

## Nessun Dorma by Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)

Nessun Dorma is an aria from Giacomo Puccini's opera "Turandot". Puccini died in 1924, before he could finish the opera. It was later completed by Franco Alfano and premiered on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1926, a year and a half after Puccini's death. Nessun Dorma is one of the most recognized and beloved arias ever written. Its long final note has long impressed listeners.

### The Story of the Opera

The opera is set in Peking, China, and tells a story of cruelty, pride, sacrifice, and transformation. Calaf, an exiled prince, falls in love at first sight with the beautiful but arrogant Princess Turandot. The princess dislikes all men and refuses to be conquered by marriage. So, according to the royal edict, anyone who wishes to marry her must correctly answer three riddles. Those who fail are killed. The crowd gathers to watch the latest victim, the Prince of Persia, who has failed the test and is led to his death. Despite protests from his father, Timur, and his servant, Liù, Calaf also accepts the challenge and is determined to marry the beautiful Turandot.

The riddles are:

- 1) What is born each night and dies each dawn? Calaf answers: "Hope."
- 2) What burns like fire but is not fire? Calaf answers: "Blood."
- 3) What is ice that burns? After a long pause, Calaf declares that the answer is "Turandot"!

He solves all three riddles! But Turandot refuses to marry him until she knows his name. So the prince makes a deal with her. If she can discover his name before dawn, he will gladly die. If she can't, they will marry. Turandot agrees and the countdown begins.

Later that night, the princess declares that nobody will sleep until she learns his name. In fact, she promises that everyone in the kingdom will die if the man's identity is not discovered by dawn. This is when Calaf sings the famous aria "Nessun Dorma", which means "Nobody Sleep", and in which he declares that he is certain of victory at dawn.

Soldiers arrest Timur and Liù. To protect Calaf, Liù (who secretly loves Calaf) claims that she alone knows his name. Under threat and torture, she refuses to speak. When asked what gives her such strength, she replies that it is love. Instead of betraying Calaf, she takes her own life.

Liù's sacrifice deeply affects Turandot. For the first time, she witnesses genuine, selfless love.

When they are finally alone together, Calaf faces Turandot and kisses her. The emotional barrier that she had created begins to break. She experiences love and vulnerability for the first time.

In the final scene, Turandot announces to the court that she has discovered the stranger's name. His name, she declares, is "Love." The opera ends with their union, suggesting that love has finally conquered fear and cruelty.

## Nessun Dorma:

Italian (original)	English
Nessun dorma! Nessun dorma! Tu pure, o Principessa, nella tua fredda stanza, guardi le stelle, che tremano d'amore e di speranza.	Nobody sleep! Nobody sleep! Even you, oh Princess, in your cold room, watch the stars, that tremble with love and with hope.
Ma il mio mistero è chiuso in me, il nome mio nessun saprà! No, no, sulla tua bocca lo dirò quando la luce splenderà!	But my secret is hidden within me, my name no one will know! No, no, on your mouth I will tell it when the light shines!
Ed il mio bacio scioglierà il silenzio che ti fa mia!	And my kiss will dissolve the silence that makes you mine!
<i>Il nome suo nessun saprà! E noi dovrem, ahime, morir, morir!</i>	<i>No one will know his name! And we must, alas, die, die!</i>
Dilegua, o notte! Tramontate, stelle! Tramontate, stelle! All'alba vincerò! Vincerò, vincerò!	Vanish, oh night! Set, stars! Set, stars! At dawn, I will win! I will win! I will win!

Luciano Pavarotti (1994): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWc7vYjgnTs>

Paul Potts (2007): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnP-8GrHOIk>