

THE PUCCINI TRILOGY

La Bohème – Tosca – Madama Butterfly

Arranged and performed by

Mathieu van Bellen (violin) & Mathias Halvorsen (piano)



A complete Puccini cycle — arranged for two musicians with surtitles.

After the international success of their groundbreaking *La Bohème*, violinist Mathieu van Bellen and pianist Mathias Halvorsen now present the full Puccini Trilogy: *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly* — each opera performed in its entirety, arranged for violin and piano with remarkable depth, colour, and theatrical clarity.

Years in the making, the trilogy offers presenters a rare opportunity: Three beloved box-office operas in a format that is intimate, tour-friendly, and artistically uncompromising.

Each opera may be booked individually, or combined into a two- or three-night Puccini festival.

Background

The duo's version of *La Bohème*, released on Backlash Music in 2022, received widespread critical acclaim:

BBC Music Magazine (Chamber Choice of the Month, ★★★★★):

"By some wizardry these distinctions are apparent even when characters 'sing' together in duet... bravi, van Bellen and Halvorsen, for this ravishing achievement."

The Sunday Times (★★★★★):

"Audacious... takes nothing away from Puccini's miraculous score. Fullness, richness, lyricism — you feel the entire opera unfolding before you."

Neue Musikzeitung:

"Rodolfo's attic, the streets of Paris, Mimi's deathbed come to life more vividly than on any opera stage."

Praised across Europe, performed at major festivals and concert halls, and selected among the 40 Best Albums of the Year (de Volkskrant), *La Bohème* established the duo as leading interpreters of Puccini in this radically intimate format.

With *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*, the cycle is now complete.

The concept

The approach is simple, bold, and deeply respectful: every note of Puccini's orchestral and vocal score is transcribed for just two instruments, performed live with projected surtitles and scene descriptions.

Drawing inspiration from Kreisler, Godowsky, and Puccini's own era, the music retains its full romantic sweep, intensity, and melodic generosity — not as a conceptual reworking, but as an act of devotion to Puccini's sound world.

Each character is voiced by either violin or piano, each with a distinct tone colour and musical personality. As reviewers have noted, the effect is strikingly lifelike:

"Mimi and Rodolfo came alive before your eyes — Puccini was rarely this close." **(Trouw)**

"A drama that deserves its own genre designation." **(Klassekampen)**

The result is an operatic experience that feels both transparent and cinematic, allowing the audience's imagination to unlock the full emotional world of each opera.

LA BOHÈME

Set in Paris around 1830, the opera follows a group of young artists living on the margins, centring on the fragile love between the poet Rodolfo and the seamstress Mimì, alongside the spirited Musetta and the painter Marcello. The work moves between bohemian camaraderie and intimate tragedy, tracing the passage from youthful exuberance to loss.

Performed complete with one interval between Acts II and III.

Approximate duration: 2 hours 10 minutes incl. interval (flexible).

TOSCA

Set in Rome during the political turmoil of June 1800, the opera unfolds over a single day and night, focusing on the singer Floria Tosca, her lover Cavaradossi, and the police chief Scarpia. A tightly constructed drama, it combines personal passion with political tension, moving swiftly from intrigue to catastrophe.

Performed complete with one interval between Acts I and II (standard placement).

Approximate duration: 2 hours incl. interval (flexible).

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Set in Nagasaki in the early twentieth century, the story centres on the young geisha Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly), her marriage to the American naval officer Pinkerton, and the steadfast presence of Suzuki and Sharpless. The opera traces a gradual unfolding of hope, waiting, and disillusionment, culminating in one of Puccini's most intimate tragedies.

Performed complete with one interval between Acts I and II (standard placement).

Approximate duration: 2 hours 25 minutes incl. interval (flexible).

Key points

- Three of the world's most beloved operas — proven audience draws
- Fully faithful, full-length performances (**no cuts, no reinterpretation**)
- Tour-friendly format: two musicians + projection
- Major international press acclaim (BBC Music Magazine, The Sunday Times, de Volkskrant, Trouw, NMZ, Klassekampen)
- Presented at leading festivals and venues (Elbphilharmonie, Beethoven-Haus, etc.)
- A distinctive artistic profile that stands out while remaining broadly accessible

Booking options

- Single opera (ideal for festivals, opera houses, chamber series)
- Two-night Puccini focus
- Full three-night Puccini Trilogy — a ready-made festival centrepiece

Listening:

Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/album/2DGHhoyVXmqmz9CxUxrM4d?si=X466EWofTxyk--xD4L_A2g

Youtube: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_ncJyG63dZFvBjlqsN3TAh5-lSCX_8wKTU&si=CWKxudCeMPrR9aea

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