Madame Butterfly
Nashville Opera
A Note from our Sponsor

For over 125 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers - some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President
Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area
Dear Teachers~

We are so pleased to be able to partner with Nashville Opera to bring students to the invited dress rehearsal of Madame Butterfly.

This guidebook includes Nashville Opera’s extensive study guide for adults with synopsis, background, and musical information. We have also added some additional material for you to use with students.

Please look particularly at the opera rehearsal information which will help students understand the special factors present in an invited dress rehearsal.

Enjoy!

TPAC Education
Most final dress rehearsals are almost exactly like a performance. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. Like theatre, an opera dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

The Nashville Opera’s rehearsal schedule begins with two weeks at the opera rehearsal space in the new Noah Liff Opera Center. Stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director’s ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. The time period may seem short for such a large production. It only works because opera singers begin rehearsals knowing every bit of their music by heart and having rehearsed it themselves over a period of months, sometimes years. If they do not know the role on the first day, the director has the right to replace them immediately. The opera company will fly in a new singer to take over their part. Once opera singers learn a particular role, they keep it in their repertory and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

Four to five days before the first performance, the set is “loaded in” to the theater, and the lights are hung and focused. Students will notice a table in the middle of the orchestra level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers. This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew onstage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth. During the final dress rehearsal, students may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

Opera rehearsals use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the company moves into the theater, the performers will have a Sitzprobe rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The Sitzprobe is a “sing-thru” with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers put together the work that they have been doing in separate orchestra rehearsals and staging rehearsals.

A piano tech rehearsal is held without costumes to let the singers get used to the set and give the set crew their first chance to practice scene changes. The next rehearsal is a piano dress rehearsal that adds costumes. Finally, the orchestra dress rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, the orchestra, and the supertitles (the English translations of the words to the opera, called the libretto.) The supertitles will also be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

The final dress rehearsal allows the last polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the final important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, a singer may choose to “mark” on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve their voices for all the performances. “Marking” does not have the same meaning in opera as it does in theatre. In theatre, it means just going through the blocking and the words of the lines. In opera, it specifically means that the singer may choose not to sing at full volume and not to push their voice to the utmost. The singing will still hold all the emotion and expression they have been working to convey from the music for the character. All of their acting will be at full power and with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. You will be their first audience; they are ready and excited to give you the story and the music.
Breathe like Singers

The power of opera singer’s breath control is formidable. They must be able sing very complicated musical passages, to sustain long notes, and to project their voices without microphones. They work all the time on their abdominal muscles, particularly the diaphragm which runs along the bottom of the ribcage.

Pay attention to your breathing. What part of your body is moving? Place your hands on your stomach just below your ribcage and try to push them out slightly as you breathe in.

Keep your hands in place, take a breath in, and say “ha!” You should feel your diaphragm jump under your hands.

Try to fill your lungs with the biggest breath you can and let it out as slowly as you can with a hissing sound.

Try it again and while you are hissing have a partner count how long you can make the hissing sound or (harder) how long you can make the sound “ahhh.” If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscle and be able to make sound for longer periods of time. That ability is a strong asset for an opera singer.

A few times during the performace, try to pay attention to which passages would require the most breath control.

Web Listen www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/history/sounds

Go to the web-site listed above and choose selection 132 of Renata Scotto singing Madame Butterfly. The excerpt is sung in Italian and the English translation is included below.

Ask students to listen first. Even though the words are in Italian, there is a lot of other information in the sounds of the music and voice that communicate meaning. Ask them to describe the emotions the singer is expressing for that character. It is perfectly all right for students to have different interpretations.

Next, ask students to read the English translation below and then listen again. What do they know about what Cio-Cio-San(Madame Butterfly) is feeling from the opera singer’s voice? From the libretto (lyrics)? Why did Puccini include the melody of the Star Spangled Banner?

(Butterfly and Suzuki are looking out into the harbor. Suzuki has just sung: Una nava da Guerra (a warship)

Reggimi la mano ch’io ne discerna
il nome, il nome.....il nome.....
Eccolo: Abramo Lincoln!
Tutti han mentito!Tutti!
Sol io lo sapevo....sol io che l’amo.

