

# TOSCA CAFE

SEPTEMBER 13 to OCTOBER 2, 2011

Created and staged by CAREY PERLOFF and VAL CANIPAROLI  
The American Conservatory Theater (San Francisco) production

Starring REX HARRINGTON  
PETER ANDERSON (*The Overcoat, 7 Stories*)  
and DEAN PAUL GIBSON (*Vigil, The Drowsy Chaperone*)

A co-production with the Vancouver Playhouse

## Enrichment Guide

*Prepared by Dom Saliani*

and

Shari Watling, Artistic Associate, Theatre Calgary

With additional material provided by American Conservatory Theater



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## ABOUT THEATRE CALGARY



The Max Bell Theatre in the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts – Home to Theatre Calgary  
Photo by David Cooper

In the 1940s, Dr. Betty Mitchell, a drama teacher at Calgary's Western Canada High School, inspired such loyalty and devotion in her students that they continued to study with her after graduating. Together they named themselves "Workshop 14" and became one of the country's finest amateur theatre companies. Two decades later, a second amateur group called the "Musicians' and Actors' Club" (MAC), composed of local business people, were staging short plays and excerpts from musicals in the old Isis movie house. MAC and Workshop 14 merged to become MAC 14 under the direction of Kenneth Dyba and mounted productions in a converted tractor house, later to be named The QR Centre. MAC 14 became Theatre Calgary, a fully professional theatre company, on July 1st, 1968.

Christopher Newton, formerly the Artistic Director of the Shaw Festival, was appointed the first Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary. A keen interest was expressed at this time to produce plays by Canadian playwrights; James Reaney's *The Three Desks* was produced during the first season, as were two others of Newton's works: *You Two Stay Here*, *The Rest Come With Me* and *Trip*. In 1971, Clark Rogers succeeded as Artistic Director, the very year a disastrous fire destroyed most of the company's archives. Harold G. Baldrbridge assumed the direction of the company in 1972, and for the next seven years presented a blend of national, international, contemporary, and classic works.

In 1977 Rick McNair joined Theatre Calgary as the director of Caravan, a touring theatre troupe that brought drama to the schools throughout Alberta. Caravan was renamed Stage Coach Players in 1979 and still exists in Calgary today as Quest Theatre, originally under the direction of Duval Lang. Mr. McNair was appointed Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary in 1979 and presented premiers by John Murrell, W.O. Mitchell, and Sharon Pollock. In 1984, Sharon Pollock became the fifth Artistic Director of the company and again a commitment to producing new Canadian work was re-established.

Martin Kinch succeeded as Artistic Director in 1985. During this time Theatre Calgary became the resident company of the state-of-the-art theatre in the Calgary Centre of Performing Arts (now known as the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts). Designed in conjunction with Theatre Calgary, the Max Bell Theatre came to completion as a striking performance space. Every seat is within sixty feet from the stage so audiences can enjoy the kind of intimate rapport with the actors that serves to enhance the magical experience of live theatre.

In 1991, Brian Rintoul came to Theatre Calgary as Executive Producer. Mr. Rintoul had produced plays previously for Theatre Calgary in the QR Centre. In 1996, James Brewer was appointed Acting Artistic Director and Richard C. Dennison became the general manager. In 1997 Ian Prinsloo assumed the role of

Artistic Director. Prior to joining Theatre Calgary, Mr. Prinsloo was the co-founder of Orange Dog Theatre in Toronto.

In 1997, Tom E. McCabe, after a successful tenure on the Board of Directors, became General Manager (and later President). Prior to this, Mr. McCabe served as Executive Director of Tourism Alberta and held numerous positions over a 25-year career with the Bank of Montreal.

In September 2005, Dennis Garnhum was appointed the new Artistic Director. Over the past 6 years, Theatre Calgary has renewed its commitment to developing and producing new plays through FUSE: The Enbridge Play Development Program and has also nurtured and mentored a new generation of Alberta theatre artists through the FUEL Artist Development Program.



(L to R) Andrew McNee, Christian Goutsis, Jordan Schartner, Hrothgar Mathews and Erin Wells in Timothy Findley's *THE WARS*, by Dennis Garnhum, 2007.  
Photo by Trudie Lee



David Fox and Aaron Stern in W.O. Mitchell's *JAKE & THE KID*, by Conni Massing, 2009.  
Photo by Trudie Lee



The company of *BEYOND EDEN*, by Bruce Ruddell, 2010.  
Photo by David Cooper

## **THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM**

### **THEATRE CALGARY**

#### **Presents**

**The American Conservatory Theater Production**

### ***TOSCA CAFE***

Created and Staged by Carey Perloff and Val Caniparoli

#### **CAST**

Starring Rex Harrington

Featuring Peter Anderson and Dean Paul Gibson

and

Sabina Allemann

Sara Hogrefe

Annie Purcell

Kyle Schaefer

Nol Simonse

CindyMarie Small

Gregory Wallace

#### **CREATIVE TEAM**

Directed by Carey Perloff

Choreography by Val Caniparoli

Dance Repetiteur Nancy Dickson

Set Design by Douglas W. Schmidt

Costume Design by Robert de la Rose

Lighting Design by Robert Wierzel

Projection & Sound Design by Darron L. West

Original Dramaturgy by Beatrice Basso, Elizabeth Brodersen, Michael Paller

Assistant Director Zach Moull

Assistant Lighting Designer Nick Solyom

Stage Managed by Rick Rinder

Assistant Stage Managed by Ailsa Birnie

*Tosca Cafe* was first workshopped by American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco at Zeum Theater in 2006 and at the Forum at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 2007. It opened under the title *The Tosca Project* at American Conservatory Theater June 9, 2010. Theatre Calgary is proud to support its continued creative development prior to production at Theatre Calgary and the Vancouver Playhouse.

## SCENARIO

*Elements of the story may be adapted or changed through rehearsals in advance of the Theatre Calgary premiere.*

Shortly after the end of World War I, a Bartender arrives in San Francisco from Italy. He is haunted by a mysterious woman in a red dress, the love of his life who died before he undertook the journey.



The Musician (Gregory Wallace) keeps the drinks coming while the women wait for their men to return from World War II (from left: Lorena Feijoo, Sara Hogrefe, Rachel Ticotin, Sabina Allemann). Photo by Kevin Berne. 2010 Production.

The Bartender opens Tosca Cafe with help from his employees, an insolent pair of fellow Italians. Business is very slow, though, and soon he's left all alone. When a desperate Orphan sneaks into the bar looking for food, the Bartender gives shelter to the young child.

