

**INVITED DRESS
REHEARSAL**
**Madame
Butterfly**
Nashville Opera

**PERFORMANCE
GUIDEBOOK**



**2019-20 SEASON
for Young People**

presented by



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Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.





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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

Nashville Opera Guidebook written by Anna Young and Nahal Afsharjavan
TPAC Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown

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. As in theatre, an opera's dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

In the Studio

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 repertoire and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

In the Theater

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.

Technical Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

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.



TPAC's Jackson Hall stage

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 lyrics, called the libretto.) The supertitles will be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

Final Dress

The final dress rehearsal allows the finishing polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the last important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, singers 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, not pushing their voice to the utmost. All of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, however, 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.

Web Listen ~ YouTube.com - search "Renata Scotto *Una nava da Guerra*, Live 1974"

- ☞ The excerpt is sung in Italian and the English translation is included below. The exact link is as follows:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6dgUZYPd4I>
- ☞ 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. Does the music match her emotions? It is perfectly all right for students to have different interpretations.
- ☞ Next, share with students that *Una Nava Guerra* means "a warship". Butterfly has been waiting 3 years for the naval officer she fell in love with to return. Ask them how this knowledge informs their earlier opinions.
- ☞ Finally, ask students to read the English translation below and then listen again. What more do they know about what Cio-Cio-San (Madame Butterfly) is feeling from the libretto (lyrics)? Why did Puccini include a fragment of the melody of "The Star Spangled Banner"?

(Butterfly and Suzuki are looking out into the harbor. Suzuki has just sung: *Una nava da Guerra* - Butterfly begins singing the lyrics below at 0.41 seconds into the video.)

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.

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.

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

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!

Breathe like Singers

The power of opera singers' breath control is formidable. They must be able to 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 muscle which runs along the bottom of the ribcage.

- ☞ Pay attention to your breathing. What part of your body is moving? Place your hands lightly on your stomach, just below your ribcage, and try to push them out slightly as you breathe in.
- ☞ Keep your hands more firmly in place, take a breath in, and say "ha!" You should feel your diaphragm jump.
- ☞ 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, as opera singers can.

Every once in a while during the performance, try to pay attention to which passages seem to require the most breath control.

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 *daimyos* 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 *daimyo* 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.



Modern painting of Commodore Perry upon landing meeting Japanese representatives.



This photograph was taken on the Washington Navy Yard when the first official delegation from Japan visited the United States in 1860.

Japonisme

“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.

Parisians 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 *Madame 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.

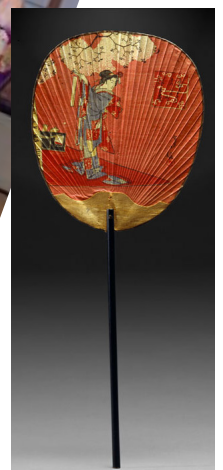


Japonaiserie: Oiran, 1887
by Vincent Van Gogh

Van Gogh made many copies of Japanese prints, translating them on canvas in his own unique style and color palette. This painting is a copy *The Actor*, by Kesai Yesien of Japan.

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

MADAME BUTTERFLY

Opera in two acts by Giacomo Puccini
Text by Giacosa and Illica
Premiere at La Scala, Milan, February 17, 1904

OCTOBER 10 + 12, 2019

Andrew Jackson Hall, TPAC
Sponsored by Northern Trust | Judy & Joe Barker | Ann Marie & Martin McNamara III

Directed by John Hoomes
Conducted by Dean Williamson
Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

CAST & CHARACTERS

Cio-Cio-San, <i>Butterfly</i>	Elizabeth Caballero
B.F. Pinkerton, <i>Lieutenant, U.S. Navy</i>	Adam Diegel*
Sharpless, <i>U.S. Consul at Nagasaki</i>	Lester Lynch
Suzuki, <i>Butterfly's servant</i>	Cassandra Zoé Velasco
Goro, <i>a marriage broker</i>	Joel Sorensen*
Prince Yamadori	Brent Hetherington †
The Bonze, <i>Butterfly's uncle</i>	Brent Hetherington †
The Imperial Commissioner	Luke Harnish
Kate Pinkerton, <i>Pinkerton's American wife</i>	Sara Crigger †
Sorrow, <i>Butterfly's child</i>	Tavi Gray*/Luca Viglianco*

* Nashville Opera debut
† 2019 Mary Ragland Emerging Artist

TICKETS & INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit nashvilleopera.org.