Vedi lo scimunito tuo dubbio? È giunto!
Proprio nel punto che ognun diceva:
Piangi e dispera.
Trionfa il mio amor! Il mia amor, la mia fè, trionfa intera.
Ei torna e m’ama!

Steady my hand so that I can pick out
The name, the name....the name...
There it is: Abraham Lincoln!
They were all lying! All of them!
I alone knew...only I who love him.

Can you see how foolish were your doubts? He has come!
Just at the moment when everyone was saying:
Weep and despair.
My love triumphs!My love, my faith, triumphs completely.
He has returned and he loves me!
Early History

Japanese tradition holds that the first emperor was the son of a sun goddess, and that the imperial line has descended unbroken for over 1500 years. In truth, the power of the emperors was often limited or purely symbolic, and the actual rulers of Japan were the military generals, the Shoguns.

The feudal system of Japan operated in a similar way to that of Northern Europe. Loose parallels can be drawn between the Japanese landowners or daiymos and European nobles, between Japanese samarai and European knights. In the late 1500’s, the era of civil wars came to an end, and the warring independent states were brought under the control of a single Shogun. By 1603, the Shogun Tokugawa, still “appointed” by the emperor, established his military government in Edo (modern day Tokyo.)

His rule began a nearly 250 year isolation of Japan from the rest of the world. During this Tokugawa/Edo period, the Shoguns brought the whole country under tight control. Land was cleverly redistributed among the loyal daiymo to keep power. The suppression and persecution of Christianity was enforced, driving out missionaries. All traveling abroad was forbidden by 1633, and foreign books were banned. Contact was reduced with the outside world to very limited trade relations with China and the Netherlands in the port of Nagasaki, and no foreigners were allowed in Japan. Relative peace prevailed in the country throughout these years, and popular culture flourished. The samurai educated themselves not only in the martial arts but also in literature, philosophy and the arts, and many became teachers and artists as well as warriors.

Late 19th Century

In 1853, four black ships commanded by United States Navy Commodore Matthew Perry, anchored at Edo (Tokyo) Bay. Never before had the Japanese seen ships steaming with smoke. They thought the ships were "giant dragons puffing smoke." They did not know that steamboats existed and were shocked by the number and size of the guns on board the ships.

Many countries had begun applying pressure to convince Japan to open trade routes with them, but the United States was the first to succeed with treaties allowing American vessels to begin trade with the mysterious island kingdom.

The arrival of Perry and the treaties were the first in a monumental change in Japan. Not twenty years later, the Shogun was toppled, the Emperor restored, and the feudal and social caste systems began to change. The isolated country broke open and began to absorb and implement Western knowledge, engineering, and technologies at a rapid rate. On the other hand Western countries, fascinated with Japan's art and culture, became greedy for all things Japanese.

Japan’s new intercourse with the world contributed both to the enthusiasm for Japanese culture that led to Puccini's creation of the opera, and the conditions that existed in Japan that gave him a story so true to life in its depiction of cultural environment and East/ West interaction.

“Japonisme” is the term coined by art critic Philippe Burty in 1876 to refer to the late 19th century passion, both artistic and commercial, for all things Japanese. The term also refers to the incorporation of the qualities and vision of a new mode of expression into Western culture introduced by the access to the world of Japan.

After Japanese ports re-opened to trade with the West in 1854, a tidal wave of foreign imports flooded European shores. Woodcut prints by Japanese masters greatly influenced Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. Artists were drawn to the asymmetrical compositions, elongated picture formats, spaces emptied of all but abstract elements of color and line, and a focus on solely decorative motifs. Van Gogh, Monet, Cassatt, Whistler and others all produced artwork influenced by the Japanese aesthetic.

Parishians did not see their first formal exhibition of Japanese arts and crafts until Japan took a pavilion at the World’s Fair of 1867, but before the exhibit, shiploads of oriental bric-a-brac—including fans, kimonos, lacquers, bronzes, and silks—had begun pouring into England and France. Japanese objects became wildly popular, exerting great influence on design and fashion.

