The Life and Times of Giacomo Puccini

1858  Giacomo Puccini is born in Lucca, Italy on December 22.

1867  Canada becomes a country.

1874  Puccini enters the Istituto Musicale where he studies under Carlo Angeloni.

1876  Puccini sees a production of Aida in Pisa and resolves to compose operas.

1879  Xiu Wei Sun as Cio-Cio-San, Allyson McHardy as Suzuki and Liam Benson as Trouble (laying down) in Madama Butterfly (COC, 2003). Photo: Michael Cooper

1880  Puccini begins his studies at the Milan Conservatory.

Anne of Green Gables author Lucy Maud Montgomery is born on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Ottawa is made the capital of Western Canada in British North America.

The first Impressionist art exhibition takes place in Paris where Monet displays Impression: Sunrise.
The Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, the Honourable Théodore Robitaille, commissions a song for the St. Jean-Baptiste Day ceremony. Composer Calixa Lavallée sets the French text of Sir Adophe-Basile Routhier’s patriotic poem “O Canada” to music. In 1980, 100 years later, this song officially becomes Canada’s national anthem.

1884 • Puccini’s first stage work, Le villi, is produced in Milan at the Teatro Dal Verme.
• Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn is published in the United States.

1889 • Puccini’s second opera Edgar premieres at La Scala in Milan.
• Alexander Gustave Eiffel designs the 324-metre-high Eiffel Tower for the Paris World Exhibition.
• Vincent van Gogh paints Starry Night.

1893 • Three famous operas are produced this year: Puccini’s Manon Lescaut, Verdi’s Falstaff, and Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel.
• Henry Ford builds his first car.
• Algonquin Park is established as a wildlife sanctuary in Ontario.

1894 • George Bernard Shaw, music critic for The World in London, writes that “Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals.”
• Music and entertainment venue, Massey Hall, opens in Toronto.

1896 • La Bohème is produced in Turin at the Regio, February 1.
• The first modern Olympics are held in Athens.
• The Klondike gold rush begins in Bonanza Creek, in the Yukon, Canada.

1900 • Puccini sees Belasco’s play Madama Butterfly. He immediately applies to Belasco for the rights.
• Puccini’s Tosca premieres at Costanzi in Rome, January 14.

1904 • Madama Butterfly opens at La Scala in Milan on February 17.
• The Rolls-Royce Company is founded.
• Theodore Roosevelt is elected president of the United States.

1910 • Puccini’s The Girl of the Golden West is first produced in New York at the Metropolitan Opera.
• Frank Lloyd Wright becomes well-known and influential in Europe for his domestic architecture.

1914 • Countries engage in one of the deadliest conflicts in human history: World War I.
• The Royal Ontario Museum opens.

1915 • The poem “In Flanders Fields” is first published in a London magazine.

1917 • Puccini’s La Rondine is given its first performance at the Monte Carlo Opéra on March 27.
• Canadian troops win the battle at Vimy Ridge.
• Halifax, Nova Scotia is devastated by a huge explosion when two freighters collide in Halifax Harbour.

1918 • Il trittico, Puccini’s collection of three, one-act operas (Il tabarro, Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi), are produced by the Metropolitan Opera in New York.
• World War I ends.
• Women over 30 get the vote in Britain.

1924 • Puccini dies, as does Communist leader Vladimir Lenin.
• The Royal Canadian Air Force is formed.

1926 • Turandot receives its first performance on April 25 at La Scala in Milan.
• The character Pooh, first appears in the book Winnie-the-Pooh by A. A. Milne.