

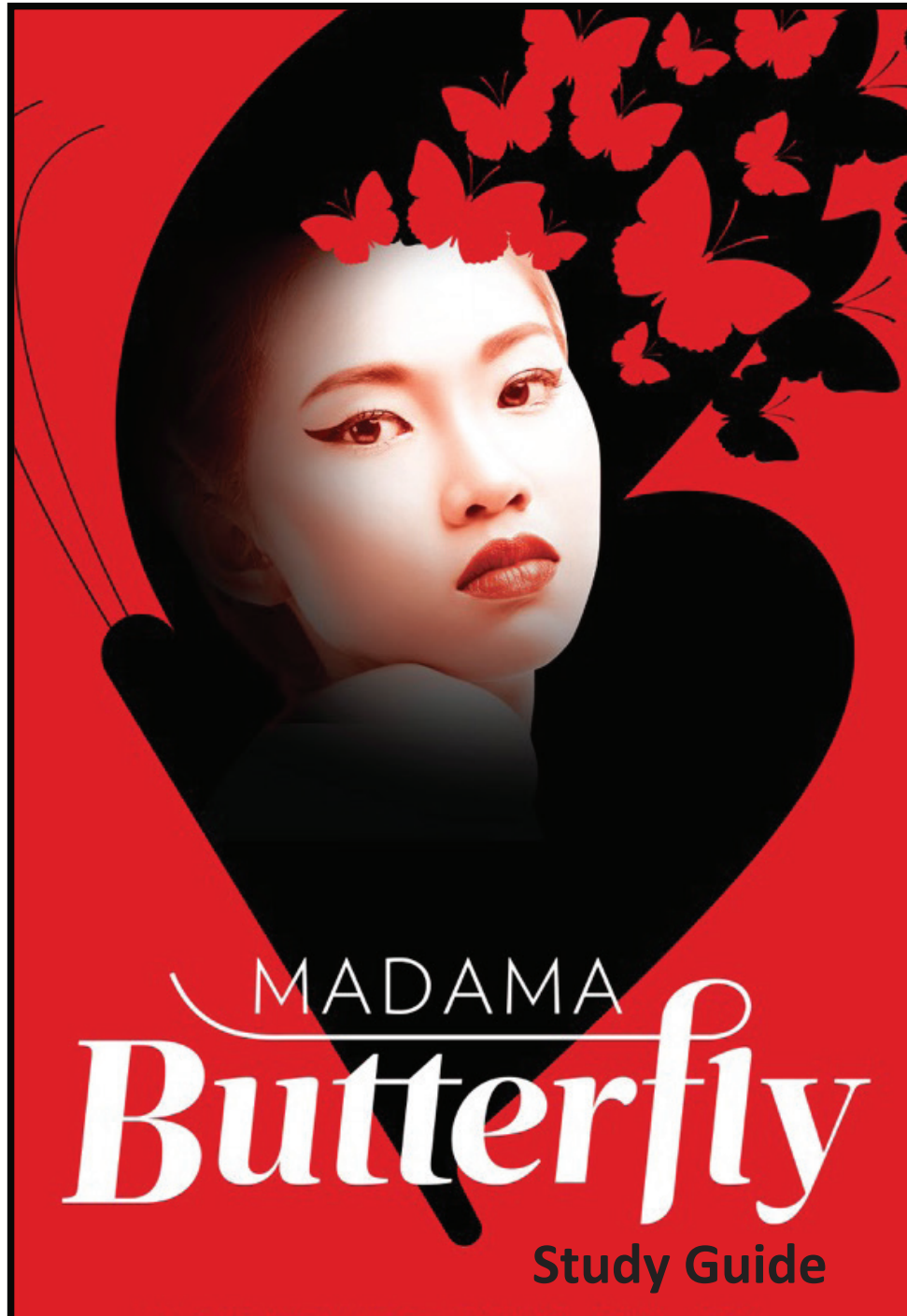


MANITOBA OPERA

2017/18 Season

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**MANITOBA OPERA**

1060 – 555 Main Street  
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Winnipeg, MB, R3B 1C3  
204-942-7470  
[www.manitobaopera.mb.ca](http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca)

**For Student Night tickets or more information on student programs,  
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[education@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:education@manitobaopera.mb.ca)**

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# 5 Great Resources for Engaging Your Students with the Art of Opera

## 1. Student Night at the Opera

Student Night is an affordable opportunity for students to watch the dress rehearsal of our mainstage productions, providing an exciting look at the art and magic of opera before the curtain goes up on Opening Night.

