





On a warm Roman night in 1990, beneath the ancient arches of the Baths of Caracalla, three voices—each already a legend—rose together and forever changed the world of music. The Three Tenors, united for the first time, summoned a magic that transcended rivalry and genre, weaving opera and song into a tapestry of joy, heartbreak, and triumph. Their concert was not merely a performance but a phenomenon, watched by over a billion people, and it bridged the worlds of high art and popular passion, football and aria, with a grandeur and warmth that will never be repeated. In that moment, Carreras, Domingo, and Pavarotti were not just singers but living monuments to the power of music, their voices echoing through history with a beauty and unity that remains unmatched.



1.

L'Arlesiana: Lamento di Federico (“È la solita storia del pastore”) is from Francesco Cilea’s 1897 opera, based on Alphonse Daudet’s play. Federico, a young shepherd, mourns the betrayal and loss of his beloved, the mysterious girl from Arles, pouring out his heartbreak and longing for the peace of sleep to escape his pain.



2.

L'Africaine: "O Paradiso" comes from Giacomo Meyerbeer's grand opera, premiered in 1865. Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer, sings this aria as he beholds a new land, expressing awe and hope for a new beginning. The opera's plot centers on his love for Sélika, an African princess, and the impossible choices between love, duty, and homeland.



3.

Tosca: “Recondita Armonia” opens Puccini’s 1900 opera set in Napoleonic Rome.

Cavaradossi, the painter, reflects on the mysterious harmony of contrasting beauties as he paints his lover’s portrait, capturing the opera’s themes of art, love, and jealousy amidst political turmoil.



4.

Das Land des Lächelns: “Dein ist mein ganzes Herz” is from Franz Lehár’s 1929 operetta about Prince Sou-Chong of China and his forbidden love affair with an Austrian woman, Lisa. The aria is a heartfelt declaration of devotion, even as cultural barriers and royal obligations doom their romance, making it a story of love lost to duty and tradition.



5.

Rondine al nido, written in 1926 by Vincenzo de Crescenzo, uses the image of a swallow returning to its nest as a metaphor for lost love. The singer laments that, unlike the faithful bird, his beloved never returns, leaving only memories and longing.



6.

Core 'ngrato, composed in 1911 by Salvatore Cardillo, is a Neapolitan song where the singer, abandoned by his beloved Caterina, accuses her of ingratitude and laments the torment of loving someone who does not reciprocate.



7.

Torna a Surriento, composed in 1902 by Ernesto de Curtis, is a passionate plea for a loved one to return to the beautiful town of Sorrento. The lyrics evoke the natural beauty of the region and the pain of separation, blending nostalgia with longing for reunion.



8.

Granada, written in 1932 by Agustín Lara, is a vibrant ode to the Spanish city, celebrating its Moorish heritage, passionate spirit, and romantic allure. The song has become a standard, symbolizing the city's intoxicating beauty.



9.

La tabernera del puerto: “No puede ser” is from Pablo Sorozábal’s 1936 zarzuela set in a Basque port town. Leandro, the protagonist, refuses to believe that Marola, the woman he loves, is as heartless as rumors claim. The story is a nautical romance filled with intrigue, love, and redemption.



10.

Andrea Chénier: “Un di all’azzurro spazio”
is from Umberto Giordano’s 1896 opera based
on the life of the French poet André
Chénier during the Revolution. Chénier
reflects on the suffering and injustice he
witnesses, longing for a better world and
expressing the power of poetry and love to
transcend hardship.



11.

Tosca: “E lucevan le stelle” is sung by Cavaradossi in the final act of Puccini’s opera as he awaits execution. He reminisces about past happiness and love under the stars, filled with despair and longing for Tosca, encapsulating the opera’s tragic fate.



12.

Turandot: “Nessun dorma” is from Puccini’s final opera, premiered in 1926. Prince Calaf, having answered Princess Turandot’s riddles, declares that no one shall sleep until his name is discovered. The aria is a triumphant proclamation of hope and victory through love.



13.

Maria / Tonight / O paese do sole / Cielito lindo is a medley blending “Maria” and “Tonight” from Bernstein’s 1957 musical West Side Story, which tells of forbidden love amidst gang rivalry in New York; “O paese do sole,” a Neapolitan song celebrating homeland warmth; and “Cielito lindo,” an 1882 Mexican serenade encouraging joy and resilience in love.



14.

Memory / Ochi tchorniye / Caminito / La vie en rose is a medley of “Memory” from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s 1981 musical *Cats*, reflecting on nostalgia and longing; “Ochi tchorniye,” a Russian romance about the haunting beauty and danger of a lover’s gaze; “Caminito,” a 1926 Argentine tango about a path symbolizing lost love; and “La vie en rose,” Édith Piaf’s 1945 classic about seeing life through the glow of love.



15.

Mattinata / Wien, Wien, nur du allein /
Amapola / O sole mio is a joyful medley:
“Mattinata” (1904) by Leoncavallo is a
morning serenade; “Wien, Wien, nur du
allein” (1912) is a tribute to Vienna’s
charm; “Amapola” (1920) likens a beloved to
a beautiful poppy; and “O sole mio” (1898)
celebrates the sun as a metaphor for love’s
radiance.



16.

‘O sole mio, composed in 1898 by Eduardo di Capua, is a Neapolitan classic celebrating the beauty of a sunny day as a metaphor for the beloved’s presence, a universal hymn to love and hope.



17.

Turandot: “Nessun dorma!” (Encore) reprises the iconic aria from Puccini’s opera, reiterating the message of hope, perseverance, and the triumph of love and courage over adversity¹².