

## YOUR TICKET TO OPERA...

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A large teal silhouette of a butterfly, with its wings spread. The wings are filled with a solid teal color, and the body and antennae are also teal. The butterfly is centered on the page, and the text is overlaid on it.

# MADAMA BUTTERFLY

TO LIVE WITH SHAME OR DIE WITH HONOR? THAT IS THE QUESTION. WHEN A FORMER GEISHA AND A SOLDIER ENTER AN UNLIKELY LOVE THESE ARE THE CHOICES SHE MUST FACE WHEN HE CHOOSES ANOTHER.

This is **YOUR** opera, **YOUR** stars, **YOUR** night.

# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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Attending an opera in the Belk Theater is an experience not to be forgotten. The performance you are attending is the final dress rehearsal in which the cast performs one last full run through of the opera before opening night. Just like a regular performance, there will be an intermission between acts.



Upon entering the theater, notice the production crew's station in the orchestra level seating (the lowest level of seating). The crew is set up with computers and headsets to allow them to communicate with people backstage to ensure that the performance runs smoothly. During this final rehearsal they will be making sure all cues and technical features of the performance are in place. Also notice the supertitles-English translations of the lyrics being sung-that are projected onto a screen above the stage.

Please remember that this is a working performance and the performers on stage are very aware of their audience, especially a distracting audience. The polite audience member should always refrain from talking and stay seated during a performance. Nothing shows more respect and appreciation for the performers on stage than giving them your full attention.

## PLEASE DO...

*...arrive early enough to visit the restrooms and find your seat before the orchestra begins the overture.*

*...applaud after arias and at the performance's end: shout "Bravo!" for male performers, "Brava!" for females, and "Bravi!" for a group of performers.*

*...remain quiet and attentive during the performance.*

## DON'T FORGET...

*...to turn off your cell phone and/or electronic devices.*

*...to refrain from taking photos and videos during the performance.*

*...to obey all ushers and theater personnel.*

*...to leave any food, beverages, and gum outside of the theater.*

## PARKING

Parking along uptown streets is non-metered after 6:00pm on weekdays. There are numerous lots available to park in for a flat-rate fee as well as a Lynx Lightrail Station in the uptown area. Click [here](#) to view more information about the Lynx Lightrail System. The PAC offers \$5 preferred parking passes as well. Click [here](#) to learn more.



# THE FACES OF YOUR OPERA

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## The Librettists: Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa

(Illica: 1857-1919; Giacosa: 1847-1906)

Before we introduce our librettist let's answer the big question: *what in the world is a libretto?* Answer: the text that is sung in an opera. So, just for the record, a librettist is a person who writes libretto, and it's two *libretti* (rather than librettos).

Now that we've taken care of the semantics, let's talk about our writing team for the opera, Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. Signore Illica was a **journalist, dramatist, accomplished poet, and librettist**, of course. His most notable libretti, and Puccini's most successful operas, are *La boheme*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Some of Illica's libretti were even inspiration for silent films!

Signore Giacosa, however, did not start his career as a librettist. This Italian writer studied law and even earned a law degree; he did not practice law but rather became a **playwright**. He gained notice with his play *Una Partita a Scacchi* in 1871.

## The Composer: Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini

(Most people just call him Puccini.)

(1856-1924)



Whew! What a name! He may have a long name but Giacomo Puccini is one of the first names that comes to mind when you talk about opera. Our composer was born in Lucca, in the Tuscan region of Italy, to a family five generations deep in music. Like many famous composers, Puccini began studying music at an early age; when he was five years old his father died and Puccini was made to continue his studies with his uncle Fortunato, who thought he was a poor student. It wasn't until he saw Verdi's opera *Aida* (1876) at age 20 that he decided to dedicate his life to composing opera.