- *Madama Butterfly* is an opera in three acts, with a running time of approximately 2.5 hours.
- Tickets to Student Night are \$13 each and are available to full-time students from schools, post-secondary institutions, and youth organizations.

## 2. Study Guide

This study guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera at the Centennial Concert Hall. Materials in the study guide may be copied and distributed to students. Manitoba Curriculum Connections are provided with links to Grade 9 - 12 Music, Drama and English Language Arts.

## 3. Opera Class

Recommended for Grades K-6

Bring an opera singer to your classroom! Students will participate in hands-on learning activities which explore storytelling through music and experience the power of live operatic singing.

- Free of charge
- Length: 45 minutes
- Maximum # of students per workshop: 30

Opera Class connects to all four essential learning areas of the K-8 Mb Music curriculum framework.

## 4. Opera in a Trunk

Recommended for Grades K-6

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk program. Each trunk includes costumes, props, books, a CD and DVD of the opera, instruments, activities, and a guide for putting it all together. Trunks are free to borrow for a three-week period.

Available trunks:	<i>Hansel and Gretel</i>	<i>The Daughter of the Regiment</i>
	<i>The Magic Flute</i>	<i>La Bohème</i>
	<i>Carmen</i>	<i>Aida</i>

## 5. CDs Available for Loan

Borrow a *Madama Butterfly* CD from our office for a two-week period.

### For More Information / Bookings:

Contact Livia Dymond at 204-942-7470 or [education@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:education@manitobaopera.mb.ca)

# About Manitoba Opera

Manitoba Opera was founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoban audiences. Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts internationally renowned artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

## Chorus

The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers, but most work in jobs that aren't music related.

### Staff

Tadeusz Biernacki  
*Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director*

Michael Blais  
*Director of Administration*

Larry Desrochers  
*General Director & CEO*

Livia Dymond  
*Education & Outreach Coordinator*

Bethany Epp  
*Patron Services & Communications Coordinator*

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Tyrone Paterson  
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## Fast Facts

- *Madama Butterfly* is an Italian opera in three acts, composed by Giacomo Puccini with a libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa.
- Set in Nagasaki, Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, *Madama Butterfly*'s universal themes of love, betrayal, family, and death resonate with audiences the world over, rendering it amongst the most performed operas of all time.
- The libretto is based upon two sources, a short story from 1889 written by John Luther Long, a Philadelphia lawyer, and the play later derived from that narrative, by playwright and theatrical producer David Belasco.
- The original version of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, in two acts, had its premiere on February 17, 1904, at Teatro alla Scala in Milan. It was poorly received so Puccini made revisions to the opera, including the addition of a third act. Following the premiere of this new version on May 28, 1904, in Brescia, Italy, the opera became a success. Puccini continued making revisions until his fifth version which premiered in 1907. Now known as the "Standard Version," it is this version which is most often performed for today's audiences.
- *Madama Butterfly* is generally considered one of the greatest works to emerge from the Italian verismo movement. Verismo (meaning "realism," from Italian vero, meaning "true") was a style of opera from the late 19th century which is characterized by melodramatic, often violent plots with characters and emotions drawn from everyday life.
- The story of *Madama Butterfly* inspired the 1989 hit musical *Miss Saigon* by Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil.
- Manitoba Opera's *Madama Butterfly* features Japanese-born soprano Hiromi Omura in the title role, Canadian tenor David Pomeroy as Pinkerton, and American mezzo-soprano Nina Yoshida-Nelson as Suzuki. The production also features Winnipeggers Gregory Dahl as Sharpless, Laurelle Froese as Kate Pinkerton, and James McLennan as Goro, David Watson as The Bonze, and Mel Braun as Yamadori.
- Manitoba Opera first performed *Madama Butterfly* in 1973. This season's production is the company's seventh.