History flows through the bar, which has become a popular local watering hole. Amidst the scarcity of the Depression, the Orphan is arrested when a mischievous scam goes awry. Then, a Musician on the run from law asks for safe haven. The Bartender learns the tragic secrets of the Musician's past and allows him to stay—as long as he earns his keep by cleaning the bar.

As the Depression gives way to World War II, a battle-bound sailor enjoys one last dance with his hometown girl. The Orphan returns after long years in a workhouse, eager for a job, a place to call home, and a chance at a new life. The Bartender and the Musician welcome her warmly and fit her back into the life of the bar. The bar is filled with the joy of reunion when the sailors come back from the war—but not all have escaped unscathed.

In the '50s, Tosca Cafe becomes a happening haven for members of the counter-culture Beat Generation. The bar's patrons are whipped into a frenzy by a passionate poetry recitation. No one lets loose more than the Orphan, who is coming of age as a young woman. But the fatherly Bartender is frightened by the Orphan's newfound independence. They clash at the close of the alcohol-fueled evening, and the Orphan leaves the bar.

Tosca Cafe is soon overrun by the hippies and flower-children of the 1960s, but the "Summer of Love" turns ugly when a Vietnam veteran receives a rude welcome. Tormented by his memories, the distraught Bartender drinks to excess. He tears apart the inside of the bar in a drunken rage, and then collapses.

With the help of the Musician, the Orphan returns and saves the Bartender. She takes over Tosca Cafe and, during the '70s, welcomes the city's artists and dancers to the bar. Disco music pours from the jukebox as ballet star Rudolf Nureyev parties through the night with a group of young men. When it becomes clear that Nureyev is very ill, the Orphan tries to soothe him as he dances for her.

The Orphan keeps the bar running as the Bartender and the Musician grow old. As time passes into the '80s, the customers of Tosca Cafe become more and more disconnected from the bar and from each other. At the close of the decade, an earthquake reduces the once-elegant bar to rubble. Ghosts of the bar's past gather together in the ruins—a whirl of memory. At last, the Bartender makes peace with his long-lost love.

## WHO'S WHO IN *TOSCA CAFE*

*Tosca Cafe* spans some seventy years and features dozens of roles. But this broad view of history is seen through the lens of the three characters who run the bar. They are:

**The Bartender** who opens Tosca Café after he arrives in San Francisco from Italy.

**The Orphan** who is sheltered by the Bartender and becomes part of the life of the bar.

**The Musician** who seeks refuge in the bar after a run-in with the law.

Three actors play those three characters throughout the piece. The seven other performers in the ensemble each play several parts over the course of the show. These include:

- A mysterious woman in a red dress who haunts the Bartender
- The Bartender's first two employees
- The local beat cop who arrests the Orphan
- The dangerous blonde woman from the Musician's past
- The Beat Poet, a character inspired by William S. Burroughs and Lawrence Ferlinghetti
- A veteran of the Vietnam War
- Russian ballet dancers Natalia Makarova and Rudolf Nureyev
- A businessman who falls in love with Makarova
- Various fantastical apparitions

To bring *Tosca Cafe* to life, ensemble members also portray the wide range of customers who patronize the bar over the years:

- 1930s: Downtrodden folks
- 1940s: World War II sailors and the women they leave behind
- 1950s: Hipsters of the Beat Generation
- 1960s: Free spirits and flower children
- 1970s; Young gay men of the Disco era
- 1980s: Harried businesspeople



A ballet diva (Sabina Allemann) enchants a businessman (Peter Anderson) in *Tosca Cafe*.  
Photo by Kevin Berne. 2010 Production.

## TOSCA INSPIRATIONS

Edited from an original article by Elizabeth Brodersen, Publications Editor, American Conservatory Theater.

*"I am at home nowhere, in no house, and in no country, except one place."*

- Wim Wenders, German filmmaker talking about the Tosca Cafe

*"It was so serene and beautiful and gracious, so evocative of southern Italy, 1919... I remember feeling knocked out of time and just being able to sit and let my imagination run free. It was an oasis, it was a refuge. Tosca can transport anyone who's paying attention to a different place in time."*

- Janet Clyde, co-owner of Vesuvio Cafe, about her first visit to Tosca Cafe in 1979



Tosca Cafe co-founder  
Gesualdo "Baldo"  
Francesconi. Photo  
courtesy Martha  
Francesconi Holroyd.

Historic Tosca Cafe, the inspiration for A.C.T.'s time-traveling *Tosca Cafe*, was founded on Columbus Avenue in San Francisco's North Beach neighbourhood in November, 1919, by three intrepid Italians—just weeks before nationwide laws banning the sale of alcohol went into effect. Martha and her sister, Tosca Francesconi Sartorio—after whom the cafe is reputedly named—fondly remember their opera-loving mother at the kitchen stove cooking up home-made spirits, which their father, co-founder Gesualdo "Baldo" Francesconi, carried to work twice each day in bottles hidden in his coat pockets to outwit the ever-watchful FBI.

That brew helped to perk up the house "cappuccino," served nightly to Tosca's eagerly scofflaw patrons. Transforming the sawdust-floored bar into a coffeehouse, Francesconi sent to Italy for San Francisco's first espresso machines, adorned the walls with murals depicting scenes of Puccini's eponymous opera and the canals of Venice, and installed a jukebox filled with

the popular arias of the day. Overcoming their initial skepticism, the paesani of North Beach's thriving working-class neighbourhood found at Tosca a home away from their homeland—playing cards in the back room, eating Mamma Francesconi's sandwiches, and sipping potent "cappuccini" while evading the not-so-vigilant local police.

During World War II, Martha and Tosca remember soldiers on their way to and from the Pacific lined up at the beautiful mahogany bar two and three deep, mingling with local girls and gents; they were soon followed by the literati of the beat generation—and their fans—who made North Beach their creative headquarters. As the San Francisco Renaissance reached its peak, Tosca Cafe found itself at the heart of American counterculture.

As the years passed, Tosca remained true to its family origins. Al Landi, son of owner Fred Landi and Baldo's nephew, carried on the tradition, managing the bar with the help of local boy Mario



The Tosca Cafe. Photo by Kevin Berne.

Doninelli—Tosca’s stalwart bartender from 1947 until his retirement in 1990. Mario and Al always had a friendly word, protective stance, and taxi home for their loyal customers.

