

“Vissi d’arte,” (I have lived for art), TOSCA, Act II, Giacomo Puccini; libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giocosa. 1900

SYNOPSIS: The famous opera singer, Floria Tosca, is in love with Mario, an enemy of Scarpia, Rome’s brutal Chief of Police. Scarpia is obsessed by Tosca and has Mario captured and tortured while he attempts to seduce her. She hears her lover’s cries from an adjacent room and learns that the price of his freedom is her yielding to Scarpia’s hated advances. Terrified and bewildered, she seeks divine intervention.

TOSCA

Vissi d’arte, vissi d’amore,  
non feci mai male ad anima viva.  
Con man furtiva,  
Quante miserie conobbi, aiutai...  
Sempre, con fè sincera,  
la mia preghiera  
al tabernacoli sali  
Sempre con fè sincera,  
diedi fiori agli altar.  
Nell’ora del dolore  
perchè, perchè, Signore,  
perchè me ne rimuneri così?  
Diedi gioielli  
della Madonna al manto  
e diedi il canto  
agli astri al ciel  
che ne ridean più belli.  
Nell’ora del dolor,  
perchè, perchè, Signore,  
Ah! Ah! ...  
Perchè me ne rimuneri così?

I’ve lived for art; I’ve lived for love,  
I’ve never done harm to one human being...  
Ever in secret,  
how many poor people have I assisted...  
Always, with faith everlasting ,  
my most fervent prayers  
filled the church all around..  
Always, with faith everlasting  
I placed flowers on the shrine.  
In the hour of my suffering,  
oh why, oh why, dear Lord,  
oh, why have you rewarded me this way?  
I gave jewelry  
for the Madonna’s mantle,  
and gave my music  
to the stars high above  
and they shined for me more brightly.  
In the hour of my pain,  
Oh, why, oh why, dear Lord,  
Ah! Ah!...  
Oh, why have you rewarded me this way?

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