*Madama Butterfly*, Manitoba Opera, 2009.  
Photo: R. Tinker

# Production Information

## MADAMA *Butterfly*

November 18, 21 & 24  
**Dress Rehearsal / Student Night:** November 16  
Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Giacomo Puccini  
Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, based on John Luther Long's story and  
David Belasco's play  
Approximately 2.5 hours in three acts  
Premiered at Teatro alla Scala in Milan on February 17, 1904  
Sung in Italian with projected English translations

### PRINCIPAL CAST (In Order of Vocal Appearance)

B.F. Pinkerton	Tenor	DAVID POMEROY
Goro	Tenor	JAMES MCLENNAN
Suzuki	Mezzo-Soprano	NINA YOSHIDA-NELSEN
Sharpless	Baritone	GREGORY DAHL
Cio-Cio-San	Soprano	HIROMI OMURA
The Bonze	Bass	DAVID WATSON
Yamadori	Baritone	MEL BRAUN
Imperial Commissioner	Baritone	MEL BRAUN
Kate Pinkerton	Mezzo-Soprano	LAURELLE FROESE

Manitoba Opera Chorus  
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON
Director	ROBERT HERRIOT
Sets	PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA
Costumes	PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA & MALABAR
Lighting designer	BILL WILLIAMS
Stage manager	ROBERT PEL
Assistant stage managers	KATHRYN BALL MATTHEW LAGACE
Projected titles	SHELDON JOHNSON

# Synopsis

Place and Time: Nagasaki, at the beginning of the 20th century

## ACT I

Lieutenant Pinkerton of the U.S. Navy inspects a house overlooking Nagasaki harbor that he is leasing from Goro, a marriage broker. The house comes with three servants and a geisha wife known as Madam Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San). The American consul Sharpless arrives breathless from climbing the hill. Pinkerton describes his philosophy of the fearless Yankee roaming the world in search of experience and pleasure “Dovunque al mondo.” He is not sure whether his feelings for the young girl are love or a whim, but he intends to go through with the marriage ceremony anyway. Sharpless warns him that the girl’s philosophy may not be as breezy as Pinkerton’s, but Pinkerton brushes off such concerns and says someday he will take a real American wife. He offers the consul whiskey and proposes a toast, “America forever!”

An eager Butterfly is heard climbing the hill with her friends for the ceremony “Spira sul mare.” In casual conversation after the formal introduction, Butterfly admits her age of 15 and tells him how her family was once prominent, but she has more recently had to earn her living as a geisha. Her relatives arrive and chatter about the marriage. Cio-Cio-San shows Pinkerton her very few possessions, and quietly tells him she has been to the Christian mission and will embrace her husband’s religion. The Imperial Commissioner reads the marriage agreement, and the relatives congratulate the couple.

Suddenly, a strident voice is heard from afar. It is the Bonze, Butterfly’s uncle, a priest. He curses the girl for going to the Christian mission and renouncing her ancestral religion. Lieutenant Pinkerton orders the Bonze and Butterfly’s shocked relatives to leave at once. Butterfly is upset, and her new husband tries to console with sweet words. She is helped by Suzuki into her wedding kimono, and joins Pinkerton in the garden “Viene la sera.”

## ACT II

Three years have passed and Cio-Cio-San still waits for her husband’s return. Suzuki prays to the gods for help, but Butterfly berates her for believing in lazy Japanese gods. She envisions the day when Pinkerton will return “Un bel di.” Sharpless appears with a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it to Butterfly, Goro arrives with the latest potential husband for Butterfly, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. Butterfly insists she is not available for marriage as her American husband has not deserted her. She dismisses Goro and Yamadori.