Among the wayward travelers who found safe haven at the Tosca was Armen Balianz (née Psakian). Born in 1921 in Manchuria, Armen spent much of her life one step ahead of the forces of history. She married businessman Aram Balianz in 1939 in Tsingtao, where their two children, Jeannette and Arthur, were later born. When World War II caught up with them, the Balianz family was detained for four years in a Japanese prison camp. Not long after their release, they were deported by the Red Chinese and then spent two years in a refugee camp in the Philippines. Armen got her family safely to San Francisco in 1952, where she established her own restaurant, Bali’s, which soon became a sanctuary for a diverse array of writers, dancers, filmmakers, and politicians. A lifelong lover of the ballet, the Russian-speaking Armen befriended ballet legend Rudolf Nureyev soon after his 1961 defection from the Soviet Union and became a mothering influence on the greats that followed, including Mikhail Baryshnikov, Natalia Makarova and Alexander Filipov. All found a nourishing meal and warm heart at Bali’s—and a place to party the night away at Tosca.



Rudolf Nureyev with Armen Balianz. Photo courtesy Jeannette Etheredge.

Armen’s daughter Jeannette (Etheredge) remembers sitting with her brother on a bench outside the bar while their parents enjoyed their Sunday night cappuccini. She herself started hanging out at Tosca with fellow art students in the 1960s; once inside, she essentially never left.

When Al Landi retired in 1979 it looked like Tosca would have to close. Armen told Jeanette—who by now was helping her mother run Bali’s— that she needed a business of her own. In 1981, Jeannette stepped up and bought the bar, promising to retain its old-world charm. She has been true to her word: Tosca Cafe features the same faded

linoleum, vintage jukebox (which still plays the hits of Caruso and Callas, Ellington, Sinatra, and Patsy Cline, all labelled in Al’s handwriting), nicotine-stained murals, hand-carved mahogany bar (one of the longest in the city), gleaming (original) espresso machines, and enduringly beloved house cappuccino that made it one of San Francisco’s best-loved nightspots.

After Armen closed Bali’s in 1985, the scene shifted entirely to Tosca, where Jeannette and Armen continued to hold court for two decades. Jeannette, active in the leadership of the San Francisco International Film Festival, attracted with her own hospitality and warmth the luminaries of the film, literary, and political milieus (not to mention the local cops): Sean Penn, Francis Ford Coppola, Philip Kaufman, Lauren Hutton, Ed Harris, Willie Brown, Hunter S. Thompson, Sam Shepard, Johnny Depp, Philip Glass, Louis Malle, Norman Mailer, Bono, Joseph Brodsky, and Nicolas Cage are but a handful of the great, glamorous, and notorious who have spent many a late night in Tosca’s embrace. All desire—and a few are granted—access to Tosca’s by-now legendary back room, where Jeannette’s brother played pool with his friends until his death in 1983, and which Jeannette keeps private in his memory. In the booths and back room of Tosca, countless masterworks have been written, film deals wheeled, political careers brokered, and love affairs sparked and quenched.

It remains to be seen where the swirling eddies of history will leave Tosca Cafe. Regardless, the ghosts of the past remain to mingle with today’s cappuccino-sipping regulars. “Tosca feels like something that’s been part of me forever,” says Jeannette. “The world outside changes, but this place doesn’t.”

## THINKING ON THEIR FEET

Excerpts from an interview conducted by Elizabeth Brodersen with *Tosca Cafe* Co-creator Carey Perloff



Co-creators Carey Perloff (L) and Val Caniparoli (seated) with actor Gregory Wallace (facing mirror) in a workshop rehearsal of *Tosca Cafe*, October 2007.

Photo by Kevin Berne.

*A unique blend of ballet, modern dance, San Francisco history, 20th-century music, Italian opera, beat poetry, and theatrical storytelling, Tosca Cafe emerged from the minds of a host of collaborators from both sides of the dance/theatre divide and evolved through a series of workshops populated by dancers and actors trained in a variety of styles. As rehearsals were about to begin for the 2010 production at A.C.T., Artistic Director and co-creator Carey Perloff described the challenges of transcending the boundaries between artistic disciplines and finding a common language with which to tell the universal truths inherent in the most specific of human experiences.*

### WHAT WAS THE FIRST WORKSHOP LIKE?

I remember the dancers all sat on one side of the room, and the actors all sat on the other side of the room, and nobody spoke to each other. [San Francisco Ballet choreographer and co-creator] Val [Caniparoli] and I sat in the middle and thought, "Well, what are we going to do now?"

I had pulled all this music, and one of the things that I pulled was this crazy jazz setting of a Kenneth Rexroth poem called "Married Blues." So Val taught everybody a Madison, which is this very straight-ahead kind of line dance. And then we did the flip side; I gave everybody tons of poetry. Peter Anderson knew a lot about the beats already. We picked a [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti poem, "I Am Waiting." Peter went away and memorized it and did a mad improvisation about a poet creating this poem.

We built these modules, trying to figure out: Did we want to create individual characters who remained the same throughout the piece, or did we want an ensemble that always changed? Was there a gestural pattern that continued through the piece, while the characters changed? We were very puzzled about

all of that, but the one thing we knew at the end of that first week was that the dancers and the actors loved working together, and there actually was a common vocabulary.

### **HOW DO YOU THINK THEY FOUND THAT VOCABULARY?**

The dancers were incredibly hungry to create character; they hadn't been asked to do that in that way before. We were interested in specific character development and behavior, relationships, and secrets. We did a lot of exercises exploring the kinds of encounters that can happen in a bar. The dancers are used to thinking on their feet, and they were very inventive, and for the actors it was liberating to just try and do it without language and see what would happen. That was another interesting blind alley we went down: How much speech should there be in the piece?

[A.C.T. Associate Artist] Jack Willis came to see that workshop, and he said: "You can't make a piece about a bar and not have a bartender. That's the center, he's the Everyman. You've got to have a bartender, and I'm him." We did another round of work in May [2009], where we experimented with that idea, and we wondered, "Who is this bartender, and what is his story?" [Former San Francisco Ballet Principal Dancer] Sabina [Allemann] was interested in her own relationship with the bartender. Val made this beautiful duet with Jack sweeping up the bar, and Sabina suddenly appearing and riding on his broom. It was to the aria "Vissi d'arte," which Tosca sings [in Puccini's opera *Tosca*] when she has to let go of everything, and she is deciding whether to give herself to Scarpia in order to save Mario. It's exquisite and moving, and became a touchstone for us. We wondered: "Why is this man listening to this aria? Why is he so sad about it and who is that woman?" So we started thinking about a man who has lost a woman in his past that keeps coming back to haunt him.