The influence extended into the performing arts and literature. Asian characteristics can be seen in musicians such as Camille Saint-Saëns, Claude Debussy, and in plays of the period, but the two best known examples are Puccini’s Madama Butterfly and Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Mikado. French writers also began to explore a Japanese aesthetic in their work. Travelogues with stories of travels to Japan were immensely popular as were stories set in Japan. John Luther Long’s Madama Butterfly was the source material for the David Belasco play that affected Puccini so deeply (see NOG- page 5 in this guidebook.) Puccini’s librettist later used the same source material for the maestro’s opera.

Short Exploration

Ask students to write a brief article for a magazine called Trends. They’ve been hired to cover the new craze in all things Japanese in the 19th century. This is primarily a creative writing exercise rather than a research-oriented one. They may want to do some web searching to look at 19th century fashions for the purposes of contrast. The object is to imagine the reaction and fascination with all things Japanese once America could import products from Japan.
MADAME BUTTERFLY
Nashville Opera
Invited Dress Rehearsal
October 9, 2012
Andrew Jackson Hall
Nashville Opera presents

**Madame Butterfly**

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Based on the short story *Madame Butterfly* by John Luther Long
First performance: La Scala, Milan, on February 17, 1904

**Cast**

John Hoomes, Stage Director
William Boggs, Conductor

Cio-Cio-San (Madame Butterfly) Jee Hyun Lim, soprano
Lt. B.F. Pinkerton Cody Austin, tenor
Sharpless Levi Hernandez, baritone
Suzuki Margaret Thompson, mezzo-soprano
Goro Julius Ahn, tenor
The Bonze/Prince Yamadori Paul An, bass
The Imperial Commissioner Ben Corlandi, baritone
Kate Pinkerton Amy Viox-Herbst, mezzo-soprano

**Performances**

Thursday, October 11, 2012, 7:00 PM
Saturday, October 13, 2012, 8:00 PM
Andrew Jackson Hall
Tennessee Performing Arts Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Opera Insights Preview
One hour prior to curtain

**Tickets**

Available at TPAC Box Office
(615-782-4040)
Or
The Nashville Opera Offices
615-832-5242
www.nashvilleopera.org

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Sheraton Nashville Downtown Hotel, Seiler Pianos (Season Sponsors)

**Study Guide Contributors:**

Laura Bouffard, Arts Administration Intern
Stuart Holt, Director of Education and Outreach
Act I – A Japanese house set on a hill overlooking Nagasaki

On a terrace above Nagasaki harbor, U.S. Navy Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton inspects the house he has leased from Goro, a marriage broker. Goro introduces Pinkerton to the two servants and the maid, Suzuki, and awaits the arrival of Pinkerton’s bride to be, Cio-Cio-San, known as Madame Butterfly. Pinkerton describes to Sharpless, the American consul, his philosophy of the carefree life of a sailor exploring the world in search of pleasure. Though Pinkerton is enchanted with Cio-Cio-San, he says he will one day marry a "real" American wife. He brushes aside Sharpless' warnings that Cio-Cio-San may not take her marriage vows as lightly as Pinkerton does.

Cio-Cio-San enters surrounded by friends and relatives. In a quiet moment with her groom, she shows him her few personal treasures and tells him she is willing to convert to his Christian faith and renounce her people in order to be a good wife. After the wedding, Cio-Cio-San’s friends and relatives toast the couple; but the celebration is interrupted by Cio-Cio-San's uncle, a Buddhist priest or Bonze, who bursts in cursing the girl for renouncing her ancestors’ religion. Pinkerton angrily sends the guests away and comforts Cio-Cio-San, who assures him that he is her life now, and joins him in singing of their love.

Act II Scene 1—Inside Cio-Cio-San’s house, 3 Years Later

Years later, Cio-Cio-San awaits her husband's return, fixing her eyes on the harbor. Sharpless brings a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it to Cio-Cio-San, the marriage broker Goro comes with a suitor, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. She insists her American husband has not deserted her and dismisses both men.