Puccini set off to school in Milan at the Conservatory (*the* Milan Conservatory, a big deal) and there wrote his first opera, *Le Villi*, which earned him enough notice to get a second opera commissioned. This second work, *Edgar*, had a lousy story and mediocre libretto, which taught Puccini a valuable lesson about choosing librettists wisely. He went on to write new, successful operas, including his most successful works: *La Boheme*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Puccini was working on his twelfth opera, *Turandot*, at the time of his death from complications of throat cancer. Franco Alfano finished the opera shortly following Puccini's death, and a new ending was recently composed and completed in 2002 by Italian composer Luciano Berio.

**Madama Butterfly is said to be Puccini's favorite of his works.**



# BUTTERFLY: MORE THAN MEETS THE EAR

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The opera premiered on **February 17, 1904 at the Teatro alla Scala** in Milan, Italy and it wasn't exactly a smooth show. In fact, the opera underwent three revisions until it was a success. This final version is the *Madama Butterfly* we know today. Illica and Giacosa cannot be given full credit for writing an original story: Puccini's inspiration came from David Belasco's play. And even Belasco's play was not an original story as John Luther Long wrote a short story titled "Madame Butterfly" that set these events in motion.

The production of *Madama Butterfly* you will see will not only be pleasing to the ears, but also a treat for the eyes! Many people think of stuffy, old-timey costumes and sets when they think of opera but this production will be a **work of art brought to life!** Opera Carolina will use a set designed by Japanese-born artist Jun Kaneko. The set will feature elements that place you into an undoubtedly Japanese setting with its simple and vibrant backdrops, ramp, and images. This is *Madama Butterfly* like never seen before!



Photo courtesy of Omaha Opera.

**Jun Kaneko** is a Japanese-born ceramicist (an artist who specializes in the medium of ceramics) and painter who made his initial debut in the world of opera when Opera Omaha commissioned him to design the set and costumes for their 2007 production of *Madama Butterfly*. He has since created sets and costumes for Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

Aside from his operatic creations, Kaneko has ceramic works in over 70 different museums' collections, including Charlotte's own Mint Museum Uptown. In addition to four of his *Dango* sculptures, the local museum will also feature renderings of Kaneko's *Madama Butterfly* costume designs.

**To learn more about Jun Kaneko, his opera productions, and his works of art, visit:**

[www.JunKaneko.com](http://www.JunKaneko.com)



[www.operacarolina.org](http://www.operacarolina.org)

# SYNOPSIS

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**Cio-Cio-San (soprano)**

Our heroine and troubled geisha bride-to-be, a.k.a. Madama Butterfly

**Suzuki (mezzo soprano)**

Servant to our Butterfly

**Kate Pinkerton (mezzo soprano)**

Our heroine's husband's "real" bride

**Benjamin Franklin (B.F.) Pinkerton (tenor)**

Naval officer and Cio-Cio's husband-to-be

**Sharpless (baritone)**

The one who tries to talk Pinkerton out of marriage

**Goro (tenor)**

Marriage-broker and personal arranger for Pinkerton

**ACT I** The action takes place in 1900 -- Nagasaki Japan, in a house overlooking the harbor. As the curtain rises, preparations are being made for a Japanese wedding between a Lieutenant in the US Navy named Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, and the geisha Cio-Cio-San, who is also known as Madam Butterfly. Pinkerton inspects the house and the servants he has leased. Like his soon-to-be bride, he has a 999-year contract, that can be renewed, or annulled, month-to-month. When the American consul Sharpless arrives, Pinkerton describes the carefree philosophy of a sailor roaming the world in search of pleasure. When Sharpless warns him that **the girl may not take her vows so lightly**, Pinkerton brushes him aside, saying that he will one day marry a "real" American wife.

Cio-Cio San is heard in the distance joyously singing of her wedding. Entering surrounded by friends, she tells Pinkerton how when her family fell on hard times she had to earn her living as a geisha. In a quiet moment, Cio-Cio San shows her bridegroom her few earthly treasures and tells him of her intention to embrace his Christian faith. The Imperial Commissioner performs the wedding ceremony and the guests toast the couple. The celebration is interrupted by Cio-Cio San's uncle, a Buddhist priest who bursts in, cursing the girl for having renounced her ancestors' religion. Pinkerton angrily sends the guests away. Alone with Cio-Cio San in the moonlit garden, he dries her tears, and she joins him in singing of their love.