It then became a piece about triangles, except instead of being two men and a woman, as in the opera, it was [the Bartender] and these two women. One is the woman who has been left behind, the ghost of a dancer he abandoned in Italy. He starts to forget what she looks like, and he obsesses about her. The other woman is the real woman who ends up buying the bar and in some way finally connects him to the future.

### **WHAT IS THIS WORK ALL ABOUT?**

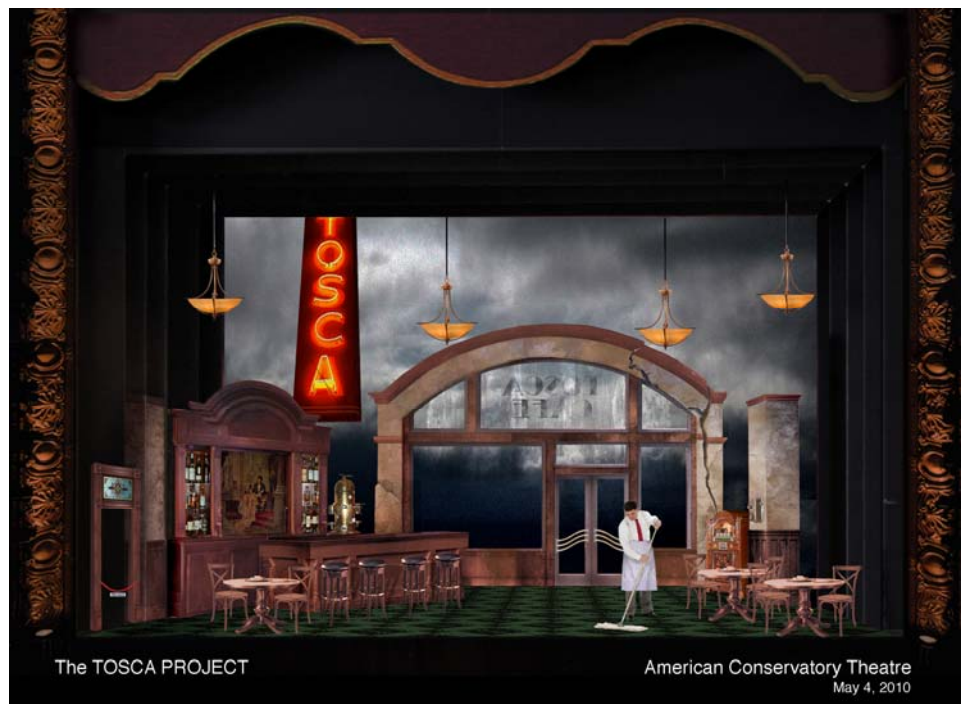
It's about how a community, how a city, holds its history. But it is also about the pieces of our past that we carry with us, always. What happens to those pieces when they get lost, whether by natural disaster, war, or other tragedy, and are then found or carried through by other people? What are the ways that we know other people? How do we find out who they are?

### **WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THEATRE, WHICH IS USUALLY LANGUAGE AND TEXT-BASED, TO TELL STORIES WITHOUT WORDS?**

It tells you what language does when you are forced to work without it. That is a great lesson to learn. I think in our culture, our language is so debased ... that we don't treasure the ability to coin a phrase that is true to what we're really feeling in a way that's specific. So when you don't have that tool, you realize how precious it is, and what language can do for you. So the absence of language is valuable.

It's also been interesting to try and understand emotional language, exploring things like: How do we tell a story in our own body language? What is eye contact in terms of body language? How do we live in

our bodies? It's very poignant to see performers have to use their whole bodies. Actors aren't often called upon to do that, because they have text. They can sit on a couch and just talk. So when they can't talk, other things become incredibly important. It really stretches their imaginations. For us, we keep trying to figure out ways to stretch our audience's imaginations, so they're not just sitting back and watching a movie. This piece will ask them to do that. But we hope they will get pleasure in putting the stories together themselves, and feel moved by this man, and what he's lost, and how alone he is. And by understanding that you can be with a group of people in a bar, but still feel totally alone. And how transient human experiences really are—that we think we've gathered in a place with other people we know, but in fact we really don't know anything about them, and when we leave at the end of the night we don't really hold on to the experience. And yet, if you have your own corner of a bar, and you go to that place every night, it can be a home, it can be a source of comfort. That's kind of lovely. Everybody looks for those places.



Original 2010 Set Design rendering for *Tosca Cafe* by Douglas W. Schmidt.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER ANDERSON

by Shelley Carter, Artistic Intern, American Conservatory Theater.

*Peter Anderson is a Canadian performer and playwright known for his work in movement based theatre. He was last seen at Theatre Calgary in the 2009 production of 7 Stories, and previously in 2007 in The Overcoat, a wordless, movement-theatre piece based on two short stories by Nikolai Gogol, one of the earliest inspirations for Tosca Cafe. After growing up in Detroit, Anderson hitchhiked up to British Columbia, where he joined the Caravan Stage Company, which traveled around Canada in horse-drawn wagons. He then settled in Vancouver where, he says, “there is a lot of really great physical, visual theatre.” Traveling frequently to A.C.T. from his home in Canada, he has been a part of Tosca Cafe since its inception.*



Peter Anderson with Sara Hogrefe in the 2010 production at A.C.T. Photo by Kevin Berne

### HOW HAS THE PROCESS OF WORKING ON *TOSCA CAFE* DIFFERED FROM THE PROCESS OF WORKING ON *THE OVERCOAT*?

Well, in *The Overcoat* none of us were dancers. It was all done with actors and we had a pretty simple, clear story from the get-go. And Morris [Panych] and Wendy Gorling, who were the co-creators of that piece, mapped out a very strong scenario prior to rehearsal that pretty much didn't change. We had a four-week rehearsal, and then we opened the show. The first time we did it, it was quite intense! It was back in the days of the Walkman, and we looked like a madhouse of people, walking around with our Walkmans listening to the music and working out our little

movements. *Tosca Cafe* has been a lot more . . . striking out into the unknown. In a good way. Finding the story as we go along, starting from the departure point of just telling the story of a place—a café—where people gather. Exploring how the interactions differ decade to decade.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK INITIALLY DREW YOU TO CLOWNING AND THE PHYSICAL SIDE OF THEATRE?