When they are alone, Sharpless again starts to read the letter and suggests that Pinkerton may not return. Cio-Cio-San proudly brings out her son with blue eyes, Dolore (Sorrow), saying that as soon as Pinkerton knows he has a son he surely will come back; if he does not, she would rather die than return to her former life. Moved by her devotion, Sharpless leaves, without revealing the full contents of the letter.

Goro has been eavesdropping and is caught by Cio-Cio-San’s maid Suzuki. He tells Cio-Cio-San that her baby will be forever shunned. Cio-Cio-San, at the point of despair, finally hears a cannon and sees Pinkerton's ship entering the harbor. Delirious with joy, she orders Suzuki to help her fill the house with flowers and announces she will wear her wedding gown to meet him. As night falls, Cio-Cio-San, Suzuki, and the child prepare for Pinkerton's arrival.

Act II Scene 2

As dawn breaks, Cio-Cio-San has remained awake and still all night, while Suzuki and the child have fallen asleep. After Suzuki awakes, Cio-Cio-San sings a lullaby to her child as she carries him into another room. Pinkerton and Sharpless arrive at the house with Kate, Pinkerton’s new wife. When Suzuki realizes who the American woman is, she agrees to inform her mistress of the cruel truth. When Pinkerton realizes Cio-Cio-San has been devoted to him for three years, he is stricken with guilt and runs away rather than face her. When Cio-Cio-San comes out seeking Pinkerton, she finds Kate instead and is shattered as she realizes the truth. At Kate’s request, Cio-Cio-San agrees to give up her child and let him be raised in the United States, but on the condition that his father return to fetch him.

Sending Suzuki away, Cio-Cio-San takes out the dagger with which her father committed suicide and bows before a statue of Buddha, choosing to die with honor rather than live in disgrace. As she raises the blade, Suzuki pushes the child into the room, forcing Cio-Cio-San to immediately drop the dagger. Cio-Cio-San sobs good-bye to her son, telling him to go play. Pinkerton returns and finds Cio-Cio-San has committed suicide with her father’s dagger.
What to Listen For

Prelude

The short prelude begins as a fugal theme not at all characteristic of Japanese music or Madame Butterfly’s exotic elements. This shows Puccini’s verismo, or realism, which comes from Verdi’s influence. As it leads into the opening scene it becomes more exotic.

Act I

“E soffitto e pareti” (“And ceiling and walls”) - Goro lists the attendance at the wedding with the accompaniment of a joking bassoon tune. When Sharpless comes in it turns into an orchestral dance sequence.

“Dovunque al mondo” (“All Over the World”) - A two-part aria comprising Pinkerton’s chauvinistic speech to Sharpless about the American male, and a discussion about Butterfly’s vulnerability. The orchestra plays “Stars and Stripes,” a leitmotif, or specific melody associated with a person or place, which shows Wagner’s influence on Puccini.

“Che burletta” - Members of the family make comments about Butterfly and Pinkerton; it starts out exotic and turns into traditional Italian opera.

Ending of Act I - A long love duet between Pinkerton and Butterfly. It ends with a climax as they leave to enter the house.

Act II part 1

“E Izaghi e Izanami” (“And Izanagi and Izanami”) - Suzuki’s prayer, containing the melody of a Japanese folk song. This shows Puccini’s dedication to exoticism in Madame Butterfly.

“Un bel di vedremo” (“One fine day we will see”) - Butterfly’s aria of expectant love and loneliness. This melody is one of the most famous and poignant in all of opera.

“Che tua madre” (“That your mother”) – Butterfly’s second aria, which starts out sampling from a Japanese traditional rice-planting song, then turns into traditional Italian style structure.

“Coro a bocca chiusa” (“Humming Chorus”) - the melancholy tune an offstage chorus hums as Butterfly keeps her vigil throughout the night.