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SWENSON



THE STORY

NAGASAKI, JAPAN | EARLY 20TH CENTURY

ACT I

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.

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. 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. They sing together of their love.

ACT II

Three years have passed. 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 suit-or—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, 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.

As dawn breaks, Cio-Cio-San has waited 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.

Cio-Cio-San rushes out seeking Pinkerton only to find 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.



Through the long night, Suzuki, Sorrow, and Cio-Cio-San await Pinkerton's return.

Nashville Opera
Madame Butterfly, 2012

THE MUSIC

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. At the entrance of Sharpless, 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.

Ending of Act I

A long love duet between Pinkerton and Butterfly. It ends with a sweeping 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 to the Italian operatic style.

“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.



Soprano Elizabeth Caballero, our Butterfly, makes her Nashville Opera debut as Donna Elvira in DON GIOVANNI, 2008.

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Label: EMI 1966

Conductor: Sir John Barbirolli

Artists: Renata Scotto, Carlo Bergonzi, Rolando Panerai

Label: EMI 1960

Conductor: Gabriele Santini

Artists: Victoria de los Angeles, Jussi Björling, Mario Sereni

Label: Decca 1974

Conductor: Herbert von Karajan

Artists: Mirella Freni, Luciano Pavarotti, Robert Kerns

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

GIACOMO PUCCINI | 1858–1924

Giacomo Puccini was born Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini in the city of Lucca, Italy. Known for being the most important composer of Italian opera with the exception of Verdi, Puccini came from a long lineage of musicians, many employed by the church. In fact, the Cathedral of San Martins in Lucca employed members of the Puccini family for 124 years. Unfortunately, Giacomo became an orphan at the age of five, ending this tradition. The municipality of Lucca provided a pension for the Puccini family after the death of Giacomo's father and even held the position of organist open until he came of age.

Puccini later graduated from the Milan Conservatory in 1883. During the same year wrote his first opera, *Le Villi*, to little acclaim. Thankfully, a good friend, Arrigo Boito, along with other supporters, helped to get the work premiered at Milan's Verme Theater. This opera proved a great success and caught the attention of music publisher Giulio Ricordi, whose friendship lasted throughout the rest of Puccini's life.

Inspired by a multitude of composers, Puccini's writing encompasses a large spectrum of styles, yet all contain the careful touch and innovative quality that distinguish them as his own. Out of these influences, Puccini finds his voice, leaving a lasting impression on the world of opera. Famous for the beauty of the musical line and grand orchestration, you hear the influence of Wagner. Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and even Schoenberg add to a kind of contemporary freshness, keeping Puccini's compositions firmly set as the favorite operatic repertoire of audiences today.

Adding to Puccini's style, it is important to note the prominent musical movement known as exoticism. A fascination with cultures different from the European way of life, namely the Far East, inspired many composers during this time. They incorporated folk tunes and special scales or modes to achieve a specific country's flare. *Madame Butterfly*, set in Japan, and *Turandot*, set in China, pay homage to the European ideal of these perspective heritages.