I took a theatre class my last year in university that was Grotowski based—extremely physical. And something about that really appealed to me. I'd grown up fairly inhibited, and learning to move was a great challenge for me. I was very shy in high school; I suffered at school dances because I didn't know how to dance. I was an only child; I had no sister or brother to teach me. So, learning to express myself physically onstage, and to make others laugh when I did, was a life-changing thing for me. I have an enduring love for clowning; the comic perspective appeals to me. When we laugh, differences dissolve and barriers we've constructed crumble, and the world looks like a little easier place in which to be.

### SO, YOU DON'T HAVE A DANCE BACKGROUND?

[Laughs] Not very much at all! Because of *The Overcoat*, I have something of a reputation as a physical actor. I'm known for being relatively adept at movement, but I'll tell you, throughout this process,

working with these amazing dancers, I've felt very humbled. But that's also a joy and a great thing: to go to places outside of your comfort zone. That's the exciting thing about this project.

### **WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE *TOSCA* MOMENTS?**

The first time we went to the Tosca Cafe in the middle of the afternoon and met [Tosca owner] Jeannette [Etheredge] was special. We danced the Madison slide right there in the café, with beer delivery men coming and going. Getting to perform Ferlinghetti's poem "I Am Waiting" has also meant a lot to me, because the beat movement—people expressing themselves fearlessly in a time of great conformity—was a source of great hope to a kid like me growing up in a stultifying suburb in the 1950s. But there've been so many favorite moments, it's hard to pick. The whole experience has been a remarkable journey of exploration. Filled with lots of laughter, and I think that's key. Everyone in the rehearsal room . . . is passionate about telling a story. About sharing our humanity. It's an act of love, really . . . What more could one possibly ask for?

### **HOW MUSIC AND DANCE FUNCTION AS STORYTELLER**

**Quoted from Sound Designer Darron L. West**

There's an interesting thing about performance: if you're watching something in the theatre and you put your hands over your eyes and just listen, then it's kind of like a radio show, but if you put your hands over your ears and just watch, it might as well be a slideshow. So for me the juxtaposition between the two is what's interesting; it's what makes theatre alive, really. You're creating a juxtaposition in the relationship between the music and the movement that makes things pop. It makes the music more important and it makes the dance and the interior life of these characters more important. The choices that you make have to be inspired by the rhythms of the scene and the emotions of the actors.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EVENTS

*Tosca Cafe* is a work that recreates and celebrates the significant cultural and social changes that occurred in North America during the twentieth century.

In the following pages, the **text in blue provides an historical context and information about the songs and events occurring in America and in San Francisco during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**. The text in black presents events in the performance of *Tosca Cafe* accompanied with explanatory notes on the major songs and dance numbers featured in the performance.

**1906 San Francisco is devastated by a major earthquake on April 18<sup>th</sup>. To make matters worse, fires ravage much of the city. A flood of Italian immigrants make their way to San Francisco and contribute significantly to the rebuilding of the city.**

**1919 The Treaty of Versailles officially ends WWI in June .**

**The Tosca Cafe opens its doors in November (just a few months before Prohibition). It is owned and operated by three Italians and it boasts having the first cappuccino machine in San Francisco. The name of the cafe/bar, by the way, had very little to do with the famous Puccini opera, *Tosca*. It was named after Tosca Francesconi Sartorio who was a daughter of one of the cofounders, Gesualdo “Baldo” Francesconi.**

The war is over. A young Italian Bartender arrives in San Francisco and together with two other Bartenders, they open the Tosca Cafe. He is visited by the spirit of his one true love whom he had abandoned in Italy and who subsequently died before he was able to return to her. The memory of his lost love will continue to torment him throughout his life. A haunting aria from Puccini’s opera *Tosca* emphasizes his continuing sense of loss and loneliness.

The Bartenders welcome their first customers to the newly opened bar.

Late one night, a scrappy street kid (The Orphan) breaks in, desperate to find something to eat.

To entertain the kid, the Bartender begins folding paper swans. Pavlova’s *Dying Swan* is heard as the dancing spirit of the swan glides into their fantasy.

**1920 The Prohibition Period begins in America. It becomes illegal to manufacture, sell, and transport alcohol anywhere in the U.S. The Prohibition Act will eventually be repealed in 1933.**

To survive prohibition, the Tosca appears to be a coffeehouse but it continues to serve alcohol surreptitiously in the house “cappuccino” which is made up of Ghirardelli chocolate, steamed milk, and a generous shot of brandy.

**1926 City leaders in San Francisco express their dislike of Prohibition by enacting a resolution whereby the local police could not be used to enforce the ban on alcohol. San Francisco gains the reputation of being the “wettest city in the West.”**

**1929 The Stock Market collapses and on October 29, the Great Depression begins in America and throughout the world.**

**1933** On December 5<sup>th</sup>, the laws prohibiting the consumption of alcohol are repealed.

### "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You"

Despite the hard times, people continue to frequent the Tosca. As the jukebox plays Bing Crosby's 1932 hit song "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You," the spirit of the Bartender's lost love appears again. The lyrics of the song express the Bartender's deepening sense of loss.

*from "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance with You"*  
I need your love so badly  
I love you, oh, so madly  
But I don't stand  
A ghost of a chance with you  
- Ned Washington and Bing Crosby

The Bartender reluctantly hires a Musician who is attempting to evade the police. They eventually become lifelong friends.

With the end of prohibition, the Tosca can once again openly sell liquor but America and the world are still in the grips of the Great Depression and are preparing for war.

### "Wham (Re-Bop-Boom-Bam)"

Swing is all the rage and the jukebox belts out the Glenn Miller Orchestra's "Wham (Re-Bop-Boom-Bam)" as a sailor and his girlfriend spend their last few hours together before he sets off to war.

**The song "Wham (Re-Bop-Boom-Bam)" was released in 1939 and brags about the staying power of Swing as a dance.**

*from "Wham (Re-Bop-Boom-Bam)"*  
Some folks say that Swing won't stay  
And it's dying out  
But I can prove it's in a groove  
And they don't know what they're  
talking about.  
Wham, Re-Bop-Boom-Bam  
- Eddie Durham and Taps Miller

**1941** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor and the U. S. enters World War II. San Francisco becomes the Pacific point of departure for American troops and cargo ships.

*from "What'll I Do?"*

What'll I do with just a photograph  
To tell my troubles to?

When I'm alone  
With only dreams of you  
That won't come true  
What'll I do?

