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Duetto a tre: Franco Alfano's completion of *Turandot*

LINDA B. FAIRTILE

Abstract: This study of the ending customarily appended to Giacomo Puccini's unfinished *Turandot* offers a new perspective on its genesis: that of its principal creator, Franco Alfano. Following Puccini's death in November 1924, the press overstated the amount of music that he had completed for the opera's climactic duet and final scene. In fact, Puccini's manuscripts were so disjointed that Arturo Toscanini, the conductor chosen to lead the première, drafted the reluctant Alfano to fashion them into a viable conclusion. While occupied with this assignment, Alfano spoke with the writer Raymond Roussel about his plans for the opera's completion. This long-forgotten interview, absent from previous studies of *Turandot*'s conclusion, reveals a strategy that would inevitably fall foul of Toscanini's expectations. Rejecting Alfano's first attempt for its extensive original composition, Toscanini forced changes on the conclusion that undermine both its musical coherence and dramatic logic. I assess Alfano's original ending in light of his frustration with Puccini's sketches, as well as the generally deleterious result of Toscanini's interventions. While neither conclusion represents an ideal solution, a judicious conflation of the two versions offers the best chance of reconciling a suitable denouement with the musical character of Puccini's finished score.

Turandot is Giacomo Puccini's most frustrating work. Had he managed to represent in music his vision of a transcendent, transforming love, this operatic setting of Carlo Gozzi's 1761 retelling of a Chinese folk tale would surely have been hailed as his masterpiece. Instead, the unfinished state in which he left its climactic final scenes has prompted even admirers to suggest that the dying composer's ambition exceeded his ability.¹ During his final, despondent months Puccini predicted that *Turandot* would be performed as it stood, without a definitive ending. Yet, immediately after his funeral, those closest to him began discussing how to realise his fragmentary design for the opera's conclusion. At the time of his death on 29 November 1924, Puccini had composed and orchestrated the score of *Turandot* largely in sequence, stopping just before the protagonists' final confrontation. The first two acts in their entirety, and the third act through the death of the servant Liù, had already been engraved by his publisher, Ricordi.² During the last eight months of his life Puccini focused exclusively on the opera's conclusion, in which the Unknown Prince's kiss transforms Princess Turandot from vindictive man-hater to submissive lover, and the two appear before her subjects in triumph. This ultimate manifestation of love's redemptive power represented not merely the climax of a single opera, but the culmination of Puccini's entire career, which until then had rested largely on the depiction of love as a destructive force.

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¹ See, for example, Claudio Sartori, *Puccini* (Milan, 1958); Vittorio Gui, 'Le due "Turandot"', in *Battute d'aspetto* (Florence, 1944), 149–60; and Fedele d'Amico, 'L'opera insolita', *Quaderni pucciniani* (1985), 67–77.

² The genesis of *Turandot*'s libretto and score is described in detail by William Ashbrook and Harold Powers in *Puccini's 'Turandot': The End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton, 1991).

Given the diversity of creative input behind each of Puccini's operas, the fact that his final work was completed by committee is less extraordinary than it may at first appear. Puccini was by nature a collaborative artist. In addition to employing both a dramatist and a versifier to prepare most of his librettos,³ for much of his career he also relied on the guidance of Giulio Ricordi, the publisher, part-time composer and full-time musical power broker who served as his surrogate father. After a score received its first performances, the circle of influence widened, as Puccini frequently considered the input of conductors, singers, impresarios and even non-musical friends when he contemplated revising his operas.⁴

In the case of *Turandot*, however, a remarkable misunderstanding appears to have undercut the efforts of the musicians, librettists, publishers and others who came together to ready Puccini's unfinished score for performance. The two central figures, Arturo Toscanini and Franco Alfano, were seemingly unaware that they held incompatible views of the assignment before them. Alfano, the composer entrusted with *Turandot's* completion, had to contend not only with Puccini's ghost, but also with the more fearsome spectre of Toscanini, the conductor who had been put in charge of the opera's première. Alfano's idiosyncratic approach grew from an inability to ascertain the purpose of Puccini's enigmatic sketches, while Toscanini's consequent hostility was rooted in his well-known obsession with textual fidelity. Each had advised Puccini while he struggled with this difficult work, and each felt that his subsequent actions respected the late composer's wishes, but while Toscanini, true to his reputation for literal interpretation, wanted a synthesis of Puccini's fragmentary manuscripts, Alfano felt that a coherent ending for the orphaned opera would require considerable original composition. The clash of these irreconcilable perspectives resulted in a compromise solution, reached only a few months before *Turandot's* première. This solution is disappointing on multiple fronts: unfaithful to Puccini's likely intentions, it is also artistically unsatisfying in its own right.

While the history and substance of *Turandot's* conclusion have received significant scholarly attention, Alfano's reasons for defying Toscanini's expectations have never been sufficiently explored. In this article I examine the opera's completion in detail, on one hand focusing on Toscanini's role, which has so far been examined mainly at a distance, and on the other reassessing Alfano's position in light of an interview that he gave to the French writer Raymond Roussel in September 1925.⁵

³ The librettos of *La bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* were written by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica; *La fanciulla del West* by Carlo Zangarini and Gualfo Civinini; and *Turandot* by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni. *Manon Lescaut's* libretto had at least five authors, including Giacosa, Illica and Puccini himself.

⁴ Studies detailing Puccini's receptivity to suggestion include Julian Smith, 'A Metamorphic Tragedy', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 106 (1979–80), 105–14 (on *Madama Butterfly*); Gabriele Dotto, 'Opera Four Hands: Collaborative Alterations in Puccini's *Fanciulla*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 42 (1989), 604–24; and chapter 3 of my doctoral dissertation, 'Giacomo Puccini's Operatic Revisions as Manifestations of His Compositional Priorities' (New York University, 1996).

⁵ Raymond Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', *Musical Leader*, 50/17 (22 October 1925), 356–7. A conservatory educated pianist as well as a poet, novelist, dramatist and journalist, Roussel characterised his talk with Alfano as 'the first interview, in fact, that he has granted
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This immensely significant text, apparently never cited in previous studies of the opera, sheds considerable light on Alfano's connection to *Turandot* both before and after Puccini's death. The new perspective afforded by a detailed examination of the process leading to the final version of *Turandot*'s completion in turn opens up space for a critical reassessment of both Alfano's contribution and Toscanini's interventions.

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Puccini's letters to his librettists, Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, include numerous allusions to the dramatic significance of Princess Turandot's metamorphosis. As early as 1921 he wrote to Adami that 'for me the duet must be the *clou* – but it must have in it something grand, bold, unforeseen . . .'⁶ Despite the consequence of the final scene, however, he could not inspire his librettists to create a sufficiently transcendent text. Adami and Simoni, each juggling several projects at once, seemed paralysed by the challenge of satisfying this notoriously hard-to-please composer. By early 1924, in constant pain from an undiagnosed malignancy at the base of his epiglottis, Puccini sensed that his capacity for serious work on *Turandot*'s finale was waning. And yet, as William Ashbrook and Harold Powers have suggested, it may have been the composer's own reluctance to face the musical demands of this climactic scene that led him repeatedly to reject Adami and Simoni's efforts.⁷

On 7 September 1924 Arturo Toscanini visited Puccini to discuss *Turandot*'s première, which he expected to conduct the following April at the Teatro alla Scala. Toscanini, with his hypermasculine persona and aggressive patriotism, had little patience for Puccini's decadent sensibilities and ambiguous political views. Despite their stormy personal relationship, however, Puccini considered Toscanini to be his finest interpreter.⁸ Moreover, many of Puccini's revisions to the orchestration of *Manon Lescaut* and *La fanciulla del West* originated with Toscanini's suggestions.⁹ Puccini's description of their *Turandot* meeting, contained in a letter to Adami, reveals the strength of Toscanini's influence and conveys the conductor's reaction to the unfinished final duet:

Toscanini just left here . . . We spoke about the duet, which does not please him much. What can be done? I don't know. Perhaps Toscanini will summon you and Simoni to Salso

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to any representative of the press. In it he has given much important information hitherto unpublished, either in Italy or abroad' (356).

