

Giacomo Puccini, 1924-2024 : Puccini and France



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Call for Papers

One of the greatest masters of musical theatre of all time, Puccini met with immense popular success in France starting from the first performances of his operas, despite the recurring reservations of critics, who severely rejected his music and librettos that were often judged vulgar and irrelevant. French composers sharply attacked him and considered his music “commercial” in order to defend their own interests on national stages, with the exception of Massenet, Saint-Saëns, Messager and Ravel (who knew Tosca by heart: “All this comes from a great artist,” he once declared to Manuel Rosenthal).

Puccini never stopped cultivating a close relationship with France. He visited many times, especially to supervise the staging of his works at the Opéra Comique and Opéra. His librettos draw on works by French authors (Abbé Prévost, Loti), particularly Parisians (Karr, Musset, Murger, Sardou, Gold). Finally, his musical language has strong affinities with that of Bizet, Massenet, Ravel and Debussy.

The purpose of this conference is to examine the close links between Puccini and France, both through the works themselves and their reception, from his lifetime to the present day. The papers, cultivating an interdisciplinary perspective, will focus on staging, musical dramaturgy, the production systems, as well as on the literary and musical sources and forms of Puccini's operas, insofar as these are linked to France. Proposals concerning cross-exchanges between France and Italy will be welcome, especially from the point of view of realism and naturalism in literature and theater.

Four lines of investigation will be privileged, without excluding other proposals:

1. “verismo” vs naturalism: porosity and antagonisms;
2. Puccini and France: sources of the librettos and their dramatic conception;
3. Puccini and French composers: reciprocal influences;
4. The reception of Puccini in France from the Paris premiere of *La Bohème* (1898) to today: performers and performances.

Proposals for presentations lasting about twenty minutes, preferably in French, English or Italian, must include a summary (3000 characters maximum, spaces included), a short bibliography and biography of the author. They must be sent jointly to Jean-Christophe Branger (jc.branger@univ-lyon2.fr) and Michele Girardi (michele.girardi@unive.it) before 4 September 2023.

The conference will be held as part of the performances of *La Fanciulla del West* at the Lyon Opéra, directed by Daniele Rustioni.

Transport costs will be borne by the participants.