- Irving Berlin

### "What'll I Do?"

As Irving Berlin's haunting 1923 song, "What'll I Do?" plays on the jukebox, the sailor, about to go off to war, dances with his sweetheart.

**The song is actually about someone whose romantic relationship has just ended, but it also effectively expresses how women must have felt as they bid their loved ones goodbye during the war. The version used in *Tosca Cafe* was recorded by [Rosemary Clooney](#), a singer and actress who became popular in the mid '50s.**

**1945** World War II ends and soldiers begin to return home.

from "It's Been a Long, Long Time"

You'll never know how many dreams  
I've dreamed about you.  
Or just how empty they all seemed without you.  
    So kiss me once, then kiss me twice  
    Then kiss me once again.  
    It's been a long, long time.  
- Julie Styne and Sammy Cahn

### "It's Been a Long, Long Time"

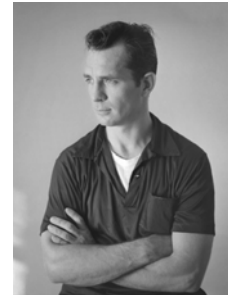
As the returning soldiers reunite with their loved ones in the Tosca, the jukebox plays this enormously popular 1945 song with lyrics written by Sammy Cahn and music by Jule Styne.

However, it soon becomes painfully clear that not everyone has returned and that many who have returned have been irreparably injured during the war.

### 1948 [Jack Kerouac](#) coins the term "beat generation."

The beats are writers, poets, philosophers and political activists who refused to conform to many of the traditional North American values especially those that stressed the pursuit of material wealth and power.

The Beats sought altered forms of consciousness through drugs, jazz, poetry and eastern religions.



Jack Kerouac, by Tom Palumbo, circa 1956.

### 1953 Lawrence Ferlinghetti moves to San Francisco and opens City Lights Booksellers & Publishers across the street from the Tosca Cafe. The San Francisco Renaissance era in American culture begins.

### 1955 [Kenneth Rexroth](#) serves as master of ceremonies at a poetry-reading event featuring Allen Ginsberg, Philip Lamantia, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, and Philip Whalen at the Six Gallery in San Francisco on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

from "Married Blues"

That's the way life is.  
Everybody's in the same fix.  
It will never be any different.  
- Kenneth Rexroth

### "Married Blues"

Kenneth Rexroth (1905 – 1982) was an American poet and translator of Japanese verse. He is recognized as one of the founders of the San Francisco Renaissance. Beat poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti considered Rexroth a mentor.

Rexroth often intoned his poems as a jazz band played in the background. A jazzed up version of his "Married Blues" has always been a part of *Tosca Cafe*. In the early development period of the project, a recording of it was instrumental in getting the actors and dancers working together.

From "I am Waiting"

... I am waiting  
for Alice in Wonderland  
to retransmit to me  
her total dream of innocence...

and I am awaiting  
perpetually and forever  
a renaissance of wonder

- Lawrence Ferlinghetti

"I am Waiting"

The poet begins to read his frenzied verse, the patrons of the Tosca respond enthusiastically. The poem is Lawrence Ferlinghetti's ground-breaking, iconic "I Am Waiting." It is a rallying cry for non-conformity and total freedom of expression.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919 -) is an American poet, liberal activist, and publisher. He is one of the few poets in the world who can claim to have written a best-selling book of verse. Ferlinghetti's 1958 collection of poems, *A Coney Island of the Mind* has sold more than a million copies.

In 1953, he opened City Lights Bookstore which soon becomes a "Literary Meeting Place" for the Beat Generation. Two years later, he entered the publishing industry with his City Lights Publishing – a venture which is still active today.



Lawrence Ferlinghetti at City Lights in 2007

The Bartender continues to be haunted and troubled by the memory of his lost love. He takes to drink and his health is obviously deteriorating.

**1965** Almost 4000 American ground troops arrive in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War is well underway.

The Beatniks of the 50s have become the hippies and "flower children" of the 60s and active protestors of the Vietnam War.

**1967** "The Summer of Love" attracts many thousands of "flower children" to San Francisco. The song "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair)" becomes the anthem for this new generation who would rather make love than war.

from "Red Rubber Ball"

The story's in the past with nothin' to recall  
I've got my life to live and I don't need you at all...

And I think it's gonna be alright  
Yeah, the worst is over now  
The mornin' sun is shinin' like a red rubber ball

- Paul Simon/Bruce Woodley

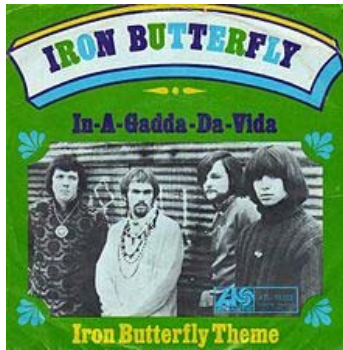
"Red Rubber Ball"

The jukebox in the Tosca goes pop and flower children celebrate life and hope as they joyously dance to the optimistic words and beat of The Cyrkle's 1966 hit song, "Red Rubber Ball."

The song was written for The Cyrkle by Paul Simon and Bruce Woodley. The Cyrkle's other claim to fame is that they were the opening act not only for Simon and Garfunkel but also for the Beatles in 1966.

**1969 Anti-War demonstrations intensify throughout the U.S. with over two million people protesting America's military involvement in Vietnam.**

The playful optimistic mood changes dramatically as news of the escalating Vietnam War is accompanied by the psychedelic tones of Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida."



Album released June 14, 1968

### **"In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"**

The 1968 song "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" was remarkable for a number of reasons, not the least of which its length – 17 minutes.

An edited seven minute version got extensive airplay and topped the song and album charts for 140 weeks.

The title of the song was supposedly "In the Garden of Eden" but the lead singer Doug Ingle was so drunk during the recording that he slurred the words and the new title stuck.

This song was also instrumental (pardon the pun) in making heavy metal music more mainstream.

The Bartender's drinking is now out of control. As he sits at the bar pouring drinks for himself and a troubled Vietnam soldier, a flower child dances to a Jimi Hendrix's guitar instrumental and tries to entice the soldier away from the bar. As the dance continues, it becomes more aggressive until the soldier eventually pushes the flower child away and leaves.

### **"Little Wing"**

According to Hendrix, his bluesy 1967 song "Little Wing" was one of his favourite recordings. There are lyrics to the song but they are not spoken in this production.

from "Little Wing" (lyrics unheard)

When I'm sad, she comes to me,  
With a thousand smiles she gives to me  
free.