⁶ Puccini to Giuseppe Adami, October 1921, in Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Giacomo Puccini: epistolario* (Milan, 1982), letter 196.

⁷ Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 88.

⁸ After attending a rehearsal of *Manon Lescaut* conducted by Toscanini, Puccini wrote to Riccardo Schnabl on 26 December 1922, 'I assure you that Toscanini is a true miracle of feeling, of subtlety, of sensitivity, of balance. What pleasure I have experienced at these rehearsals. Never, never have I so enjoyed hearing my music'. (Eugenio Gara, ed., *Carteggi pucciniani* [Milan, 1958], letter 851).

⁹ See Suzanne Scherr, 'Editing Puccini's Operas: The Case of *Manon Lescaut*', *Acta musicologica*, 62 (1990), 62–81; and Dotto, 'Opera Four Hands'.

[maggiore]. I will also come, and we will see if there is some way to improve the situation. I see darkness. Up to now I have racked my brain over this duet. Speak to Renato [Simoni] about it. We must find a way out, because now I am in dire straits . . . P.S. The little that I played for Toscanini made an excellent impression.¹⁰

One week later Puccini wrote to Adami that 'I was hoping to see you at Salso [maggiore] with Simoni and Toscanini, but so far I have not received the call'.¹¹ Puccini's reliance on a third party to guide him and his librettists through a creative impasse was not without precedent: Giulio Ricordi had done precisely that when Puccini, Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica encountered difficulties with *La bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. Personal conflicts notwithstanding, Toscanini seems to have assumed for Puccini the role of musical godfather that had been left vacant at Ricordi's death in 1912. The letter of 7 September appears to legitimise Toscanini's future administration of the *Turandot* project by revealing Puccini's hope that the conductor could solve the problem of the final duet.

Two months after his meeting with Toscanini, Puccini was admitted to the Institut de la Couronne, a clinic in Brussels that specialised in treating cancerous tumours with radiation. He brought with him the latest text for *Turandot*'s conclusion, recently obtained from Simoni, as well as musical sketches and drafts that he had begun in 1923. At first, while receiving external radiation therapy, he continued to work. On 24 November, under local anaesthesia, Puccini endured an excruciating operation to place radioactive needles around the tumour in his throat. Over the next few days his condition improved, but on 28 November he suffered a heart attack and died the following morning.

Puccini appears to have left no instructions for the disposition of his *Turandot* sketches and drafts.¹² Given his pessimistic nature, it is unlikely that he would have failed to consider the possibility of dying in Brussels. Indeed, his final letters convey significant anxiety about his prognosis. But Puccini's well-known prediction of the opera's fragmentary première suggests more than a sense of impending mortality: he may also have believed that there was no one capable of completing *Turandot* in the event of his death. Puccini knew that Toscanini had realised Arrigo Boito's unfinished *Nerone*, and he had joked about the conductor's clandestine manipulation of the score.¹³ But *Nerone* lacked only its orchestration, which Toscanini had been able to supply by following the numerous and precise annotations in Boito's piano-vocal draft.¹⁴ Puccini's cryptic sketches and drafts

¹⁰ Puccini to Adami, 7 September 1924, in Adami, *Epistolario*, letter 233.

¹¹ Puccini to Adami, 14 September 1924, in Adami, *Epistolario*, letter 234.

¹² Of Puccini's known manuscripts for the opera's conclusion, 23 leaves reside in Ricordi's historical archive, now housed at the Biblioteca Braidense in Milan. They have never been published in their entirety, either in facsimile or transcription, and Ricordi strictly controls which pages may be reproduced (see Appendix 1 for a list of selected articles with published facsimile pages). Some of the loose sketch fragments, now presumed to be in private hands, have been discussed by Federico Candida in 'La incompiuta', *La Scala: rivista dell'opera*, 109 (December 1958), 68–74. A few of these, however, seem to be early versions of musical passages that appear elsewhere in the score.

¹³ Harvey Sachs, *Toscanini* (Philadelphia, 1978), 168.

¹⁴ Domenico Del Nero, *Arrigo Boito: un artista europeo* (Florence, 1995), 169.

for *Turandot*, by contrast, would require intensive scrutiny before their status could even be determined.

In his groundbreaking study of Alfano's *Turandot* completion, Jürgen Maehder notes that Puccini's *Nachlass* included an annotated libretto (current whereabouts unknown), a few loose sketch fragments, and a collection of 23 manuscript leaves that had been separated into four groups.¹⁵ The first of these groups consists of a 29-bar draft – vocal lines plus two to four staves of accompaniment – that picks up where Puccini's orchestrated score leaves off, at the Prince's angry reaction to Liù's death, 'Principessa di morte' (rehearsal number 35).¹⁶ The second group is a 27-bar draft of a later passage that begins with the Prince's 'Mio fiore, mio fiore mattutino' (reh. 39), shortly after his kiss has transformed Turandot. The third group, 29 bars in length, follows the first, beginning with the Prince's 'La tua anima è in alto' (reh. 37) and concluding just before the kiss, with his 'Il bacio tuo mi dà l'eternità' (eight bars before reh. 39). While nearly continuous, these drafts utilise less than half of the available text, and are sometimes barely legible, owing to Puccini's numerous corrections and cancellations. The fourth group consists of assorted sketches from two to eleven bars in length. These fragments, occupying a total of nineteen pages, contain some ideas that Puccini developed more fully in groups one through three, as well as other material of undetermined purpose.

Fortunately, the men who gathered after Puccini's death to decide *Turandot's* fate were well acquainted with his compositional method. Arturo Toscanini, Giuseppe Adami, Casa Ricordi's co-directors Carlo Clausetti and Renzo Valcarengi, and Tito Ricordi, the firm's former director, had all worked with Puccini on at least one other opera. Antonio ('Tonio') Puccini, the composer's son, also participated in the discussions. Toscanini was the group's strongest personality and, as Puccini's choice to conduct the première, its natural leader. But while Toscanini had prior experience with unfinished operas, his recent work on *Nerone* had been complicated by his less-than-cooperative attitude: early in that project he had abruptly dismissed his original collaborator, the blind composer Antonio Smareglia, and may have subsequently tried to conceal his participation.¹⁷ A desire to avoid similar conflicts may explain the absence of a composer among the original *Turandot* collaborators.

Newspaper accounts appearing shortly after Puccini's death conveyed the message that *Turandot* would require little effort to render it performable. Riccardo Schnabl, a friend of the composer, reported reading that these manuscripts

¹⁵ Jürgen Maehder, 'Studien zum Fragmentcharakter von Giacomo Puccinis *Turandot*', *Analecta musicologica*, 22 (1984), 304. Maehder's study is based primarily on correspondence between Alfano and Ricordi officials, as well as his examination of Puccini's manuscripts and Alfano's scores.

