

E Lucevan le Stelle from Tosca

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 01 November 2012 10:50 -

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The upper parts of the Castel Sant'Angelo, early morning, 18 June 1800, Rome. A shepherd boy sings *"lo de' sospiri"* (*"I give you sighs"*) as church bells sound for matins. Cavaradossi is led in by guards and informed that he has one hour to live. He refuses to see a priest, but asks permission to write a letter to Tosca. He begins to write, but is soon overwhelmed by memories:
***"E lucevan le stelle"* (*"And the stars shone"*).**

E Lucevan le Stelle

"E lucevan le stelle" (**"When the stars were brightly shining"**) is the romanza of Mario Cavaradossi (tenor), a painter in love with Tosca, in **Puccini's opera Tosca**, composed in 1899 to an Italian libretto by **Luigi Illica** and **Giuseppe Giacosa**.



Puccini, Giacosa and Illica

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In Tosca, Puccini explored the dark side of human emotion, a marked change from the late Romantic sentimentality of La Bohème. Puccini creates coherence between story and music with themes that recur in association with characters and concepts.



Puccini, 1908

"E lucevan le stelle", written in B minor, it is one of the most famous opera arias.



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Tosca, original poster, 1899

The aria is introduced by a somber clarinet solo. The incipit of the melody (heard in outline earlier in the act) is repeated on the lines "*O dolci baci, o languide carezze*" and also restated in forte in the closing bars of the opera, as Tosca jumps from the ramparts.



Castel San'Angelo

In the Cavaradossi's aria the orchestra sings with him at key utterances in desperately empty octaves.



Caruso as Cavaradossi

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Every tenor sings it: Enrico Caruso, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Franco Corelli, Jussi Björling, Richard Tucker, Joseph Schmidt, Miguel Fleta, Alfred Piccaver, Beniamino Gigli, Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras, Andrea Bocelli, Jan Kiepura, Roberto Alagna and many more.



Placido Doming sings E Lucevan le Stelle

Original Italian Lyrics

E lucevan le stelle ... ed olezzava la terra stridea l'uscio dell'orto ... e un passo sfiorava la rena ... Entrava ella fragrante, mi cadea fra le braccia. O! dolci baci, o languide carezze, mentr'io fremente le belle forme disciogliea dai veli! Svanì per sempre il sogno mio d'amore. L'ora è fuggita, e muoio disperato! E muoio disperato! E non ho amato mai tanto la vita, tanto la vita!



Puccini and Toscanini

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Singable English Translation

When the stars were brightly shining ... And faint perfumes the air pervaded, Creaked the gate of the garden ... And footstep its precincts invaded ... 'Twas hers, the fragrant creature. In her soft arms she clasped me.. With sweetest kisses, tenderest caresses, A thing of beauty, of matchless symmetry in form and feature! My dream of love is now dispelled forever. I lived uncaring and now I die despairing! Alas I die despairing! And never was life so dear to me, no never, So dear, no never!



Tosca, libretto, 1899