It's alright, she says it's alright

- by Jimi Hendrix

**1981 Jeannette Etheredge, daughter of Tosca Cafe regular Armen Balianz, becomes the owner of Tosca Cafe.**

**Between 1981 to 2011, the Tosca Cafe serves as a meeting place for many dignitaries.**

**Sean Penn, Francis Ford Coppola, Philip Kaufman, Lauren Hutton, Ed Harris, Willie Brown, Hunter S. Thompson, Sam Shepard, Johnny Depp, Philip Glass, Louis Malle, Norman Mailer, Bono, Joseph Brodsky, Ashleigh Judd, Samuel L. Jackson and Nicolas Cage are just a few of the notables that have frequented the Tosca.**

After closing the Tosca for the night, the Bartender continues to drink heavily as an aria from the opera *Tosca* plays on the jukebox. He is once again tormented by the memory of his lost love and eventually storms around the bar, knocking over furniture and eventually passes out. The Orphan enters and discovers the source of the Bartender's unhappiness. She attempts to restore both the Bartender and the bar. He gives her control over the establishment.

The cafe becomes a haven for business people and the trendy set as the music transitions to disco.

A gay couple dance to a classic disco hit. Eventually, they are joined by ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev, who is friends with the Orphan and enjoys the opportunity to cruise the guys in the bar.



Sylvester (1947 – 1988)

### **“You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)”**

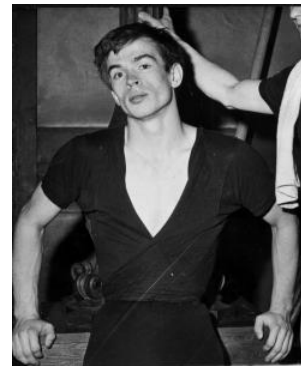
**One of the all time great disco hits, “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” was written by Sylvester James and James Wirrick. As a performer, Sylvester went by his first name only and he often dressed in drag, giving him the dubious title of the “Queen of Disco.”**

At the end of the song, Nureyev grows increasingly weak and it is clear he is desperately ill. He dances with the Orphan until he can no longer continue.

**Rudolf Nureyev (1938 – 1993) was one of the most famous and talented ballet dancers of the last century. His 1961 defection from Russia was quite controversial. Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev went so far as to approve an order to have Nureyev assassinated.**

**Nureyev is credited with changing the perception and role of male dancers in ballet. As a result, male dancers were given more prominence in productions. He is also credited with pioneering the marriage between classical ballet and modern dance. Although this was quite controversial at first, today it is expected that dancers receive training in both disciplines.**

**He died of AIDS in 1993. He was 54 years old.**



1961 - Rudolf Nureyev defects from USSR.

1980s hipsters and businessmen pour into the bar, clearly disconnected from the world around them and one another. Their dance grows to a frenzy until there is a rumble and the ground begins to shake.

An earthquake strikes, reducing the once elegant bar to rubble. Figures from the bar’s past gather in the empty space, memories whirling together.

**1989 On October 17, at 5:04 PM, the San Francisco Bay Area was hit by a massive earthquake registering 6.9 on the Richter Scale. The quake is known as the Loma Prieta or the World Series Earthquake. What is notable about this quake is that because it occurred during the third game of the 1989 World Series between the Oakland Athletics and the San Francisco Giants, it was the first such disaster that was broadcast live on national and international television. The quake resulted in the death of 63 people and injuries to almost 4000.**

Alone, at closing time, the Bartender plays an aria from *Tosca* on the jukebox and is once again visited by the haunting memory of his long lost love. He eventually releases her and turns out the lights.

- 2006 The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco begins developing *The Tosca Project* with workshops at the Zeum Theater and in the next year at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.
- 2009 November 19 is declared “Tosca Cafe Day” by the mayor of San Francisco.
- 2010 *The Tosca Project* opens at the American Conservatory Theater on June 9th.
- 2011 Theatre Calgary opens its 2011 – 2012 season with a reworked *Tosca Cafe*, starring Rex Harrington, Peter Anderson, and Dean Paul Gibson.

## PUCCINI’S TOSCA



The death of Scarpia (Act 2)

Giacomo Puccini’s three act, Italian opera, *Tosca* premiered in Rome in the year 1900.

It is based on a very successful French play of the same name which was written in 1887 by Victorien Sardou.

The opera is set in Rome at a time when the city was about to be invaded by Napoleon’s army.

This opera is notable for its beautiful haunting songs and arias but also for its pure melodramatic scenes of political intrigue, love, jealousy, torture, murder, executions, self-sacrifice, deceit, revenge and multiple suicides.

Read [here](#) for a complete synopsis of the opera.

## RELATED READING LIST

- Howard Fast            [\*The Immigrants\*](#) (1977)
- F. Scott Fitzgerald    [\*Flappers and Philosophers\*](#) (Short Stories, 1920)  
[\*Tales of the Jazz Age\*](#) (Short Stories, 1922)
- John Dos Passos        [\*The Big Money\*](#) (1936)
- Nathanael West        [\*The Day of the Locust\*](#) (1939)
- Norman Mailer        [\*The Naked and the Dead\*](#) (1948)
- Allen Ginsberg         [\*Howl and Other Poems\*](#) (1956)
- Lawrence Ferlinghetti [\*A Coney Island of the Mind\*](#) (1958)
- Tim O'Brien          [\*The Things They Carried\*](#) (1990)
- Armistead Maupin     [\*Tales of the City\*](#) (1978)



The Tosca Cafe, San Francisco. Photo by Kevin Berne.

## FEATURE FILMS RELATING TO *TOSCA CAFE*

The Tosca Cafe has served as a setting for a number of feature films including:

[Basic Instinct](#) (1992) The Michael Douglas character retreats to the Tosca when he is in dire need of a stiff drink.

[Twisted](#) (2004) Ashleigh Judd and Samuel L. Jackson enjoyed filming a scene in the Tosca so much that they have become regulars there.

To learn more about some of the historical characters who appear on stage and the cultural time periods covered during the performance, you may wish to view the following:

[The Untouchables](#) (1987) Federal agents try to control gangsters such as Al Capone during the Prohibition Era.

[Howl](#) (2010) A biographical feature film focusing on Allen Ginsberg and his obscenity trial. This film also contains readings given by Ginsberg and scenes involving Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

[One Fast Move or I'm Gone: Kerouac's Big Sur](#) (2008)

More insight on the Beat Generation. This film focuses on Jack Kerouac and his relationship with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and other luminaries of the Beat movement.