¹⁶ Rehearsal numbers refer to Ricordi's piano-vocal score of *Turandot*, Act III. The additional indication *A1*, when it appears, signifies Alfano's original conclusion for the opera, which was published in the earliest Italian and German piano-vocal scores (Ricordi plate nos. 119772 and 120150, respectively), possibly because the revised ending had not been engraved in time for rehearsals. *A2* designates Toscanini's revision of that conclusion, which appears in subsequent Ricordi editions. When no edition is specified, the latter is intended.

¹⁷ Mario Smareglia, 'Intorno alla strumentazione del *Nerone*', *L'Olimpo artistico* (10 March 1930).

contained ‘almost everything’.¹⁸ The *Corriere della sera* of 2 December 1924 printed an encouraging statement by Arnaldo Fraccaroli, author of a Puccini biography published by Ricordi:

Turandot can be considered complete. The Maestro’s last agonised words, ‘The opera will be performed incomplete and then someone will come to the front of the stage and tell the audience “At this point the Maestro died!”’ must be considered an outburst of melancholy, like an equivocation from his dissatisfied spirit. The final duet in the last act, the only thing not completely worked out, exists: the piece lacks only its instrumentation, but its design is traced.¹⁹

The foreign press offered additional details: on 24 December, Berlin’s *Signale* announced that Toscanini would perform the same service for Puccini’s unfinished opera that he had for *Nerone*,²⁰ reinforcing the notion that *Turandot*’s conclusion, too, needed only to be orchestrated. Music journals in both Europe and the United States maintained that the opera’s première would take place, as planned, in April 1925. It was in Ricordi’s interest to encourage the belief that *Turandot* was essentially finished in order to preserve the mystique and earning power of a newly deceased composer’s final work. Admitting that Puccini had failed to complete his self-proclaimed masterpiece might doom the new opera in advance, and would certainly encourage unwanted speculation. But as time passed, it became evident that an explanation was needed.

In January 1925 the conductor Giorgio Polacco revealed that Toscanini’s work on the *Turandot* score would necessitate a postponement of its first performance.²¹ Indeed, between December 1924 and May 1925 Toscanini was consumed by his theatrical responsibilities, which included ten revivals and two world premières (Giordano’s *La cena delle beffe* and Zandonai’s *I cavalieri di Ekebù*).²² In June he took the Scala orchestra to Switzerland, but it was only after the tour’s unexpected early termination that he could possibly have found time to examine Puccini’s sketches and drafts in as much detail as his wretchedly poor eyesight permitted. Perhaps Toscanini had initially hoped to proceed in the manner of the *Nerone* completion, essentially an orchestration job, only to learn that the fragments of *Turandot*’s concluding scenes would first need to be fleshed out and woven together. Although he had written songs, chamber music and a few orchestral works, Toscanini forever renounced composition at the age of 21, after attending the Italian première of *Tristan und Isolde*.²³ And even though he and Puccini had discussed the final duet the previous September, Puccini’s correspondence reveals that he had played only a small portion of its music, hardly enough to enable Toscanini, even with his legendary memory, to complete the opera from his recollections.

¹⁸ Riccardo Schnabl to Antonio Puccini, 5 December 1924, in Simonetta Puccini, ed., *Giacomo Puccini: lettere a Riccardo Schnabl* (Milan, 1981), 261.

¹⁹ Arnaldo Fraccaroli, ‘L’artista e l’uomo’, *Corriere della sera* (2 December 1924).

²⁰ ‘Puccinis unvollendet hinterlassene *Turandot* . . .’, *Signale*, 52 (24 December 1924), 2042.

²¹ ‘Giorgio Polacco has received word . . .’, *Musical Leader*, 49/28 (15 January 1925), 58.

²² Sachs, *Toscanini*, 171.

²³ Sachs, 29.

Although the *Turandot* team did not originally count a composer among its ranks, a few were soon considered for membership. The names of both Riccardo Zandonai and Franco Vittadini had been raised in early discussions, but Tonio Puccini found Zandonai too famous in his own right, while Riccardo Schnabl, an adviser to the group, questioned Vittadini's temperamental suitability. By the summer of 1925 Toscanini had decided that the Neapolitan composer Franco Alfano was the man for the job, owing to the recent success of Alfano's own exotic opera, *La leggenda di Sakùntala*, as well as his longstanding affiliation with Ricordi.²⁴ Selecting a composer already on Ricordi's roster offered obvious advantages, not only in contractual matters, but also in the control it gave them over someone whose interests would continue to be bound with those of the firm. For this reason, Pietro Mascagni, another rumoured contender for the *Turandot* assignment, was probably never seriously considered. Although he, too, had written an exotic-themed opera for Ricordi – *Iris*, premièred by Toscanini in 1899 – his remaining scores belonged to a rival publisher, Sonzogno. Moreover, as Italy's most famous living composer, Mascagni would certainly have been vetoed by Tonio Puccini.

The younger Puccini made initial contact with Alfano on 1 July 1925, arranging a visit to the latter's summer home in San Remo. After the meeting, which Roussel describes as having left him 'greatly perplexed',²⁵ Alfano informed the Ricordi directors that, although their confidence in his abilities was flattering, his own compositional career and administrative responsibilities at Turin's Liceo Musicale left him no time to undertake the *Turandot* completion.²⁶ Furthermore, as we learn from Roussel, Tonio Puccini had brought neither the score nor the libretto with him for the composer to examine.²⁷ But after a second meeting, which included Adami, Clausetti and Puccini's score, Alfano's resistance was overcome. On 31 July he ventured to La Scala to hear the librettists' reading of the final text as well as Toscanini's recollections of his last conversations with Puccini.²⁸ Five days later *Il giornale d'Italia* carried the news that Alfano had accepted the *Turandot* assignment.²⁹

Alfano had a personal reason for agreeing to Ricordi's proposal that may not have been known to his new collaborators: he had once sketched a *Turandot* libretto for his own use, but had abandoned the subject when he learned of Puccini's interest in it.³⁰ Although Alfano characteristically deferred to the older and more successful Puccini, the two composers had been good friends who candidly discussed each other's work. In fact, Alfano claimed that it was he who had suggested moving the

²⁴ Maehder, 'Studien', 328. Alfano's contribution to the 1925 *Manifesto degli intellettuali del fascismo* apparently did not faze the strongly anti-fascist Toscanini.

²⁵ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 356.

²⁶ Alfano to Ditta G. Ricordi & C., 5 July 1925 (original held in Archivio Storico Ricordi; transcribed in Maehder, 'Studien', 328–9).

²⁷ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 356.

²⁸ Roussel, 357.

²⁹ 'Il programma della "Scala". Alfano completerà *Turandot* di Puccini', *Il giornale d'Italia* (5 August 1925).

³⁰ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 356.

Riddle Scene from *Turandot*'s first act to its present position in the second.³¹ While serving as judges for a national competition in the autumn of 1923, Puccini and Alfano spoke for the last time about *Turandot*, and especially its problematic conclusion. Although, according to Alfano, Puccini had envisioned 'something vast, something grandiose', he had so far been unable to come up with 'a musical idea that would be big enough for this situation'.³² Another meeting, planned to coincide with performances of Alfano's *La leggenda di Sakùntala* in Antwerp and Puccini's radiation treatments in Brussels, never took place.

