



MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Giacomo Puccini

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Logos for this production: **Rising Alternative + Teatro Real + Theatrum Mundi**

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after the play *Madama Butterfly* by David Belasco, after a short story by John Luther Long.

Opera in 3 acts

Sung in Italian.

Recorded June 2017

From Teatro Real, Madrid

Approximately 2h25

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Marco Armiliato
Director	Mario Gas
Sets	Ezio Frigeiro
Costumes	Franca Squarciapino
Lightning	Vinicio Cheli
Chorus Master	Andrés Máspero

ARTISTIC TEAM

Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San)	Ermonela Jaho
Suzuki	Enkelejda Shkosa
Mrs. Kate Pinkerton	Marifé Nogales
B.F. Pinkerton	Jorge de León
Sharpless	Àngel Òdena
Goro	Francisco Vas
Prince Yamadori	Tomeu Bibiloni
Uncle Bonze	Fernando Radó

Produced by Teatro Real

Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro Real

PRESENTATION

A temporary wife was a widespread practice in Japan at the end of the 19th century. The West - with the United States leading - had established diplomatic and commercial relations with the country in the mid-century and the fascination with the birthplace of geishas spread like wildfire. The influence of a distant (and imaginary) Orient would take form in works by a variety of European and North American artists that continued well into the 20th century. In this way, *Butterfly* is a crass embodiment of the

conflict between two irreconcilable civilizations, one which dominates the other. A man of a subtle theatrical spirit, Puccini portrayed brilliantly the fragility of a geisha in love who naively believed the dashing North American marine official also loved her. The musical score evokes agreeably harmonized traditional Japanese melodies. In spite of the fiasco of the debut of *Madama Butterfly* in Milan, the composer stood fast in his determination to make a success of what he considered his most sincere and expressive work. The passing of time has proved him right. Mario Gas places the story in a 1930s film studio. He narrates this moving drama from three simultaneous perspectives: the opera itself, the film being made of the opera, and its projection in black and white on a large screen.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

In 1904, a U.S. Naval officer, Pinkerton, rents a house on a hill in **Nagasaki**, Japan for him and his soon-to-be wife, "**Butterfly**". Her real name is **Cio-cio-san**. She is a 15-year-old Japanese girl whom he is marrying for convenience, since he intends to leave her once he finds a proper American wife, and since Japanese divorce laws are very lax. The wedding is to take place at the house, and Butterfly is so excited to marry an American that earlier, she secretly converted from Japanese religion to Christianity. After the wedding ceremony, her uninvited uncle, a bonze, who has found out about her conversion, comes to the house, curses her and orders all the guests to leave, which they do while renouncing her. Pinkerton and Butterfly sing a love duet and prepare to spend their first night together.

ACT II

Three years later, Butterfly is still waiting for Pinkerton to return, as he had left shortly after their wedding. Her maid Suzuki keeps trying to convince her he is not coming back, but she will not listen to her. Goro, the marriage broker who arranged her marriage, keeps trying to marry her off again, but she won't listen to him either. The American Consul, Sharpless, comes to the house with a letter which he has received from Pinkerton in which he is asked to break some news to Butterfly that he is coming back to Japan, but he cannot bring himself to finish it, because Butterfly becomes very excited to hear that Pinkerton is coming back. Sharpless asks Butterfly what she would do if Pinkerton were not to return. She then reveals that she gave birth to Pinkerton's son after he had left and asks Sharpless to tell him. From the hill house, Butterfly sees Pinkerton's ship arriving in the harbour. She and Suzuki prepare for his arrival, and then they wait. Suzuki and the child fall asleep, but Butterfly stays up all night waiting for him to arrive.

ACT III

Suzuki wakes up in the morning and Butterfly finally falls asleep. Sharpless and Pinkerton arrive at the house, along with Pinkerton's new American wife, Kate. They have come because Kate has agreed to raise the child. But, as Pinkerton sees how Butterfly has decorated the house for his return, he realizes he has made a huge mistake. He admits that he is a coward and cannot face her, leaving Suzuki, Sharpless and Kate to break the news to Butterfly. Agreeing to give up her child if Pinkerton comes himself to see her, she then prays to statues of her ancestral gods, says goodbye to her son, and blindfolds him. She places a small American flag into his hands and goes behind a screen, cutting her throat with her father's hara-kiri knife. Pinkerton rushes in. He is too late.