Act II part 2

“Dormi amor mio” (“Sleep my love) - Butterfly’s lullaby to her baby as she brings him into the bedroom and falls asleep.

“Addio fiorito asil” (“Farewell, flowery refuge”) - Pinkerton’s realization that he has destroyed an innocent girl; this aria is melancholy and filled with regret and shame.

“Con onor muore” (“To die with honor”) - Butterfly’s final words as she takes out her father’s sword and kills herself, then stumbles toward her child.
### Recommended Recordings

**AUDIO**

**Rome Opera Theater Orchestra (1954)**
Testament UK

- Cio-Cio San— Victoria de Los Angeles
- B.F. Pinkerton— Giuseppe di Stefano
- Suzuki— Anna Maria Canali

Conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni

**Orchestra del Teatro dell’Opera di Roma (2009)**
EMI Classics

- Cio-Cio San— Renata Scotto
- B.F. Pinkerton— Carlo Bergonzi
- Suzuki— Anna DiStasio

Conducted by Sir John Barbirolli

**VIDEO**

**Radiotelevisione Italiana Milano Opera (1954)**
RAI

- Cio-Cio-San— Anna Moffo
- B.F. Pinkerton— Renato Cioni
- Suzuki— Miti Truccato Pace

Conducted by Oliviero de Fabritis
Sung in Italian with English subtitles

**Metropolitan Opera Orchestra (2009)**
Sony Classic

- Cio-Cio-San— Patricia Racette
- B.F. Pinkerton— Marcello Giordani
- Suzuki— Maria Zifchak

Conducted by Patrick Summers
Sung in Italian with English subtitles
A Little Background

The story of Madame Butterfly originated from Pierre Loti’s popular French novel, *Madame Chrysanthème*, published in 1887. The book was a somewhat autobiographical story of an American officer who took a geisha for a wife, then parted amicably with her as he departed Japan. The novel, written in first person from the view of an unfeeling, callous United States Navy officer, involves a marriage to a geisha but not her belief that it is an actual marriage.

From this novel came an 18-page story by John Long entitled “Madame Butterfly,” which was published in the January 1898 issue of *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. “Madame Butterfly” tells generally the same story as *Madame Chrysanthème*: Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of the United States Navy marries a geisha, the young Cho-Cho-San, or “Madame Butterfly,” and forces her to renounce her friends and family. Unlike the character in *Madame Chrysanthème*, Butterfly genuinely believes that her marriage is real and falls in love with Pinkerton. When Pinkerton leaves her and returns years later with an American wife, Butterfly attempts suicide but survives and is bandaged in the final scene of the story.

Due to the public’s fascination with Eastern culture and the exotic, John Long’s story was wildly popular, and the rights to make it into a play were given to David Belasco, a renowned playwright. Belasco’s version borrowed heavily from Long’s version, even using some of the dialogue, with the notable difference of Butterfly’s suicide being successful instead of her surviving. The entire action of the play takes place two years after Pinkerton’s departure, so the play focuses almost entirely on Butterfly and Suzuki. Pinkerton enters at the conclusion of the play, witnessing Butterfly’s suicide.

In the summer of 1900 in London, England, Giacomo Puccini saw Belasco’s dramatized version of *Madame Butterfly* and was touched by the play, particularly Butterfly’s 14-minute vigil while she waits for Pinkerton’s ship, expertly depicted with creative lighting effects showing the night’s shadows. Puccini instantly saw an opera in the story, and the exoticism of the Japanese setting was even more appealing. He enlisted the help of his two favorite librettists, Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, to write the opera with him.

Illica and Giacosa created a libretto for Puccini which in a literary sense was a great improvement on both John Long’s story and Belasco’s play. The words combined with Puccini’s arias produced a powerful and overwhelmingly beautiful opera filled with heartbreak and the misguided love of a young girl.