Armed with first-hand knowledge of Puccini's struggles with *Turandot*, Alfano needed little time to familiarise himself with his assignment. In September 1925, after only one month of work, and three months before he would submit his piano-vocal draft to Ricordi, he set the opera aside in order to attend the Third Chamber Music Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, which was taking place in Venice. It was there that he gave the interview to Roussel, who was reporting for *The Musical Leader* in anticipation of the Chicago première of Alfano's *Risurrezione*. Around the same time, Alfano received an angry telegram from Ricordi officials, who rebuked him for failing to obtain the consent of all interested parties before speaking publicly about his work on *Turandot*.³³ Shortly thereafter, he contracted an eye ailment that halted his rapid progress. Fearing another postponement of the première, now scheduled for April 1926, Ricordi dispatched Guido Zuccoli, the director of their copying house, to assist Alfano. Despite his disability, on 14 December Alfano sent Ricordi the first nineteen pages of the *Turandot* conclusion.³⁴ Toscanini's reaction to this piano-vocal draft, however, exposed a grievous and unanticipated misunderstanding between Alfano and the other members of the *Turandot* team.

Examining Alfano's draft, Toscanini discovered that he had not only failed to incorporate some of Puccini's sketches, but had also inserted his own newly composed music.³⁵ The conductor, preoccupied with his upcoming New York Philharmonic-Symphony concerts, instructed Adami and Clausetti to execute drastic modifications that would remove many of Alfano's additions and replace them with some of Puccini's unused ideas. In the meantime, however, Alfano had gone on to orchestrate his original piano-vocal draft. Seeking payment for the extra work that Toscanini's alterations would now entail, Alfano complained that Ricordi was changing the terms of his assignment, and discarding an effective conclusion in the process:

³¹ Although Alfano maintained that the conversation took place in 1922 while Puccini was in Bologna to supervise the local première of *Il trittico* (Roussel, 356), that performance actually occurred on 29 October 1921. Puccini left Bologna for the last time a few days afterwards.

³² Roussel, 356.

³³ Maehder, ('Studien', 331), describes Alfano's indiscretion as a press conference, but Ricordi's telegram uses the word *intervista*, likely in reference to his one-on-one interview with Roussel.

³⁴ Maehder, 332.

³⁵ Maehder (345–8) illustrates the similarity of some of Alfano's own *Turandot* themes to those of his *La leggenda di Sakùntala*.

[C]ontrary to what was established at first (I always insist on that because this fact is my sole *tangible* justification) – at a later time, I am saying – we wanted to consider some of Puccini's sketches that were neglected the first time. And believe me, I ceded to this wish out of respect for the firm, because I had promised Colombo [a Ricordi agent], and not for *others*, since my work was very good as it was.³⁶

Valcarenghi replied that Alfano was due no additional money because

the charge entrusted to you by us, at the suggestion of Maestro Toscanini, was clear and does not leave room for equivocation: you were to complete part of the third act of *Turandot* using the notes left by poor Giacomo and delivered to you. It is not our fault if you, forgetting what had been established, have done otherwise and have gone on to the job of orchestrating before being in agreement with us and with Maestro Toscanini.³⁷

While the issue of compensation was certainly important to Alfano, his clash with Toscanini raises a more fundamental question: was his assignment simply to stitch all of Puccini's manuscripts into a performable whole, or was it to fashion a satisfying ending for an unfinished stage work, even if that meant substituting his own ideas where Puccini's were unclear or entirely lacking? Alfano, who was well acquainted with Puccini's frustration over the opera's conclusion, had already persuaded Ricordi to alter an aspect of its staging.³⁸ He apparently felt it necessary, and entirely consistent with his charge, to exercise a certain amount of creativity in musical matters as well. The obscurity of Puccini's sketch fragments originates in the private act of a composer jotting down only as much as he needed to see and work out on paper. Faced with a musical shorthand deprived of its context, Alfano used his skill and experience as a dramatic composer to fill the gaps as best he could.

The *Turandot* team had little sympathy for Alfano's predicament. Toscanini's reaction is perhaps the easiest to anticipate. After all, a conductor with a reputation for obsessing over 'the composer's intentions' could be expected to reject any solution involving extensive creativity. Casa Ricordi's support of Toscanini's position is also predictable: while the delay caused by revising Alfano's conclusion may have worried them, their first priority was to present Puccini's final opera under the direction of Puccini's – indeed, Italy's – favourite conductor. Alfano's involvement in the project was merely a means to that end. Librettist Giuseppe Adami's endorsement of Toscanini's modifications is the most puzzling, since the conductor's changes eliminated sixteen lines of text from the duet and eight from the final scene. These cuts shorten the duet by some 25 per cent, allotting less time to Princess Turandot's all-important transformation. But Adami had already spent five difficult years on this opera, and may have been willing to make concessions in order to see it performed.

³⁶ Alfano to Valcarenghi, 15 January 1926 (original in Archivio Storico Ricordi; transcribed in Maehder, 332–3).

³⁷ Valcarenghi to Alfano, 18 January 1926 (original in Archivio Storico Ricordi; transcribed by Maehder, 334). Toscanini's dissatisfaction with Alfano's original ending, however, did not prevent Ricordi from including it in a handsome, limited edition piano-vocal score of the opera.

³⁸ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 357, who gives no details about the change.

Stung by Toscanini's reaction, Alfano had no choice but to accept the conductor's revisions, since the need to return to his own neglected responsibilities outweighed the desire to do battle over another composer's opera. The required changes were made, resulting in a drastically shorter conclusion: 102 bars were cut outright, 23 bars of Puccini's thematic material were substituted for 31 of Alfano's invention, several vocal lines were altered, and other passages underwent subtle modification.³⁹ Alfano, infuriated by what he felt was an unwarranted butchering of his work, at first refused to attend rehearsals. At the opera's première on 26 April 1926, Toscanini ended the performance, as planned, with the death of Liù on the last pages of Puccini's completed score.⁴⁰ On subsequent evenings, Alfano's conclusion was heard in its revised form, but with Ettore Panizza on the podium. Toscanini, who reportedly thought little of *Turandot*, never conducted the opera again.

2

The last-minute crisis precipitated by Alfano's unexpected creativity might have been avoided if communication among the collaborators had been more open. Roussel's account of his meeting with Alfano in September 1925, published a month later in *The Musical Leader*, discusses not only Puccini's *Turandot* manuscripts, but also Alfano's intention to compose a significant amount of new music for the opera's conclusion. Incredible as it seems, Toscanini must have either endorsed this plan or been entirely ignorant of it. Otherwise, he would surely have expressed his immediate disapproval to Alfano, rather than waiting until he received the completed piano-vocal draft in December.

Alfano justified the creation of new music for *Turandot* by citing the small amount of usable material that he had found among Puccini's manuscripts. When asked to elaborate, he explained that by 1923 '[Puccini] had sketched out the vocal line and jotted down a number of notes of miscellaneous character; a few measures for voice and piano, some series of harmonic progressions, some detached chords, the outline of a fanfare, and a rare indication, here and there, of the instrumentation'.⁴¹ Dissatisfied with the text they had prepared for him, Puccini had asked his librettists for yet another revision. But by the time he received this second libretto draft – in October 1924, according to his correspondence – he was only able to compose 'two short fragments of music, two tiny bits, not more than two or three measures', which Roussel, paraphrasing Alfano, described as corresponding to 'a single line (the first line) of verse'.⁴²

³⁹ This summary is based on Maehder's 'Synopsis der beiden Versionen der Ergänzungen Alfanos' ('Studien', 365).