Sharpless attempts to read the letter and suggests that perhaps Butterfly should reconsider Yamadori’s offer. “And this?” asks Butterfly, showing the consul her small child. Sharpless is too upset to tell her more of the letter’s contents. He leaves, promising to tell Pinkerton about the child. A cannon shot is heard in the harbour, announcing the arrival of a ship. Through a telescope, Butterfly and Suzuki read the name of Pinkerton’s ship.



Overjoyed she has been proven right, Butterfly joins Suzuki in strewing the house with flower petals from the garden “Scuoti quella fronda.” Night falls, and Butterfly, Suzuki, and the child settle into a vigil over the harbor (Humming Chorus).

### ACT III

Dawn breaks, and Suzuki insists that Butterfly get some sleep. Butterfly carries the child into another room. Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and Kate, Pinkerton’s new wife. Suzuki realizes who the American woman is and agrees to help break the news to Butterfly. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and runs from the scene, pausing to remember other times in the little house “Addio, fiorito asil.”

Cio-Cio-San rushes in hoping to find Pinkerton but instead sees Kate. Grasping the situation, she agrees to give up the child but insists Pinkerton return for him. Dismissing everyone, Butterfly takes out the sword with which her father had committed suicide, choosing to die with honour rather than live in shame. Suzuki sends in the child, hoping to change Butterfly’s mind, but Butterfly says good-bye to the child and blindfolds him “Tu, piccolo Iddio.” She kills herself as Pinkerton calls her name.

- Courtesy of *Opera News*



Ai-Lan Zhu (Cio-Cio-San), *Madama Butterfly*, Manitoba Opera, 2009.

Photo: R. Tinker

## Principal Characters

Name	Description
Cio-Cio-San (pronounced cho-cho-SAHN)	Known as Madama Butterfly. A 15-year-old Japanese geisha.
Suzuki	Maid to Cio-Cio-San
B.F. Pinkerton	Lieutenant in the United States Navy
Sharpless	United States Consul at Nagasaki
Goro	A Marriage Broker
Prince Yamadori	Cio-Cio-San's suitor
The Bonze	A Buddhist Monk, Cio-Cio-San's Uncle
Kate Pinkerton	Pinkerton's American wife



Ai-Lan Zhu (Cio-Cio-San) and Kurt Lehmann (Pinkerton) in  
*Madama Butterfly*, Manitoba Opera, 2009.

Photo: R. Tinker

## The Principal Artists



**Hiromi Omura**  
*Cio-Cio-San*



**David Pomeroy**  
*Pinkerton*



**Nina Yoshida-Nelsen**  
*Suzuki*



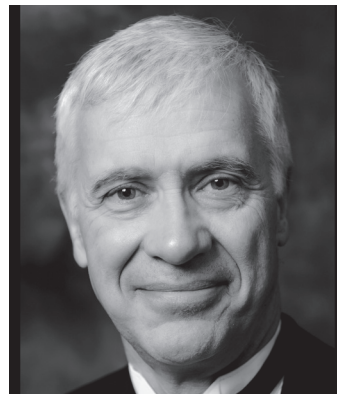
**Gregory Dahl**  
*Sharpless*



**James McLennan**  
*Goro*



**Mel Braun**  
*Yamadori/Imperial  
Commissioner*



**David Watson**  
*The Bonze*



**Laurelle Froese**  
*Kate Pinkerton*



# The Life of Giacomo Puccini

*Article courtesy of Canadian Opera Company*

Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, Italy, in 1858. Born into a long line of musicians and composers, Puccini was trained as an organist after studying music with his uncle. At the age of 18, after hearing a performance of *Aida*, Puccini resolved to become an opera composer. He soon earned a diploma from the Institute of Music in Lucca, and later graduated with honours from the Milan conservatory. While in Milan, Puccini was surrounded by compositional geniuses: one of his instructors was Amilcare Ponchielli (composer of the opera *La Gioconda*, 1876). He and Ponchielli shared accommodations with Pietro Mascagni (composer of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 1890). In 1882, Puccini entered his first opera *Le villi* into a competition run by the publishing firm of Sonzogno. It didn't win, but it garnered the attention of the publisher Giulio Ricordi, with whom Puccini was to enjoy a lifelong association.