The opening of the opera was at La Scala in Milan, Italy, on February 17, 1904. A fiasco began as soon as Butterfly entered with a theme a hostile audience found too reminiscent of Puccini’s earlier work *La bohème*. They began shouting, hissing, and laughing, as well as mocking the sounds of nature the orchestra was playing. Puccini was so upset by the incident that when he left he took the score with him so it could not be performed again. He never quite recovered from the disaster at La Scala, but he persevered and began revising the opera. Among other changes, he cut several parts, gave Pinkerton a final aria, and split the second act into two parts. The second version premiered at the Teatro Grande in Brescia on May 28th of the same year, this time to stunning success. Puccini continued to make revisions, the third version premiering at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1906, and the fourth in Paris in 1907. The fifth and final version was also premiered in Paris and became the “standard” version of the opera, though the 1904 version is also sometimes performed. Today, *Madame Butterfly* is the most performed opera in the United States, as well as one of the top five most performed throughout the world.
About the Composer

Quick Stats

**Full Name:** Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini  
**Dates:** December 22, 1858 – November 29, 1924  
**Nationality:** Born in Lucca, Italy. Died in Brussels, Belgium.

Life and Career

Giacomo Puccini was born into a long line of talented musicians. Giacomo’s great-great grandfather had held the position of choirmaster and organist at the Cathedral of San Martino. This position would be held by four consecutive generations of Puccini men, including Puccini's father. As a master of counterpoint, which is a musical form that incorporates two simultaneous melody lines, Giacomo’s father helped him to establish a firm knowledge of music and composition.

At the age of fourteen, Giacomo was already an accomplished organist, performing in his hometown of Lucca. It would not be until the age of twenty-two that Giacomo would finally begin to receive a formal education in music. In 1880, Giacomo entered the Milan Conservatory, but only with the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Puccini was fortunate in that he was exposed to a variety of theatrical styles, including opera and spoken drama in his hometown of Lucca, Italy. It is these experiences at the theatre that planted the ideas for stories that Puccini would later shape into some of his most famous operas.

It was not long after his entrance into the Milan Conservatory that Puccini’s interest in opera began to materialize. At the age of twenty-six, Puccini’s first opera, *Le Villi*, premiered. This opera caught the attention of publisher Giulio Ricordi, who funded Puccini’s second opera, *Edgar*, in 1889. This relationship between Puccini and Ricordi would last until Ricordi’s death in 1912. Despite moderate attention paid to his first two operas, Puccini’s reputation as a composer did not begin to develop until his third opera, *Manon Lescaut*, in 1893.

While some composers are only remembered for one great masterpiece, Puccini’s status as a composer arose out of three separate operas. Known as Puccini’s “Big Three,” these operas are *La bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), and *Madama Butterfly* (1904). Through the utilization of verismo, or storylines that focus on the rough and gritty aspects of common life, Puccini was able to infuse raw emotion into his characters, as well as the music they sing. This has appealed to countless generations of audiences as Puccini’s characters are completely relatable in that they are passionate, flawed, and ultimately human.

Puccini was one of the last composers influenced by the verismo of Italian composers, particularly composer Giuseppe Verdi. As the main figure in the Italian opera of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Puccini symbolized the decline of verismo as he combined the traditional musical lightness and realism of Verdi with Wagnerian musical colors and leitmotivs. *Madame Butterfly* is an example of his blending of traditionalism and exoticism. Puccini also experimented with the new harmonies of the early 20th century, as an admirer of contemporary composers such as Stravinsky, Debussy, and Strauss.

In 1924, Giacomo Puccini was diagnosed with cancer of the throat. He died later that year in Brussels, Belgium. There are disputes as to the cause of Puccini’s death, but most sources believe that he died of a heart attack during an emergency surgical treatment for the cancer. His final opera, *Turandot*, was left unfinished at the time of his death. The last two scenes of the opera were finished by composer Franco Alfano.
Other Notable Works

**Tosca** (1900) - libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, based on the play by Victorien Sardo

**La bohème** (1896) – libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, based on the stories of Henri Murger

**Turandot** (1926) – libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, based on the play by Carlo Gozzi

Of Further Interest

Puccini’s operas are marked with beautiful, sensuous melodies, colorful harmonies and brilliant orchestration. As Verdi favored monumental, sweeping arias, Puccini preferred shorter arias with memorable melodies in order to succinctly propel the drama.