⁴⁰ On 5 August 1925 *Il giornale d'Italia* had revealed that *Turandot* would be given unfinished at its first performance, but the decision to honor Puccini by fulfilling his sad prophecy probably originated well before then. The opera's Rome première, conducted by Edoardo Vitale on 29 April 1926, also ended with Liù's death, according to J. A. H., 'Vicissitudes of Puccini's Last Work', *Musical America* (17 November 1926).

⁴¹ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 356.

⁴² Roussel, 356.

This meagre characterisation of Puccini's work on the *Turandot* duet and finale seems to contradict not only earlier press accounts of its near-completion, but also the evidence of his manuscripts. Most notably, it disregards 85 bars of drafts that begin with the Prince's 'Principessa di morte!' (reh. 35) and run almost continuously through Turandot's 'La mia gloria è finita' (four bars before reh. 41). Alfano's failure to account for these drafts is explained by his perception that the duet does not actually begin until 'Princess Turandot reveals for the first time her true nature, her love nature', that is, after she has been transformed by the Prince's kiss.⁴³ He clearly believed that Puccini's piano-vocal draft – 'Principessa di morte!' through 'La mia gloria è finita' – belonged to the finished score and not to the unfinished duet. But this narrow view of the duet's compass did not prevent Alfano from occasionally modifying the 'finished' music that preceded it. Example 1a illustrates an exchange between Turandot and the Prince, with vocal lines identical to those in folios 10v and 11r of Puccini's draft, while example 1b depicts Alfano's first attempt, which was subsequently vetoed by Toscanini. In addition to altering the rhythm of Turandot's 'P'ava', Alfano anticipates the Prince's second 'Ti voglio mia!' by one bar, increasing the urgency of their dialogue.

Alfano's identification of two distinct libretto drafts for the *Turandot* conclusion indicates that he had less material to work with than the sheer number of Puccini's manuscripts might suggest. Although the exact content of the first libretto draft – now presumed lost – is unknown, two of Puccini's sketches include sung text that is absent from the final libretto, suggesting that they belong to an earlier, rejected phase of composition. Thematic relationships among Puccini's manuscripts further diminished Alfano's stock of raw material. Several sketches are preliminary versions of later sketches or of passages that appear fully formed in the drafts, such as folio 15r, which contains an early incarnation of the Prince's 'Mio fiore, mio fiore mattutino' (reh. 39 and folio 5r of the drafts). Considering such resemblances, Puccini's *Turandot* sketches actually transmit fewer than a dozen distinct musical ideas, many of which are under four bars in length. It is only in light of these conditions that Alfano's seemingly radical strategy can be understood:

Of the notes corresponding to the first [libretto] draft of the close I will be able to use nothing, except the fanfare, which I can incorporate bodily into the finale. From the remainder, it is impossible to deduce the composer's meaning. As regards the two fragments of the second sketch [i.e., second libretto draft], though brief, they are organic, and I shall be able to use them; but all the rest I shall have to do myself.⁴⁴

As late as September 1925, then, Alfano could make sense of only three of Puccini's sketches. One, which he designated a fanfare, is a four-bar phrase on folio 13v, above which Puccini had written 'cambiamento scena' ('scene change'). Heeding that designation, Alfano used this sketch as the basis of the trumpet fanfare that prepares the final scene (reh. 50). The two brief fragments to which he alluded several times in the interview are more difficult to identify. His assertion that 'I shall

⁴³ Roussel, 356.

⁴⁴ Roussel, 356–7.

The image displays a musical score for an exchange between Turandot and the Prince. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows Turandot singing 'No! mai nes-sun m'a-vrà! Del l'a - va lo stra - zio non si rin - no - ve -' and the Prince replying '- zo - gna! Ti vo - glio mia!'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'ff' and 'p', with a 'Molto sost.' instruction and a box containing the number '38'. The second system shows Turandot singing '- rà! Ah! no' and the Prince replying 'Ti vo - glio mia!'. The piano accompaniment continues with a 'ten.' marking and a fermata over the final chord.

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 121329)
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Ex. 1: (a) Alfano's revised setting of an exchange between Turandot and the Prince, with vocal lines identical to folios 10v and 11r of Puccini's draft.

insert them just as they stand at the beginning of the duet⁴⁵ suggests the contents of folio 13r. This five-bar setting of the lines 'Del primo pianto, sì, / Straniero, quando sei giunto, / con angoscia ho sentito / il brivido fatale / di questo male / supremo!' ('[Of] the first tear, yes, / Stranger, when you arrived, / with anguish I felt / the fatal shiver / of this supreme illness!') (reh. 42) is one of the few texted passages among Puccini's sketches. Since it contains Turandot's first admission of her true feelings about the Prince, it reflects Alfano's association of her newly revealed 'love nature' with the beginning of the duet. If this passage is indeed one of the two fragments, however, Alfano did not ultimately insert it 'just as it stands',

⁴⁵ Roussel, 357.

TURANDOT *cresc.*

No! Mai nes-sun m'av-rà! del - l'a - va lo stra - zio non si rin-no - ve -

IL PRINCIPE *ff*

Mi - a! Ti vo - glio mi - a!...

Molto sostenuto

37

TURANDOT

- rà!.. Non mi toc - car, stra - nie - ro! —

IL PRINCIPE

Ti vo - glio mi - a!... *subito string.* Il tuo ge - lo è men -

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 119772)
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Ex. 1: (b) Alfano's original setting of an exchange between Turandot and the Prince, later vetoed by Toscanini.

but transposed it from F-sharp minor to E-flat minor. The second fragment may be the seven bars found on folio 15v (Ex. 2a) although, as Maehder has indicated, Alfano transformed this passage rhythmically and transposed it by a perfect fifth before applying it to a later section of 'Del primo pianto' (Ex. 2b).⁴⁶

While a lack of usable source material compelled Alfano to engage in some original composition, he nonetheless insisted that he would respect Puccini's wishes at every opportunity. He summed up his planned work on the *Turandot* conclusion

⁴⁶ Maehder, 'Studien', 325.



Music examples drawn from the sketches for the finale of *Turandot* are copyright © by Casa Ricordi - BMG Ricordi, all rights reserved. Used by permission.

TURANDOT *p* *dolciss. indugiando*

C'e - - ra ne - gli occhi tuo - - i la - lu - ce de - gli e - roi! - -

43 **Poco più (ondeggiante)**

p dolce

pp

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 121329)
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Ex. 2: (a) Untexted fragment from folio 15v of Puccini's *Turandot* sketches. (b) 'Del primo pianto'. The melody from folio 15v of Puccini's sketches appears in altered form in the accompaniment's top staff.

in broad yet unambiguous terms: 'In this duet and finale, we will have first: the two short original fragments or figures and the fanfare of Puccini, which will be inserted bodily (not developed); then, the longer pieces of my own composition; and, finally, my developments of three or four of Puccini's previous themes'.⁴⁷ Alfano further identified one of Puccini's usable 'previous themes' as the second act's 'riddle theme' (Ex. 3a, also known as the 'enigma motif'), which he planned to 'bring back abruptly at the fatal moment'.⁴⁸ In the final score, after the Prince places his life in Turandot's hands by revealing to her his name, he sings 'La mia gloria è il tuo amplesso!' to an extended version of this melody (Ex. 3b).⁴⁹ At another point in the

⁴⁷ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 357.