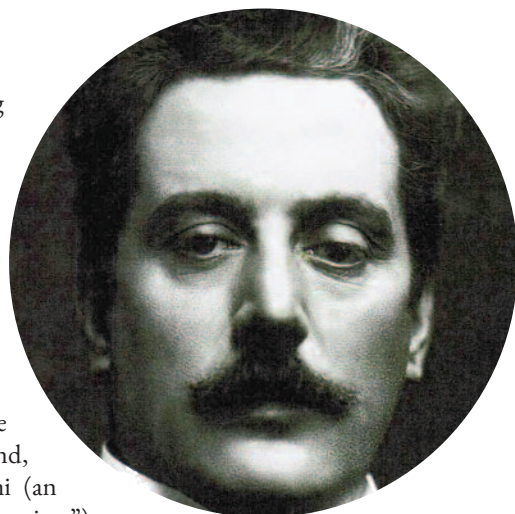
With such passionate compositions, it is easy to imagine much came from Puccini's own life experience. Many affairs and scan-

dals left a lasting impression on the composer.

Puccini's only wife was Elvira Gemignani, an already married woman at the time of their courtship. The two marry once Elvira's husband, Marciso Gemignani (an "unrepentant womanizer"), is murdered by his mistress's husband. The two have a tumultuous marriage and Elvira often accused Puccini of being unfaithful. Another great scandal occurred when Elvira publicly accused Giacomo of having an affair with their maid, Doria Manfredi. Because of this shame, Doria took her own life. Later, an autopsy was performed on the girl proving that she died a virgin. Elvira was sentenced to time in prison for slander, but after Puccini paid a great deal of money to the Manfredi family, never served time. It is believed that the role of Liù from *Turandot* was written to pay homage to Doria Manfredi and this tragic occurrence.

Giacomo Puccini chain smoked Toscano Cigars and in 1923 complained of a chronic sore throat. In 1924, he was diagnosed with throat cancer and died later that year in Brussels, Belgium. There are disputes as to the cause of Puccini's death, but most sources believe he died of a heart attack during an emergency surgical treatment of the cancer. The news of his death spread to Rome, Italy during a performance of his beloved opera, *La Bohème*. The

opera immediately ceased and Chopin's Funeral March was played in his honor. Puccini's final opera, *Turandot* was left unfinished at the time of his death.



ABOUT THE LIBRETTISTS

GIACOSA & ILLICA

Giuseppe Giacosa was born on October 21, 1847, in Colleretto Parella, Italy. The son of a magistrate, he obtained a law degree from the University of Turin but did not pursue a career in law. In 1871 his successful play *Una Partita a Scacchi* (*A Game of Chess*) won him enough recognition to become a full-time writer.

Giacosa wrote poetry, plays, and libretti, but is most highly regarded as a playwright. He wrote in a variety of styles including comedy and historical drama. His partnership with Giacomo Puccini and Luigi Illica was orchestrated in 1893 by Giulio Ricordi, an influential 19th-century Italian publisher. They worked together to create several successful operas including *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *La Bohème*. When developing these works, Illica first wrote the plot and dialogue. Giacosa refined it into poetic verse, and finally Puccini wrote music to fit the text. The three continued collaborating until Giacosa's death in 1906.

Luigi Illica lived a dramatic and interesting life. He was born May 9, 1857, in Castell'Arquato, Italy, and ran away to sea at a young age. After several years, he settled in Milan, Italy, where he began his writing career as a journalist. While

living in Milan, Illica lost part of his right ear in a duel over a woman and afterwards was always photographed with his head slightly tilted. Illica began writing works for theater in 1875 and libretti in 1889. In addition to his successful collaboration with Puccini, he wrote libretti for other well-known composers such as Pietro Mascagni and Umberto Giordano, including the libretto for *Andrea Chénier*. His most fruitful period of writing came to an end with the death of his writing partner Giuseppe Giacosa in 1906. He enlisted in the military in 1915 at the age of 58, just four years before his death in 1919.

Illica is held in high regard in Italy and is honored now through the Luigi Illica International Prize. Founded in 1961, this award is presented to famous opera singers, directors, conductors, and authors. It is awarded every other year, alternating with the Illica Opera Stage International Competition which offers prizes for young singers.