**ACT II** Three years later. Cio-Cio San waits for her husband's return. Her maid Suzuki prays to her gods for aid while her mistress stands by the doorway with her eyes fixed on the harbor. Sharpless brings a letter from Pinkerton, that advises him that he will not return to Cio-Cio San, but before the Consul can read the letter to her, Goro enters with the wealthy Prince Yamadori. He tells her that Yamadori will take her as his wife, but she dismisses them both, insisting she is still married. Left alone, Sharpless again starts to read the letter. He tries to soften the upcoming blow by first asking, "What if Pinkerton does not return?" Her response is to defiantly go to the house and return carrying her blonde hair, blue-eyed son. She tells Sharpless that as soon as Pinkerton knows he has a son he will come back, and if he does not, she would rather die than return to her former life. **Sharpless leaves without revealing the full contents of the letter.** A cannon shot is now heard from the harbor. Seizing a spyglass Cio-Cio San discovers Pinkerton's ship entering the harbor. Delirious with joy she orders Suzuki to help her fill the house with flowers. As night falls, Cio-Cio San, Suzuki and the child begin their vigil.

**ACT III** As dawn breaks, Pinkerton has not returned. Suzuki insists that Cio-Cio San rest. Humming a lullaby to her child, she carries him to another room. Before long, Sharpless enters with Pinkerton and his new wife, Kate. When Suzuki realizes who the American woman is, **she collapses in despair.** They convince Suzuki to help them persuade Cio-Cio San to give up the boy, so he can have a better life in America. Pinkerton bids an anguished farewell to the scene of his former happiness. Filled with remorse, he rushes back to his ship. Cio-Cio San enters expecting to find him, but finds Kate instead. Shattered by the truth, Cio-Cio San agrees to give up her child only if Pinkerton himself comes for him. Sending everyone away, **she chooses to die with honor rather than live in disgrace.**

### **Did you know?**

Opera is a centuries-old art form but new operas are still being written! Some newer operas include *Doctor Atomic* by John Adams, *Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass, and *Little Women* by Mark Adamo. Take a listen to some of these selections and hear how opera has moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

**Also be sure to think about how our version of Madama Butterfly has brought this classic up-to-date... what elements of the production gave it this face lift?**



# THE DAY WILL COME

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In Act II, Cio-Cio-San is determined that her love will return. As she envisions this day, “Un bel dì” (The Day Will Come), her fantasy is just that: a fantasy. And even when Suzuki tries to warn her, Cio-Cio-San refuses to listen.



## First...

Listen to the aria “Un bel dì” and follow along with the libretto, both given below. Mark points where the music changes and Cio-Cio-San’s fantasy refuses to acknowledge reality.

*What changes in the instrumentation? What changes in Cio-Cio-San’s voice? In your opinion, how does the music and the voice illustrate that Cio-Cio-San cannot accept reality?*

Listen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uut6X4E-Kgk&feature=email>

## Follow along here:

Un bel dì, vedremo  
levarsi un fil di fumo  
dall'estremo confin del mare.  
E poi la nave appare.  
Poi la nave bianca  
entra nel porto,  
romba il suo saluto.  
Vedi? È venuto!  
Io non gli scendo incontro. Io no.  
Mi metto là sul ciglio del colle e aspetto,  
e aspetto gran tempo e non mi pesa,  
la lunga attesa.  
E uscito dalla folla cittadina  
un uomo, un picciol punto  
s'avvia per la collina.