After several moderately successful operas, his first major international success was *Manon Lescaut*, which premiered in 1893 in Turin. After the success of this opera, he built himself a villa in a small town near Lucca. Music publisher Giulio Ricordi connected him with Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, who would come to write the libretti for three of his greatest works: *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. *La Bohème*, one of Puccini's most famous works, premiered in 1896 and was not a great success when it was first produced. It has since become one of the most loved and performed operas in the world. *Tosca*, another one of Puccini's best-loved operas, premiered successfully in Rome in 1900.

During a visit to London in 1900, Puccini saw David Belasco's one-act play *Madam Butterfly*, which served as the inspiration for his opera. *Madama Butterfly* premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1904.

There was a long break before his next premiere, partly due to a tragedy in his domestic life. In 1906, Puccini had begun living with a married woman, Elvira Gemignani, and was only able to marry her himself when her first husband died. Their marriage was not an easy one and eventually Elvira accused Puccini of having an affair with a servant girl. The tension in the household became intolerable and the girl committed suicide. A court case determined that she had not had an affair with Puccini and Elvira was jailed for five months. The resulting publicity caused Puccini to withdraw from the public eye for a time, and also to separate from his wife. They later reconciled, but their marriage was permanently damaged.

In 1910, Puccini composed *La Fanciulla del West* for the Metropolitan Opera in New York; his trio of one-act operas *Il Trittico* also premiered at the Met, in 1918. He died in 1924 of throat cancer before he could finish the final scene of his last opera, *Turandot*. The opera was eventually completed by Franco Alfano and premiered in 1926 at La Scala.



Puccini was handsome and debonair, with a taste for fast cars, fine wine and beautiful women. He's seen here in 1908 in a studio photograph by an unknown artist.

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and Photographs Division,  
Washington, D.C.  
Copyright A. Dupont.

# The Operas of Puccini

1884	<i>Le villa</i>
1889	<i>Edgar</i>
1893	<i>Manon Lescaut</i>
1896	<i>La Bohème</i>
1900	<i>Tosca</i>
1904	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>
1910	<i>La fanciulla del West</i>
1917	<i>La rondine</i>
1918	<i>Il trittico</i> <i>Il tabarro</i> , <i>Suor Angelica</i> , <i>Gianni Schicchi</i>
1926	<i>Turandot</i> (incomplete at the time of Puccini's death in 1924, completed by Franco Alfano)



Giacomo Puccini in 1908



Geraldine Farrar as Cio-Cio-San, Metropolitan Opera premiere of *Madama Butterfly*, February 1907

# The Librettists

The partnership between Puccini and librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa was organized by the publisher Giulio Ricordi in 1893. The head of the most powerful publishing firm in Italy during the 19th century, Ricordi had the ability to make or break any young composer who came along, much in the same way that a CEO of a major record label can do today.

Having taken Puccini under his wing, Ricordi was intent on hiring the best writers to work with the young composer on *La Bohème*. He found them in Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. This collaboration was such a success that the three worked together on two other operas: *Tosca* (1900) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904).

## Luigi Illica (1857-1919)

Luigi Illica ran away to sea at an early age, and in 1876, he found himself fighting the Turks. Three years later, he moved to the relatively peaceful enclave of Milan, Italy, and there began his literary career, including a collection of prose sketches and plays.

He began writing librettos in 1889. His most famous librettos are three of Puccini's operas (*La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*) as well as Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*.



The reason Illica was always photographed with his head slightly turned is because he lost his right ear in a duel over a woman.



## Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906)

Giuseppe Giacosa began his professional life as a lawyer. He graduated in law from Turin University and immediately joined his father's firm in Milan. He moved permanently into the literary world when his one-act verse comedy, *Una partita a scacchi*, became a popular success. From 1888-1894 Giacosa held the chair of literature and dramatic art at the Milan Conservatory.

