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**TOSCA**

Continued from preceding page

"E lucevan le stelle." Tosca enters with news of the "reprieve," and the score is heavy with leitmotifs. As soldiers come, the action progresses swiftly to the final *corps de théâtre*. Tosca leaps off the parapet, and the orchestra concludes *tutta forza con grande danza* with a repetition of the melody of "E lucevan le stelle." The scheme is, again, superficially like that of *Otello*.

Now the first part of this act, up to the entrance of Tosca, is one of the most undramatic things in opera; not because nothing much happens on the stage, but because nothing happens in the music. It is indeed the penultimate demonstration of Puccini's insufficiency before the demands of Sardou's obvious melodrama. (The ultimate demonstration is the curiously passionless dialogue with Tosca that follows.) Possibly the Shepherd's song might have been integrated dramatically, but Puccini wished only to strike a mood of melancholy, which is inappropriate to Cavaradossi's position on its own, and particularly so when it leads into the bell-passage at his entrance, and then into his mawkish aria. If Puccini had no more insight into, or sympathy with, the condemned hero's feelings at this crisis, he would have done better to leave them alone, as Verdi did with Manrico at the end of *II Trovatore*. But patently Cavaradossi was not the primary concern. What mattered was not his plight, but the effect it could make on the audience. Puccini's faint emotionality is directed out over the footlights; he will let us have a good cry at Cavaradossi's expense. This at once makes for a complete extinction of the poor painter as a dramatic protagonist, and forms a shield against any serious feelings which Sardou, even, might have hoped to arouse in us.

As for the Shepherd's folk song, it appears then to be as extraneous as the choirboys and the cardinal of Act I, an insertion not for any dramatic end, but for display or floating lyricism. This kind of thing is a weakness even with a composer of truer lyrical talent. It is hardly necessary to contrast the parallel element in *Otello*, the "Willow Song," which not only makes Verdi's hush, but also wonderfully fills out Desdemona's character and clarifies her fate. In the last act of *Otello*, the music for the hero's en-