Puccini had a special proclivity for his female characters, which he portrayed with glorious melody lines and dramatic sensibility. Heartbreaking tragedy befalls many of his heroines, including Tosca, Butterfly, and Liù of *Turandot*.

A wealthy opera fan from New York, in exchange for a handwritten, autographed copy of “Musetta’s Waltz” (*La bohème*), agreed to buy Puccini an extremely expensive motorboat and have it sent all the way to Italy.

Puccini was known for being a reckless driver and was involved in several car crashes.

Two years after his death, Puccini’s remains were interred at his house at Torre del Lago. After his wife’s death in 1930, Puccini’s house was turned into a museum.

Puccini formed a club called Club *La bohème* with his friends. Some excerpts from its constitution: “Grumblers, pedants, weak stomachs, fools, and puritans shall not be admitted… Wisdom is not permitted except in special cases… The President must hinder the Treasurer in the collection of monthly dues …The lighting of the clubroom shall be by means of an oil lamp. Should there be a shortage of oil, it will be replaced by the brilliant wit of the members.”
On Operatic Voices

All classical singers fall into one of the categories listed below. A singer cannot choose his/her voice-type...it is something he/she is born with. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for specific examples.

Women

**Soprano:** The highest female voice, with a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the Prima Donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. In Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, Cio-Cio-San is sung by a soprano.

**Mezzo-Soprano:** Also called a mezzo; the middle female voice similar to an oboe in range. A mezzo's sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano’s. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-Sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano’s normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. In *Madame Butterfly*, Suzuki is sung by a mezzo-soprano.

**Contralto:** The lowest female voice, similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare – some believe they don't exist at all! There are no contraltos in *Madame Butterfly*.

Men

**Counter-tenor:** The highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio (a genre of classical vocal music similar to opera but generally based on a religious topic and accompanied by a choir). The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano’s voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare. There is no counter-tenor in *Madame Butterfly*.

**Tenor:** Usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest in an opera. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the C above. The role of Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* is sung by a tenor.

**Baritone:** The middle male voice, close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. The range is from the G that is an octave and a half below middle C to G above. In *Madame Butterfly*, Sharpless is a baritone.

**Bass:** The lowest male voice, it is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In *Madame Butterfly*, The Bonze is a bass. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C down to the F an octave and a fourth below.
About our Cast

The Nashville Opera is honored to present the following artists in this production of *Madame Butterfly*:

**Stage Director**
*John Hoomes*, General & Artistic Director of Nashville Opera

*Nashville Opera Credits*: *Elmer Gantry, Samson & Deliah, Il Trovatore, Aïda, Roméo & Juliette, Salome*

*Other Appearances*: Florentine Opera, Augusta Opera, Mobile Opera, Opera New Jersey, Indianapolis Opera

**Conductor**
*William Boggs*

*Nashville Opera Credits*: *Iolanthe, Elmer Gantry, The Fall of the House of Usher, The Marriage of Figaro, Pagliacci*

*Other Appearances*: Opera Columbus, Florentine Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Mississippi Opera

**Cio-Cio San**
*Jee Hyun Lim, soprano*

*Nashville Opera Debut*

*Other Appearances*: Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, Tulsa Opera

**B.F. Pinkerton**
*Cody Austin, tenor*

*Nashville Opera Debut*

*Other Appearances*: Opera Company of Philadelphia, Lyric Opera of Virginia, Shreveport Opera

**Sharpless**
*Levi Hernandez, baritone*

*Nashville Opera Debut*

*Other Appearances*: Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera
Suzuki
Margaret Thompson, mezzo-soprano
Nashville Opera Debut
Other Appearances: Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera

Goro
Julius Ahn, tenor
Nashville Opera Debut
Other Appearances: Boston Lyric Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Opera Carolina, Seattle Opera
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* A fund of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee

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Special thanks to the Mary C. Ragland Foundation for support of Nashville Opera's Madame Butterfly