⁴⁸ Roussel, 357.

⁴⁹ Michele Girardi has criticised Alfano's insertion of the riddle theme at this point in the score, arguing that 'at this moment there is nothing more to guess, and, rather than introduce an element of suspense, it would seem important to prepare for the happy ending'. (Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini [Chicago, 2000], 482).

CALAF

ff

La mia glo - ria è il tuo am - ples - - - sol

49 Appena un po' più sostenuto *poco rit. a tempo*

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 121329)
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Ex. 3: (a) 'Riddle theme'. (b) The 'riddle theme' recalled by the Prince (now called Calâf) after Turandot learns his name.

interview, Alfano noted that 'Puccini had mentioned on several occasions to his librettists that the closing measures of the finale should be a restatement, in amplified form, of the tenor aria ('Nessun dorma') which occurs in the early part of the act. I shall observe this wish scrupulously, and this theme, in the form of a chorale, will be heard at the last'.⁵⁰ Indeed, Alfano did conclude the opera with a final statement of the 'Nessun dorma' theme, complete with an extended peroration (A1: thirteen bars after reh. 53). Toscanini subsequently shortened and simplified this elaborate setting, dropping the soloists' obbligato vocal line as well as some exaggerated brass flourishes (A2: reh. 54).⁵¹

3

To conclude his interview, Roussel remarked that 'among modern Italian composers, Alfano was in closer communion of spirit with Puccini than anyone else, and better understands his aims and wishes'.⁵² Despite this vote of confidence, however,

⁵⁰ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 357.

⁵¹ The Music Division of The New York Public Library holds a score of the final chorus in Toscanini's hand (call number JOG 81-14). It is possible that this document, which goes unmentioned in the literature on *Turandot*, represents the conductor's preferred setting of the passage, since it differs substantially from Alfano's original effort, and slightly modifies the choral voicing found in the revised version. According to Maehder, 'Studien', 337, Toscanini was still tinkering with the final chorus as late as April 1926.

⁵² Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 357.

critical reaction to Alfano's efforts has been mixed. The earliest reviews of the *Turandot* conclusion vary considerably, and often seem to reflect the nationality of the writer. Italian critics, many of whom had attended both the shortened première and the complete dress rehearsal that preceded it by two days, were inclined to treat Alfano gently, perhaps out of appreciation for his devoted service to Puccini's memory. The reaction of Andrea della Corte emphasises this careful detachment:

About the creation of the epilogue there has already been much gossip. We, like the public, lack the probative documents, that is, all of the fragmentary material left by Puccini. In order not to insert ourselves into the quarrel, we distance ourselves from the question – which, besides, does not interest the critic – and relate the statement carried by the piano-vocal score: 'The last duet and the finale of the opera have been completed by F. Alfano'.⁵³

Even Guido M. Gatti, who remarked, 'in *Turandot* Puccini has not succeeded in creating a work of art which lives and will live', nonetheless praised Alfano's contribution as 'most skilfully put together in accordance with the Puccini style, as far as this was possible to a foreign individuality'.⁵⁴

German critics, for the most part, displayed no such sympathy. Adolf Weissmann, who also attended an early performance at La Scala, remarked that Alfano 'should not have taken over this thankless task', which produced music that displayed polish, but none of Puccini's distinctive colour.⁵⁵ Reviewing the opera's German-language première, given in Dresden on 4 July 1926, Walter Petzet dismissed the conclusion as a 'kitschy love duet, which Alfano laboriously set from a few miserable melodic flourishes', followed by a 'fortunately brief finale'.⁵⁶ After witnessing the first performance of *Turandot* in Vienna, on 14 October 1926, Paul Bechert faulted Alfano for 'following Puccini rather than himself',⁵⁷ an amusing observation, given the likelihood that it was Alfano's original, more freely composed ending, and not Toscanini's edited version, that was used for opera's earliest German and Austrian performances.⁵⁸

Turandot's North American debut, at the New York Metropolitan Opera on 16 September 1926, also earned few positive comments for Alfano's conclusion, here presented in its shortened version. Olin Downes, who erroneously reported that

⁵³ Andrea della Corte, *La stampa* (26 April 1926), cited by Gara, *Carteggi*, 566.

⁵⁴ Guido M. Gatti, 'Puccini's *Turandot* Fails to Reveal Any Immortal Qualities', *Musical Courier* (13 May 1926).

⁵⁵ Adolf Weissmann, 'Puccini's Oper *Turandot*', *Die Musik*, 18/9 (June 1926), 683.

⁵⁶ Walter Petzet, '*Turandot*. Lyrisches Drama in drei Akten . . .', *Signale*, 84/28 (14 July 1926), 1083. Although Ashbrook and Powers (*Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 157) claim that the opera's German-language première took place on 6 September, Petzet's review establishes 4 July as the correct date.

⁵⁷ Paul Bechert, '*Turandot* in Vienna', *Christian Science Monitor* (27 November 1926).

⁵⁸ German recordings of 'Del primo pianto' made by Anne Roselle, Lotte Lehmann and Mafalda Salvatini – the first Dresden, Vienna and Berlin *Turandots*, respectively – all include passages found only in Alfano's original conclusion, which Ricordi had published in German translation in early 1926 (Gordon Smith, 'Alfano and *Turandot*', *Opera*, 24/3 [March 1973], 227). Salvatini committed her performance to disk immediately after the première, which suggests that the Berlin company, at least, had performed Alfano's original ending on stage.

Alfano had simply ‘strung together and orchestrated’ Puccini’s sketches, found the opera’s conclusion theatrically unsatisfying.⁵⁹ Other New York critics, such as Lawrence Gilman and Richard L. Stokes, scarcely mentioned Alfano’s name – in the midst of a largely derisive review, Gilman identified him simply as Puccini’s ‘editor’.⁶⁰ Samuel Chotzinoff described Alfano’s work as ‘a good job’, but complained ‘his coda is more daring harmonically than the rest of the opera’.⁶¹ Curiously, while a sidebar to Oscar Thompson’s review in *Musical America* includes an unattributed summary of Alfano’s interview with Raymond Roussel, Thompson himself had nothing to say about the opera’s conclusion.

Repeated exposure has not improved the critical reception of *Turandot*’s ending. Two of Puccini’s leading biographers, each assessing the composer at the centennial of his birth, saw the passage as a symbol of artistic impotence. Claudio Sartori absolved Alfano of responsibility, observing that ‘*Turandot* is not an unfinished opera, but rather an opera that cannot be finished, and it was fortunate for Puccini that he died before realising his failure’.⁶² In Sartori’s pessimistic view, the decision to present *Turandot* without an ending, as was done at its premières in Milan and Rome, should be adopted for all performances of the work: ‘The opera must not be concluded in any way. It must remain a document of unreachable aspirations unrealised by a maestro who was killed by the error of having believed in a dream too vast for his possibilities’.⁶³ Mosco Carner, writing at the same time as Sartori, praised Alfano as ‘Süssmayr to Puccini’s Mozart’, but regretted the obvious stylistic difference between their respective contributions. Carner, who did not yet know that Toscanini had cut some luxuriously scored passages from Alfano’s original conclusion, attributed the mismatch to ‘the bare, harsh texture of the orchestration and the rigidity of line in the vocal parts’ in the duet and disappointingly brief final scene.⁶⁴ But more damaging than Alfano’s flawed effort, according to Carner, was Puccini’s tragic inability to identify with his heroine’s spiritual transformation. This was what prevented him from completing *Turandot* on his own.