## What is a Libretto?

Libretto means "little book" in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being 'by' the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers – notably Wagner – wrote their own texts.





## Butterfly and “Orientalism”

*Article courtesy of Canadian Opera Company*

It's important to note that while still almost-universally loved, *Madama Butterfly* is in no way an accurate portrayal of Japan, even in the era in which it was written. As is true of most Western art about Asian cultures, *Madama Butterfly* is much more a reflection of Europe's perception of Asia, and reflects many stereotypes of the time. Examining this story and these stereotypes can teach us much more about the West than the East, as they reflect structures and ideals from European society during Puccini's time. This “orientalism” that emerged during the mid-eighteenth century allowed artists to examine issues that were otherwise taboo in European society.



A poster for *Madama Butterfly*, 1908, by Adolfo Hohenstein (1854–1928), a German artist who also worked as a set and costume designer, numbering several Puccini operas among his projects.

# The Music of *Madama Butterfly*

Article courtesy of Pacific Opera Victoria (Maureen Woodall)

Puccini called *Madama Butterfly* "the most heartfelt and evocative opera I have ever conceived." Discover the beauty of this opera through the Youtube links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06QUSg23Ks4>

**Nick Reveles: San Diego OperaTalk!**

**Join Nick Reveles of San Diego OperaTalk! for a discussion of *Madama Butterfly***, including how Puccini was inspired to create the opera, its disastrous world premiere, discussions of Japanese society and the music of the opera, along with an overview of recordings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqTVIN4BjsE>

**Act 1. *Dovunque al mondo ... Amore o grillo (Throughout the world ... Love or fancy)***

**With the help of the marriage broker Goro, Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton** has leased a Japanese house and a Japanese wife. The agreement is for 999 years – cancellable on a month's notice.

**Opening to the strains of The Star-Spangled Banner**, this thrilling aria tells us nearly all we need to know about Pinkerton. He loves the thought of being a Yankee roaming the world in search of pleasure, profit, and beautiful women. He is entranced by his lovely Japanese bride, but ...

*Like a butterfly she comes to rest with hushed grace,  
and I'm gripped with the desire to chase after her  
even if I break her wings.*

When Sharpless, the American consul, warns him that the girl may actually be in love with him, Pinkerton brushes off his concern, and drinks to the day I have a proper wedding to a proper American wife.

**Although this aria shows Pinkerton at his insensitive best**, the music is rapturous, and one can begin to understand how easily Cio-Cio-San could have fallen for him.

In this 1974 film by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Placido Domingo is Pinkerton, Robert Kerns is Sharpless, and Michel Sénéchal is Goro. Herbert von Karajan conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Vienna State Opera (with English surtitles).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvexSfANgaA>

**Act 1. Love Duet, first part. *Viene la sera ... Bimba dagli occhi pieni di malia (Night is falling ... Little one with your bewitching eyes)***

**Here is the beginning of the great love duet** between Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton. The marriage ceremony has taken place, but Cio-Cio-San's entire family has disowned her because she has rejected her ancestral religion and become a Christian. Pinkerton has ordered them to leave, and now he comforts his young bride.

From Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's 1974 film of the opera. Mirella Freni is Butterfly, and Placido Domingo is Pinkerton. Herbert von Karajan conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Vienna State Opera (with English surtitles).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCk9BaIJVlk>

**Act 1. Love Duet, second part. *Vogliatemi bene (Love me with a little love)***

**Butterfly pleads with Pinkerton to "Love me, please."**

*We are a people used to small, modest, quiet things,  
to a tenderness gently caressing, yet vast as the sky and as the waves of the sea.*

She tells him she has heard that overseas, a man will catch a butterfly and pin its wings to a table. Pinkerton explains that this is so it will not fly away: *I've caught you ... you are mine*. She responds, *Yes, for life*, and they revel in the glorious, starry night above them.

