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MADAMA BUTTERFLY

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Giacomo Puccini

Teatro Real, Madrid

Cast

Conductor
Marco Armiliato

Director
Mario Gas

Sets
Ezio Frigeiro

Costumes
Franca Squarciapino

Lightning
Vinicio Cheli

Chorus Master
Andrés Másper

Czech subtitles
Petra Ocelková

**Chorus and
Orchestra of Teatro
Real.**

**Madama Butterfly
(Cio-Cio-San)**
Ermonela Jaho

Suzuki
Enkelejda Shkosa

Mrs. Kate Pinkerton
Marifé Nogalesová

B.F. Pinkerton
Jorge de León

Sharpless
Àngel Òdena

Goro
Francisco Vas

Prince Yamadori
Tomeu Bibiloni

Uncle Bonze
Fernando Radó

*Premiere
February 17, 1904*

*Libretto
Giuseppe Giacosa
Luigi Illica*

*Czech subtitles are based
from English subtitles
and are informative
character.*

*Opera on 3 acts.
Sung in Italian language.*

*Template
David Belasco
John Luther Long*

*Record from Teatro Real
Madrid, June 2017.*

A temporary wife was a widespread practice in Japan at the end of the 19th century. The West - with the United States leading - had established diplomatic and commercial relations with the country in the mid-century and the fascination with the birthplace of geishas spread like wildfire. The influence of a distant (and imaginary) Orient would take form in works by a variety of European and North American artists that continued well into the 20th century. In this way, Butterfly is a crass embodiment of the conflict between two irreconcilable civilizations, one which dominates the other. A man of a subtle theatrical spirit, Puccini portrayed brilliantly the fragility of a geisha in love who naively believed the dashing North American marine official also loved her. The musical score evokes agreeably harmonized traditional Japanese melodies. In spite of the fiasco of the debut of Madama Butterfly in Milan, the composer stood fast in his determination to make a success of what he considered his most sincere and expressive work. The passing of time has proved him right. Mario Gas places the story in a 1930s film studio. He narrates this moving drama from three simultaneous perspectives: the opera itself, the film being made of the opera, and its projection in black and white on a large screen.

ACT I

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

ACT II

Three years later, Butterfly is still waiting for Pinkerton to return, as he had left shortly after

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

ACT III

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