The performance history of *Turandot* as a whole reflects an opera whose exoticism, grand scale and exciting vocalism have secured it a place on the international stage. But the debate over whether Alfano’s contribution constitutes a successful ending for this unfinished work is now typically accompanied by the question ‘in which version?’ Widespread awareness of Alfano’s two *Turandot* conclusions can be traced to scholarly investigations begun by Jürgen Maehder in 1978, as well as to a 1982 concert performance with the original ending at London’s Barbican Hall. Since then, several theatres, including the New York City Opera, Barcelona’s Teatre del Liceu, and the Oper der Stadt Bonn have opted for Alfano’s

⁵⁹ Olin Downes, ‘*Turandot* Opens, Scores a Triumph’, *The New York Times* (17 November 1926).

⁶⁰ Lawrence Gilman, ‘A New Puccini Opera: *Turandot* at the Metropolitan’, *New York Herald-Tribune* (17 November 1926).

⁶¹ Samuel Chotzinoff, ‘At the Metropolitan’, *New York World* (17 November 1926).

⁶² Sartori, *Puccini*, 28.

⁶³ Sartori, 29.

⁶⁴ Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (London, 1958), 469.

original, full-length conclusion, and a recording featuring Josephine Barstow and Lando Bartolini has introduced this version to an even wider audience.⁶⁵

In his review of the historic Barbican Hall concert, Mosco Carner revealed that while examining the two versions of Alfano's conclusion side by side, he initially assumed that the second 'must have been made by a hack – so mutilated by clumsy cuts it appeared to me'.⁶⁶ Indeed, an often-repeated criticism of Alfano's revised ending is the charge that its brevity allows too little time for Turandot to evolve from ice princess to woman in love. From a purely dramatic standpoint, as Cesare Orselli has suggested, this objection is easily overcome: in a mythical opera where beauty, horror and comedy are starkly juxtaposed, a magically instantaneous transformation of Turandot's character is a theatrically viable option.⁶⁷ An instantaneous transformation, however, is not what audiences have come to expect from Puccini, a composer whose lengthy love scenes constitute musical high points in so many of his scores.

The cuts that Toscanini imposed on Alfano's *Turandot* conclusion tend to disrupt larger musico-dramatic designs. By substituting five thumps and a grand pause for the eight-bar orchestral *tutti* with which Alfano underscored the infamous kiss (*A1*: four bars before reh. 38/*A2*: seven bars before reh. 39), Toscanini not only prematurely shifted focus from the Prince's passion to Turandot's stupefaction, but also interrupted an ironic wordless reprise of the second act's 'Mai nessun m'avrà' ('No one shall ever possess me').⁶⁸ Similarly, his reduction of Turandot's 'Del primo pianto' (*A1*: ten bars after reh. 41/*A2*: reh. 42) by nearly 40 per cent diminishes its association with her previous aria, 'In questa reggia'. Because Turandot's confession of her evolving emotional state in 'Del primo pianto' discloses the turmoil that she had successfully concealed during 'In questa reggia', the two passages should ideally be roughly equal in length and complexity. By trimming and compressing four of the five sections of 'Del primo pianto', Toscanini weakened the psychological and emotional heart of the concluding duet.

One of Toscanini's modifications, however, is not only defensible, but also apt. For no obvious reason, Alfano discarded Puccini's clear and legible sketch for the Prince's 'Il mio mistero? Non ne ho più' on folio 16r. Ignoring the active, sequentially rising theme with which Puccini depicted the Prince's reckless passion, Alfano instead composed his own setting (Ex. 4a), slow and intoxicating despite the expressive marking 'con caldissimo impeto' ('with warmest impetuosity'). Reviewing Alfano's work, Toscanini insisted that he substitute Puccini's 'Il mio mistero',

⁶⁵ *Josephine Barstow: Opera Finales*, with the Scottish Opera Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by John Mauceri (Decca 430 203 2; there is apparently a CD reissue on the Polygram label, which remains frustratingly hard to find).

⁶⁶ Mosco Carner, 'Toscanini versus Alfano', *Opera*, 34/1 (January 1983), 38.

⁶⁷ Cesare Orselli, 'Inchieste su *Turandot*', in Jürgen Maehder, ed., *Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini. Atti del I° Convegno Internazionale sull'Opera di Giacomo Puccini* (Pisa, 1985), 188. Ironically, in the preface to the collected edition of his *Fiabe* (1805), Carlo Gozzi claimed that he created his own version of the Turandot folktale 'in order to curtail the debate on the merit of magical transformation scenes' (Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 44).

⁶⁸ Ashbrook and Powers, 134–8, offer a fascinating and credible interpretation of Puccini's drafts and sketches for this passage.

TURANDOT
pp
- ster! _____

IL PRINCIPE
(con caldissimo impeto) *p*
Il mio mis-ter? _____ Non ne ho più!...

Lento assai
46
pp espress. *poco* 3

IL PRINCIPE
f
Sei mi - a! _____ Tu che tre - mi se ti sfi - ro... Tu che sbian - chi che ti ba - cio...

pp *sva*.....

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 119772)
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Ex. 4: (a) Alfano's original setting of the Prince's 'Il mio mistero'.

which is fundamentally identical to the passage as it now appears in the score (Ex. 4b). This change might, in turn, have influenced Toscanini's elimination of the ensuing 'Arbitra son del tuo destino' (A1: reh. 47), in which Turandot, now armed with the Prince's secret, confronts him with renewed spite. After restoring Puccini's music for 'Il mio mistero', Toscanini may have found 'Arbitra son' – entirely Alfano's musical creation, despite Puccini's allusion to its text on folio 17r – too similar in character, and therefore needlessly repetitive. The passage's brief resuscitation of Turandot's hatred for the Prince, after she had already admitted her sympathetic feelings, may also have struck Toscanini as dramatically superfluous.

IL PRINCIPE *p*

Il mio mi - ste - ro? Non ne ho più! Sei mi - a!

46 *a tempo*

man mano cresc.

ppp

IL PRINCIPE

Tu che tre - mi se ti sfi - ro! Tu che sbian - chi se ti ba - cio puoi per - der - mi se

f

IL PRINCIPE

vuoi. Il mio no - me e la vi - ta, in - siem ti do - no.

allarg:

sempre cresc.

from Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Act III (plate no. 121329)
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Ex. 4: (b) Alfano's revised setting of the Prince's 'Il mio mistero', essentially identical to folio 16r of Puccini's sketches.