Victoria de los Angeles is Butterfly and Giuseppe di Stefano is Pinkerton in this acclaimed 1954 recording, with the Rome Opera Orchestra conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4dOpyVMfqg>

**Act 2, Part 1. *Un bel di, vedremo (One fine day we'll see)***

**When the second act begins, Pinkerton has been gone for three years.** Cio-Cio-San has been living with her maid Suzuki and the child that she bore after Pinkerton's return to the United States. The two women are nearly out of money, and Suzuki doubts that Pinkerton will ever come back. Cio-Cio-San, however, believes fervently that Pinkerton will keep his promise and return to her and their child.

In the most famous aria in the opera, she tells Suzuki what will surely happen ...

*Un bel di, vedremo levarsi un fil di fumo sull'estremo confin del mare.*

*One fine day we'll see a wisp of smoke arising over the extreme verge of the sea's horizon...*

*Then the white ship will enter the harbour ... I shan't go down to meet him.*

*No, I shall stand there on the brow of the hill and wait*

*And from the midst of the city crowd a man – a tiny speck – will make his way up the hill.*

*He'll call, "Butterfly!" from the distance.*

*Not answering, I'll remain hidden, partly to tease,*

*and partly so as not to die at the first meeting ...*

*And this will happen, I promise you ... with unalterable faith I shall wait for him.*

Maria Callas sings *Un bel di, vedremo* in a 1955 studio recording with Herbert von Karajan conducting the Chorus & Orchestra of La Scala Opera House.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18TjhA7TC38#t=50>

***Un bel di, vedremo*: Historic Recording from 1912**

**The world premiere of *Madama Butterfly* took place at La Scala, Milan, on February 17, 1904.** It was a disaster, in part because of a hostile, rowdy audience, possibly orchestrated by a rival publishing house.

Puccini immediately made several revisions to the opera, including splitting the long first act into two, and giving Pinkerton a remorseful aria near the end of the opera. Three months later, on May 28, 1904, he premiered a revised version in Brescia. This time the opera was a hit, and it has since established itself as one of the most popular operas ever.

Rosina Storchio performed Cio-Cio-San at the La Scala première. In the Brescia première, it was Ukrainian soprano Salomea Krusceniski (Solomiya Krushelnyska) who performed the role of Cio-Cio-San. Here is Salomea Krusceniski singing *Un bel di, vedremo* in a 1912 recording.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWAaK4DyAt8>

### **Act 2. *Mio marito m'ha promesso My husband made me a promise***

**One day, Goro and Sharpless arrive to visit Butterfly.** Sharpless has brought a letter from Pinkerton to read to her. But they are interrupted by the arrival of Prince Yamadori, the latest in a succession of suitors that Goro has been presenting to Cio-Cio-San.

Prince Yamadori arrives with great pomp amid the strains of a martial tune that those familiar with Gilbert and Sullivan's 1885 musical, *The Mikado*, will recognize. "Miya sama" in *The Mikado* was originally a Japanese army war song called "Miyasan" (My Prince). It is one of several Japanese melodies that Puccini incorporated into the opera.

Although *Madama Butterfly* is at heart a romantic tragedy, this scene is full of charm and humour as Cio-Cio-San flirts politely with Yamadori even while refusing him.

**Goro tries to persuade Butterfly to marry Yamadori**, on the grounds that being abandoned is equal to being divorced. That may be the law in Japan, she tells him, but not in the United States. She quotes a brief phrase from Kimigayo (which is as close to a national anthem as Japan had at the time), followed by a few notes from The Star Spangled Banner, making it clear which country she feels is now her own.

The three men are dismayed by her blind optimism. They know that Pinkerton's ship is on its way and that Pinkerton does not wish to see Butterfly. Yamadori takes his leave.

From Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's 1974 film of the opera. Mirella Freni is Butterfly, with Robert Kerns as Sharpless, Michel Sénéchal as Goro, Giorgio Stendro as Yamadori, and Christa Ludwig as Suzuki. Herbert von Karajan conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Vienna State Opera. With English surtitles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpJO1PVGA7c>

### **End of Act 2. *Coro a bocca chiusa (Humming-Chorus)***

**Knowing the letter he carries announces that Pinkerton has an American wife**, Sharpless has asked Butterfly what she would do if Pinkerton never returned. By reply she has shown Sharpless the child and told him, I could do one of two things: go back to entertaining people with my songs; or better, die. Sharpless has left, unable to tell her the truth.

