

## Tosca's Prism: Three Moments of Western Cultural History

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This collection of insightful and very welcome essays not only examines the historical events in *Tosca*, but also explores various musical and theatrical details of the work with precision and erudition. The first of the three sections deals with the world of Italy and Napoleon around 1800; the second and longest examines the opera and its world at the time of its premiere in 1900; and the third explores *Tosca* in 2000. The first part discusses the Napoleonic legacy in Italy (Andrew Grab) to include how the emperor's military and political policies helped shape Italy for succeeding generations. Grab discusses Napoleon's attempts at unifying diverse regions, introducing the French legal system, strengthening ties with the Catholic Church, drafting soldiers to build the army, and raising revenues. Perhaps the most fascinating essay in this section (Herbert Handt) explores the life and time of Domenico Puccini, Giacomo's grandfather, likewise a gifted composer. Handt examines with particular attention the elder Puccini's setting of the *Te Deum*, and he helps place the composer in a family context and provides a thoughtful discussion of his musical style.

The second part discusses *Tosca* at the time of its premiere. This section contains essays which examine Victorien Sardou's play and Puccini's adaptation, explore the political and cultural worlds of the opera and provide theoretical analyses of the work. Among the most fascinating, Verdi scholar Julian Budden compares characterizations of Sardou and Puccini's *Toscas*. Budden believes that Puccini and his librettist trans-