Puccini with Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

- Puccini got the idea for *Madame Butterfly* in 1900. He was in London, preparing for the British premiere of his opera *Tosca*, and saw a one-act play called *Madame Butterfly* written by the well-known American playwright David Belasco.
- Puccini revised the libretto for *Madame Butterfly* several times between 1904 and 1907. One of the biggest changes, made after the Milan premiere, was dividing the second act into two parts.
- Cio-Cio-San, the main character in *Madame Butterfly*, means butterfly in Japanese.
- “Bring Him Home” from *Les Miserables* is very similar to the “Humming Chorus” in Act 2 of *Madame Butterfly*. *Les Miserables* is well-known for being heavily influenced by Puccini’s music.
- *Miss Saigon*, a musical, is directly based on the story of *Madame Butterfly*. It is instead set in Vietnam.
- The blockbuster film *Fatal Attraction* starring Michael Douglas and Glenn Close makes several references to *Madame Butterfly* with the soundtrack featuring extracts from the opera.
- In 1984, Malcom McLaren, an English rock impresario who founded the notorious band the Sex Pistols, released his techno record, “Madame Butterfly.” It boldly blended a driving disco beat, snippets of the Puccini aria, “*Un bel dì*,” a narrative spoken by a Southern-accented Pinkerton, and vocals sung by Cio-Cio-San.
- The most recognizable tune in the opera is “The Star-Spangled Banner,” quoted in the opening act as Pinkerton and Sharpless drink a toast to America. Back then, the music was familiar as the U.S. Navy anthem; it did not become our National Anthem until 1931.
- Puccini took great pains to bring authenticity to his score, researching traditional Japanese melodies and importing recordings of music from that country as he worked in Italy. He gained valuable information from a Mrs. Oyama, the wife of the Japanese ambassador to Rome, who often sang to the composer songs of her homeland. The score includes at least 10 traditional melodies, including the Japanese national anthem, “Kimigayo,” heard during the wedding of Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton.



OPERA ETIQUETTE

ALWAYS BE EARLY!

Please arrive early to ensure you are able to find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. For dress rehearsals, the casual attire that students wear to school is perfectly acceptable. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

to everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone's experience at the opera. Remember that unlike many staged performances, opera singers do not use microphones. This makes it essential to wait until intermission to unwrap gum/candy, talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others. Be sure to turn off cell phone and pagers.

APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers. The first opportunity to applaud takes place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and when he/she returns to the podium following intermission(s). It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria in the middle of a performance. Applaud when the performance moves you. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting "Bravo!" for a male performer, "Brava!" for a female performer, or "Bravi!" for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, singers who performed principal roles in the opera will take their "curtain call." It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause. Sometimes, audience members are so impressed with the overall performance of the opera, they will stand and applaud the entire ensemble. This is called a "standing ovation."

NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED



A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all—and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

ARIAS

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in *Carmen*: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.

ON OPERATIC VOICES

Every voice is unique and no singer gets to choose the category in which they sing but must work with the vocal attributes with which they were born. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

WOMEN

SOPRANO

This is the highest female voice and has 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 *Madame Butterfly*, the role of Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly) is sung by a soprano.

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Also called a mezzo, this is the middle female voice with a range similar to an oboe. 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*, the roles of Suzuki and Kate Pinkerton are sung by mezzo-sopranos.

CONTRALTO

This is the lowest female voice and has a 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 is no featured contralto in *Butterfly*.

MEN

COUNTER-TENOR

This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. 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 are no counter-tenors in *Butterfly*.

TENOR

This is 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. His voice ranges from the



C below middle C to the above. In *Butterfly*, the roles of B. F. Pinkerton and Goro are for tenors.

BARITONE

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

BASS-BARITONE/BASS

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In *Butterfly*, the role of The Bonze is sung by a bass-baritone. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fourth below.

Above, soprano Jee Hyun Lim as Cio-Cio-San in Nashville Opera's last production of *Madame Butterfly*, 2012.

Special Thanks

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*A fund of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee



Additional Acknowledgements

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





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