4

Assessing Alfano's *Turandot* conclusion, whether in its original or revised form, is no simple matter. Granting absolute authority to Puccini's intentions, however vaguely expressed, is obviously problematic. From his correspondence and from Alfano's recollection of their conversations we learn that he wanted 'something grandiose' at the opera's end, but his continued dissatisfaction with the libretto and failure to draft the full conclusion leave open the possibility that he might eventually have resigned himself to a little less grandiosity in order to salvage what had become an unfinishable work. But attempting to interpret in any detail the desires of a composer such as Puccini, whose constant revision of his scores vexed even the

most indulgent of publishers, is a risky undertaking that can easily lead either to idiosyncratic second-guessing,⁶⁹ or to a declaration such as Sartori's that *Turandot* should be performed with no ending at all.

Puccini's ominous prediction to the contrary, *Turandot* needs some sort of conclusion in order to deliver what he valued above all, namely, a satisfying evening of musical theatre. One possibility would be an ending that minimises the stylistic divide between his finished score and whatever follows it, while at the same time giving the denouement sufficient time to unfold. To achieve this end, instead of starting over with Puccini's sketches and drafts, it is more productive to apply standards of consistency to the full-length ending that was prepared by his friend and contemporary, Franco Alfano. Alfano's original conclusion, which incorporates many of the sketches and nearly all of the chronologically final text, is the best starting point we have to evoke an artistic perspective consistent with the period of Puccini's death. Speculating beyond this point, trying to guess what Puccini himself might have done with the opera had he survived his cancer treatment, is an exercise in futility.

There is one obvious way in which Alfano's first attempt at finishing *Turandot* can be more closely reconciled with the remainder of the score. Jürgen Maehder has demonstrated that Alfano seldom heeded the instrumental cues scattered throughout Puccini's drafts and sketches; by employing his own orchestral palette, Alfano further distanced his conclusion from the rest of the work. Maehder traces this discrepancy to the fact that Ricordi withheld Puccini's completed orchestral score until Alfano requested it in writing only fifteen days before submitting his work to Toscanini.⁷⁰ Roussel reports that before Alfano had even agreed to complete *Turandot*, Giuseppe Adami had allowed him to examine 'the score'.⁷¹ Because Roussel's published interview appears in English, however, it is not possible to know whether Alfano's original Italian, or perhaps French, described this score more explicitly. But even if he had looked at Puccini's orchestration before accepting the assignment, Alfano was apparently unable to refer to it during most of his work on the duet and finale. This not only explains why the *Turandot* conclusion sometimes sounds so un-Puccinian, but also sanctions a careful reorchestration according to both Puccini's specific instrumental cues and his existing full score.

Appeals to Puccini's intentions, however, do not justify Toscanini's extensive alteration of Alfano's original conclusion. When the conductor privileged Puccini's ambiguous sketches over Alfano's concrete realisation, he disrupted the coherence of a musico-dramatic unit that owes its internal logic to the latter's design. But the decision to accept all, some, or none of Toscanini's cuts and substitutions can today be made in an atmosphere free of the veneration that had once accompanied the

⁶⁹ An example of this can be found in Janet Maguire, 'Puccini's Version of the Duet and Final Scene of *Turandot*', *Musical Quarterly*, 74 (1990), 319–59, in which Maguire, herself a composer, 'corrects' Alfano's work by substituting her own highly subjective interpretations of Puccini's sketches.

⁷⁰ Maehder, 'Studien', 352.

⁷¹ Roussel, 'Completion of *Turandot*', 356.

conductor's every word and deed. The tendency to equate Toscanini's objectives with the composer's own, thereby giving the former a godlike authority, was not as pronounced in 1925 as it became in the 1940s and 50s.⁷² Even so, there seems no question that in a showdown between Toscanini and Alfano, the conductor would always prevail. At their worst, Toscanini's changes to Alfano's ending seem more vindictive than artistic (the elimination of Alfano's music for the kiss, the radical reduction of 'Del primo pianto'), but his replacement of Alfano's overripe 'Il mio mistero' with Puccini's own setting does at least eliminate one of the most uncharacteristic passages in the score.

Varying confluences of Alfano's first and second *Turandot* endings have been proposed by Maehder, Ashbrook and Powers, and others.⁷³ In each case, appreciation for the life that Alfano gave to a pile of manuscript leaves is tempered by the realisation that his own musical personality sometimes overwhelms them. The Puccini-Alfano *Turandot* remains a flawed work, not only for its patchwork conclusion, but also because Puccini was unable to subject the entire opera to the type of self-doubting, yet ultimately constructive scrutiny that his other finished works had endured. But even if he had been blessed with infinite time and resources, a successful musical depiction of love's transcendence might well have been beyond his ability. Alfano's sincere attempt, which occupied him for only about six months, has become his best-known accomplishment, sentencing him to eternity as a footnote to another composer's career. He might be pleased, however, to know that Toscanini's musical authority is no longer sacrosanct, and his original *Turandot* conclusion is gaining in popularity.

Appendix

Selected articles containing facsimiles of Puccini's sketches and drafts for *Turandot's* conclusion

Candida, Federico. 'La incompiuta', *La Scala: rivista dell'opera*, 109 (December 1958), 68–74. With facsimiles of folios 7r, 17r, and seven sketches in private hands.

Celli, Teodoro. 'L'ultimo canto', *La Scala: rivista dell'opera*, 19 (May 1951), 32–5. With facsimiles of folios 7r, 17r, and two sketches in private hands. Reprinted, with poor-quality copies of the sketch facsimiles, as part of 'Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*' in *Quaderni pucciniani* (1985), 43–65.

Celli, Teodoro. 'Scoprire la melodia', *La Scala: rivista dell'opera*, 18 (April 1951), 40–3. With facsimiles of four sketches in private hands. Reprinted, with poor-quality

⁷² See Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini* (New York, 1987) for one account of the cult that grew up around the conductor, and my own 'Toscanini and the Myth of Textual Fidelity' (*Journal of the Conductors' Guild*, 24/1-2 (Winter / Spring–Summer / Fall 2003 2004), 49–60) for an attempt to reconcile the heavily modified scores in Toscanini's personal collection with his reputation as the humble servant of the composer.

⁷³ Maehder, 'Studien', 350; Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 164; Orselli, 'Inchieste su *Turandot*', 188–9; Gordon Smith, 'The *Turandot* Riddle', *Opera* 34/1 (January 1983), 39–40.

copies of the sketch facsimiles, as part of 'Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*' in *Quaderni pucciniani*, 2 (1985), 43–65.

Maehder, Jürgen. 'Studien zum Fragmentcharakter von Giacomo Puccinis *Turandot*', *Analecta musicologica*, 22 (1984), 298–379. Reprinted in Anna Maria Voci's Italian translation as 'Studi sul carattere di frammento della *Turandot* di Giacomo Puccini' in *Quaderni pucciniani*, 2 (1985), 79–163. Condensed and reprinted in Italian translation as 'La trasformazione interrotta della principessa. Studi sul contributo di Franco Alfano alla partitura di *Turandot*' in Maehder, ed., *Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini. Atti del I° Convegno Internazionale sull'Opera di Giacomo Puccini* (Pisa, 1985), 143–70. Each of these versions of Maehder's study contains facsimiles of folios 2r, 5r, 7r, 9r, 11r, 15r and 17r, in addition to four pages of Alfano's orchestrated completion.

Maguire, Janet. 'Puccini's Version of the Duet and Final Scene of *Turandot*', *Musical Quarterly*, 74 (1990), 319–59. Contains facsimiles of folios 1r, 5r, 7r, 11r, 11v, 15r, 15v, 17r, 17v and 22r.