[Ferlinghetti: A City Light](#) (2009 Documentary)

Focuses on the life and influence of this cultural icon.

[Nureyev](#) (2009 TV) This 47 minute Canadian production dramatizes the life and contributions of this famous and infamous Russian ballet dancer.

## QUOTABLE NOTABLES ON IDEAS EXPRESSED IN TOSCA CAFE

Many notable people have said very quotable things about some of the important ideas expressed or implicit in this work. Here are some of the more interesting quotations:

*"Everything you can imagine is real."*  
- Pablo Picasso

*"Nothing is as real as a dream.  
The world can change around you,  
but your dream will not.  
Responsibilities need not erase it.  
Duties need not obscure it.  
Because the dream is within you,  
no one can take it away."*  
- Tom Clancy

*"So, if I dream I have you, I have you,  
For all our joys are but fantastical. "*  
- John Donne

*"The prohibition law, written for weaklings and  
derelicts, has divided the nation, like Gaul,  
into three parts -- wets, dries, and hypocrites."*  
- Florence Sabin

*"Talking about music is like  
dancing about architecture."*  
- Laurie Anderson

*"The musicals had a good, happy feeling,  
saying that the world is a better place.  
They say it's not reality, but who cares?  
There's too much reality these days."*  
- Shirley Jones

*"Very often a change of self is needed  
more than a change of scene."*  
- Arthur Christopher Benson

*"If it hadn't been for Jazz,  
there wouldn't be no rock and roll."*  
- Louis Armstrong

*"Music is the best means we have  
of digesting time. "*  
- W. H. Auden

*"All you need is love."*  
- John Lennon

*"When we lose one we love,  
our bitterest tears are called forth  
by the memory of hours  
when we loved not enough."*  
- Maurice Maeterlinck

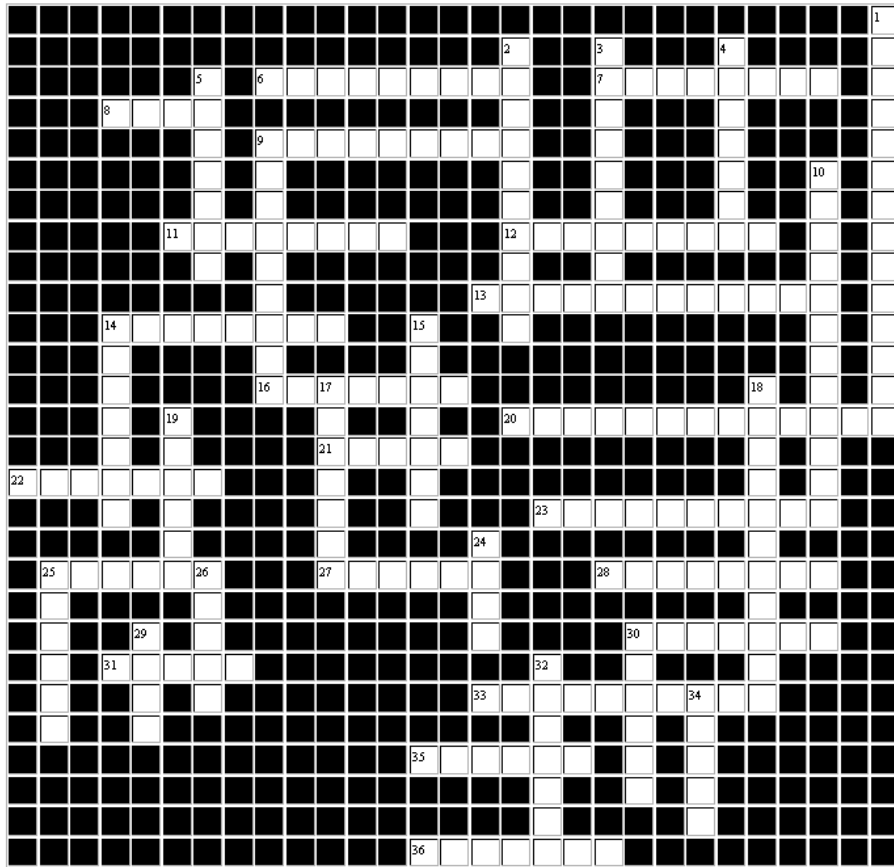
*"It is my feeling that Time ripens all things;  
with Time all things are revealed;  
Time is the father of truth."*  
- Francois Rabelais

*"Time is Too slow for those who wait,  
Too swift for those who fear,  
Too long for those who grieve,  
Too short for those who rejoice.  
But for those who love, time is not."*  
- Henry Van Dyke

*Tosca feels like something that's been part of  
me forever. The world outside changes, but  
this place doesn't."*  
- Jeannette Etheredge (owner of the Tosca  
Café)

# TOSCA CAFE CROSSWORD

## The Tosca Cafe



### Across

6. new owner of the Tosca Cafe
7. a Judd who loves the Tosca
8. generation popularized by Kerouac
9. Queen of Disco
11. what they were about to play when the earthquake struck
12. illegal drinking place
13. what Ferlinghetti writes poetry on
14. members of the beat generation
16. Russian ballet dancer
20. trait of the beat generation
21. energetic dance popular in the 30s
22. music dispenser in the Tosca
23. specialty coffee of the Tosca
25. dance most often performed in this production
27. first name of Premier who want Nureyev killed
28. occupation of the man who is running from the law
30. author of the Tosca opera
31. type of music played by Sylvester
33. dance loved by flappers
35. group that sung "Red Rubber Ball"
36. name of another famous cafe in San Francisco

### Down

1. In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida singers
2. event which began in October 1929
3. what shakes things up in 1989
4. group whose concerts was opened by The Cyrkle
5. nationality of the Bartender
9. length in minutes of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"
10. city where the Tosca is located
14. flower children
15. where the Americans were fighting during the 60s and 70s
17. nationality of the Immigrant Woman
18. law which prohibited booze
19. character who dances the Charleston in "It's a Wonderful Life"
24. upbeat music of the 40s and the 50s
25. what the bartenders added to their coffee during Prohibition
26. name of the opera that the Bartender loves to listen to
29. the time of day when the Tosca opens
30. literary form favoured by Beats
32. military men who come to the Tosca before and after the war
34. character who does the Charleston to save a Lion King

# SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE

