#), Pittsburgh Opera's frequent artistic collaborator, is already at work with Mr. Doucet, and children from [Pittsburgh Chinese School](#) and the [Children's Festival Chorus](#) add to the extensive cast.

Tickets to *Turandot* start at \$10 with all performances at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Penn Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh. For additional information or to purchase tickets call 412-456-6666 or visit [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org).

## Facts about the opera

- *Turandot* is Puccini's final opera. He completed all except the ending, which was left unfinished when he died of throat cancer in November 1924.
- At its premiere in April 1926 at Teatro Alla Scala (Milan), the opera was performed without the ending, and conductor Arturo Toscanini announced that "Here the opera ends, because at this point the maestro died." The opera's ending was subject to many opinions, both musical and contextual, but it was eventually completed by Puccini's associate Franco Alfano, and was added to subsequent performances.
- The People's Republic of China prohibited performances of *Turandot* until 1998,   
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saying it did not portray China or the Chinese people in a positive light. In September 1998, the opera was [performed at the Forbidden City](#), including soldiers from the People's Liberation Army as supernumeraries.

## The story, in brief

Calàf, the former prince of Tartary, is in a crowd surrounding the Imperial Palace, where Princess Turandot orders the execution of her latest suitor that has failed to answer her riddles. After an unexpected reunion with his father, the deposed king Timur, he is smitten by Turandot's great beauty. Despite many warnings, Calàf runs to the gong to signal that he wants to compete for Turandot's hand. Turandot explains that she has vowed never to let a man possess her because of the murder of her ancestor by a foreign prince. She also warns the "Unknown Prince" (Calàf) not to continue the quest, but he answers the riddles and she is bound to the marriage. However, Calàf says that if Turandot can guess his name by sunrise, he will be subject to her order of death.

As the imperial guards search for those who know the Unknown Prince's name, Calàf waits for dawn, confident of victory and immune to the temptations of riches and women presented by Ping, Pang and Pong. Meanwhile, Timur and his servant Liù, seen talking to Calàf, are dragged before Turandot, but Liù refuses to reveal Calàf's name despite torture, and commits suicide to protect his identity. Calàf and Turandot are left alone, and he reproaches her for her cruelty, but kisses her passionately. After telling him to leave, she returns the kiss, and Calàf tells her his name, placing his life in her hands. At sunrise, they approach the Emperor's throne and she announces that she now knows the Prince's name, and it is... "Love."

*Turandot* opens Saturday, March 26 and continues March 29, April 1, and April 3, 2011. Tickets start at \$10. Call 412-456-6666 or visit [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org) to purchase tickets.

The Pittsburgh Opera 2010-2011 season is generously sponsored by [PNC Foundation](#). This project is supported in part by an award from the [National Endowment for the Arts](#).

## Cast and Artistic Team *(cast is listed in order of vocal appearance)*

|                |                                    |          |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------|
| Mandarin       | <a href="#">Adam Fry</a> *         | bass     |
| Liù            | <a href="#">NaGuanda Nobles</a> ** | soprano  |
| Calàf          | <a href="#">Frank Porretta</a>     | tenor    |
| Timur          | <a href="#">Hao Jiang Tian</a>     | bass     |
| Ping           | <a href="#">Craig Verm</a> **      | baritone |
| Pang           | <a href="#">James Flora</a> *      | tenor    |
| Pong           | <a href="#">Joseph Gaines</a>      | tenor    |
| Emperor Altoum | <a href="#">Joseph Frank</a>       | tenor    |
| Turandot       | <a href="#">Susan Neves</a>        | soprano  |

*(more)*

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|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Conductor                    | <a href="#">Antony Walker</a>   |
| Stage Director/Choreographer | <a href="#">Renaud Doucet</a> +   |
| Production                   | Pittsburgh Opera, The Minnesota Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Utah Symphony and Opera (new production) |
| Set and Costume Designer     | <a href="#">Andre Barbe</a> +   |
| Lighting Designer            | <a href="#">Guy Simard</a> +  |
| Hair & Makeup Designer       | James Geier   |
| Stage Manager                | Tara E. Kovach  |

+ Pittsburgh Opera Debut

\* [Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist](#)

\*\* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni

## Tickets and Group Discounts

Tickets for all performances of *Turandot* start at \$10. Group discounts are available. For tickets, call (412) 456-6666 or visit [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org). For discounted group tickets (6 or more), contact Randy Adams at 412-281-0912, x 213.

## Related Events

### Pre-Opera Talks

#### Benedum Center Main Floor

Ticketholders are invited to attend a [Pre-Opera Talk](#) on *Turandot* one hour before each performance's curtain in the Orchestra Section (Main Floor) of the Benedum Center. Learn about the composer and the story of the opera. These talks are free to all ticketholders.

### Brown Bag Concert

**Saturday, March 12, 2011 – 12:00 PM**

**The George Rowland White Opera Studio at Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters**  
([2425 Liberty Avenue](#))

This one-hour concert begins at 12:00 PM and features the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artists performing a family-friendly selection of works. The Brown Bag concerts provide an informal introduction to opera, and guests can meet the performers after the concert. Guests are invited to support Pittsburgh Opera's participation in the "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Day Sweater Collection by bringing gently-used sweaters to the concert on March 12. Pittsburgh Opera proudly serves [21<sup>st</sup> Street Coffee](#) at Brown Bag concerts. Guests are encouraged to bring a lunch. **Pittsburgh Opera is grateful to Eden Hall Foundation for sponsoring Brown Bag Concerts.**

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## **Opera Up Close: Turandot**

**Sunday, March 13 – 2:00 PM**

**Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters (2425 Liberty Avenue)**

*Opera Up Close: Turandot* is an entertaining and insightful program held on Sunday, March 13, in the performance space of Pittsburgh Opera's headquarters (2425 Liberty Avenue) in the Strip. *Opera Up Close* includes an in-depth musical analysis of the opera *Turandot*. Free and open to the public; no RSVP required. Pittsburgh Opera proudly serves [21<sup>st</sup> Street Coffee](#) at *Opera Up Close*. For more information, call (412) 281-0912 or visit [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org).

## **Turandot Previews on WQED-FM 89.3**

**Saturday, March 19 – 1:30 PM**

**Friday, March 25 – 7:00 PM**

Hosted by WQED's Stephen Baum, the *Turandot* preview gives listeners an in-depth introduction to the singers, music and production of the opera. For more information, call (412) 281-0912 or visit [www.pittsburghopera.org](http://www.pittsburghopera.org).

## **Meet the Artists**

**Tuesday, March 29**

### **Immediately following the opera in the Benedum Lower Lobby**

Ticketholders for the Tuesday, March 29 performance of *Turandot* are invited to gather in the Benedum Lower Lobby immediately following the performance for light refreshments and interviews with [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) and the stars of the opera. This event is free to all Tuesday performance ticketholders.

*Pittsburgh Opera's 2010-2011 season continues a 72-year tradition of excellence in opera. As part of the Company's continued efforts to make opera accessible to all members of the community, single tickets for the 2010-2011 season again start at just \$10, with subscriptions starting at just \$21 for the two remaining mainstage operas. Subscriptions and single tickets are on sale now.*

## **2010-2011 Season**

[The Barber of Seville](#) October 9, 12, 15, 17, 2010

[Lucia di Lammermoor](#) November 13, 16, 19, 21, 2010

[Rinaldo](#) January 27, 29; February 1, 4, 6, 2011

[Turandot](#) March 26, 29; April 1, 3, 2011

[Dialogues of the Carmelites](#) April 30; May 3, 6, 8, 2011

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