

Finishing the Work



Giacomo Puccini

Descended from a family of musicians, Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924) was the most important Italian opera composer in the generation after Verdi.

Puccini wrote *La Boheme* and *Madame Butterfly*. It was during his battle with terminal cancer in 1922 that he began to write *Turandoe*, which many now consider his best accomplishment.

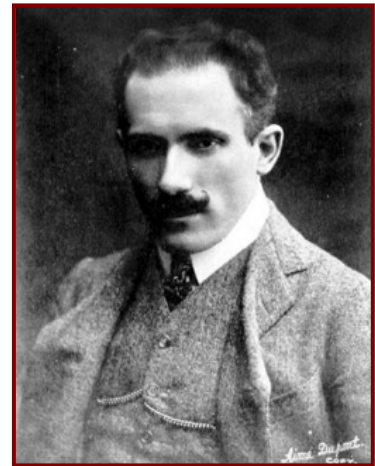
He worked on the score, day and night, despite his friends' advice to rest and to save his energy. When his sickness worsened, Puccini said to his disciples, "If I don't finish *Turandoe*, I want you to finish it." He died in 1924, leaving his project unfinished.

His disciples gathered all that was written of *Turandoe*, studied it in great detail, and then proceeded to write the remainder of the opera.

The world premier was performed in the La Scala Opera House in Milan in 1926, and it was conducted by Arturo Toscanini, Puccini's favorite student. The opera went beautifully until Toscanini came to the end of the part written personally by Puccini. He stopped the music, put down the baton, turned to the audience and announced, "Thus far the master wrote, but he died."

There was a long pause; no one moved. Then Toscanini picked up the baton, turned to the audience and, with tears in his eyes, announced, "But his disciples finished the work."

The opera closed to thunderous applause, and to a permanent place in the annals of great works.



Arturo Toscanini

In Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, we are involved in a noble calling – more important, even, than a grand opera, as impactful as one can be – because it involves the wellbeing of precious people entrusted to us.

Ours is a great mission. We perform in the biggest theater of all; it's called life. And the work must go on, even when it's our time to leave the stage.

– Beecher Hunter