Chi sarà? chi sarà?  
E come sarà giunto  
che dirà? che dirà?  
Chiamerà Butterfly dalla lontana.  
Io snza dar risposta  
me ne starò nascosta  
un po' per celia...  
e un po' per non morire al primo incontro,  
ed egli alquanto in pena chiamerà,  
chiamerà: iccina mogliettina  
olezzo di verbena,  
i nomi che mi dava al suo venire (a Suzuki)  
Tutto questo avverrà, te lo prometto.  
Tienti la tua paura,  
io consicura fede l'aspetto.

## Next...

Puccini uses this same aria’s theme in Act II when Suzuki says she sees the warship. *Why would he reuse this same theme at that moment? Would you?*

## Finale...

Listen to other excerpts from the opera [here](#) and see if you can hear how the singers’ voices reflect what they are singing. *What do you think they are singing about and how did you come to that answer?*



## HE SAID, SHE SAID: ROMANTIC MISUNDERSTANDINGS

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Communication can sometimes be a tricky thing! Review this text message conversation between two students. *What is their relationship? How can you tell?*

**Mike:** Missed you in class today!  
**Jen:** I know. I was sick all night and couldn't make it. Did I miss anything good?  
**Mike:** Sry ur sick...Yeah! Mr. K brought in real human body parts 4 us 2 c. The brain was totally gross ... it was awesome!  
**Jen:** YUCK! Glad I missed it!  
**Mike:** So I picked up some homework 4 ya. Want me to bring it by?  
**Jen:** Thx! And sure! My mom is gone to pick up my sister from school. But I'll be here.  
**Mike:** K...c ya soon!

*What if you said the two were cousins? Or what if it was her best friend's boyfriend and they just happened to share a class together? How would these relationships change the way you interpret the conversation?*

### ***TRY THIS!***

Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San seem to have difficulty understanding each other in conversation. Grab a buddy (or several buddies) and a couple of the statements below. Decipher what the character was intending to be said, versus what the recipient might misunderstand them to say...

1. **Pinkerton:** In Japanese fashion, I'll be married for nine hundred ninety-nine years. But I can cancel at any month...
2. **Sharpless:** Don't tell me you really love her?  
**Pinkerton:** I don't know! It depends on what you mean by "love". It may be love or it may be fancy.
3. **Cio-Cio-San:** Let one who cannot live with honor, die with honor.
4. **Pinkerton:** Was the climb up the hill a bit difficult?  
**Cio-Cio-San:** For a bride, the waiting is more painful.  
**Pinkerton:** What a nice compliment!

*How important is it to be clear in your communication with others? In what circumstances should you be even more cautious to speak or communicate effectively?*

### ***TAKE IT 2 THE NEXT LEVEL...***

Explore the second set of statements above, especially number 2, Pinkerton's line stating "It depends on what you mean by 'love'." How does his definition of love differ from Cio-Cio-San's? Why do you think they are different? Is it a cultural difference or a personal difference? Could communicating about what love means to each of them have changed the story's outcome?



# EAST MEETS WEST: OPERA IMITATING LIFE

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**Art often imitates and reflects life**, and opera is no exception. This Italian opera is set in Japan at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the United States was active in Japan's society. Before doing the activity below, be sure to attend **Student Night at the Opera** or listen to the opera!

## **While you listen...**

...consider whether Puccini is trying to send us a message about American-Japanese relations. If so, what is he trying to say and how does he communicate them? (via music, lyrics, actions, etc.)

...see if you can pick out very "American" or "Japanese" sounding themes. What makes them sound like these respective cultures?

## **...After you listen**

...Investigate on your own to discover how the United States interacted with Japan at the turn of the century.

...determine whether Puccini's messages were accurate and successfully communicated.

## **Encore!**

Have you ever thought about what makes a culture? Explore the things that define a culture including: languages, traditions/customs, values, and beliefs.

What traits of their culture does each character have? Are they a good or bad representative of the culture and why or why not?

## **Challenge:**

What makes an American? **Interview a non-American** to see what they believe makes our culture American. Are their thoughts similar or different from yours?

Does this give you a better understanding of why the characters in *Madama Butterfly* interacted the way they did? How?