Now Butterfly has spied Pinkerton's ship in the harbour and in great joy has readied the house for his arrival. She settles down with Suzuki and the child to wait for him.

Their wordless vigil lasts the entire night. Suzuki and the baby fall asleep as the offstage chorus hums a beautiful, gentle tune, the famous Humming Chorus, a tone-poem that evokes the beauty of the night and the hope in Butterfly's heart as she waits.

In the play by David Belasco on which Puccini based the opera, this vigil scene was even more drawn out – 14 minutes with no spoken words, in which dusk, starlight, and dawn were presented in a series of lighting effects that demonstrated Belasco's genius in taking advantage of the nascent art of electric theatrical lighting.

The performers and musicians are not identified in the video.



# Butterfly's Music: Giving Voice to Hope

Article courtesy of Pacific Opera Victoria (David Shefsiek, 2008)

*Madama Butterfly* is one of opera's most accessible works, built on beautiful, evocative melodies and a heartfelt, compelling story, all amidst a backdrop of social conflict that remains relevant a century after its premiere. Surprisingly, the work has been reviled by critics and summarily dismissed by musicologists. Even the composer's friend Giulio Ricordi considered the piece a "facile tear-jerker" unworthy of Puccini's genius.

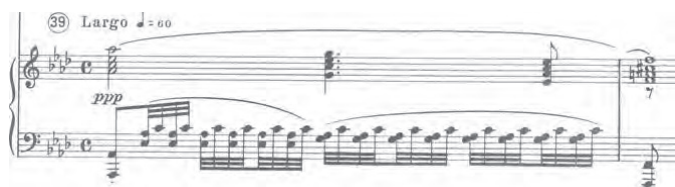
In recent years, however, the work's profound popularity has inspired writers and musicians to engage in new critical review, and Puccini's self-professed favourite opera appears to have gained a new artistic respect to match its sentimental appeal. The often underestimated composer is being recognized as an artful interpreter of text, an inspired orchestrator, and of course, a master melodist, one who can weave these skills to create character and drama that can speak directly to the heart of his listener.

As you explore *Madama Butterfly* – for the first or 20th time – consider these musical aspects of the work that underlie the truly sumptuous and expansively emotional score.

## Melodic Cells

Melody in *Madama Butterfly* is paramount; character is defined by consistent use of particular intervallic patterns – short, melodic cells, if you like – that are repeated, embellished, and developed to create unity of character throughout the work.

For example, listen for the first two bars of the music of Butterfly's entrance; these four notes form the basis for the aria that announces the entrance of the innocent heroine.



Example #1 – Butterfly's Entrance

Five upwardly modulating repetitions of this theme, taken by solo violin, woodwinds, solo voice and ultimately full orchestra evolve into a full statement of the aria's melody, an aural impression of a flower coming into blossom, petal by petal. Later in the act, this same melody reappears several times, notably as the final climax of Butterfly and Pinkerton's Love Duet (*Dolce notte! Quante Stelle! – Sweet Night! So many Stars!*), while the opera's most popular aria, (*Un bel di vedremo*) evolves from this same two measure melodic cell.

For all the impressionist sounds of Butterfly's music, Pinkerton's music takes a decidedly more forthright tone. His first aria is built on the opening notes of The Star Spangled Banner, a perfect major triad, evoking not only the familiar patriotic sounds of the American National Anthem, but also a simplicity and clarity far removed from the impressionist chromatic planing of Butterfly's entrance music.

It is most certainly no coincidence that Pinkerton's second aria (*Amore o grillo, dir non saprei – I cannot say whether it is love or caprice*), where he tells the consul Sharpless of the superficial quality of his feelings for Butterfly, begins with this same major triad, and his solo music shares the same directness of melodic design throughout.

## Repetition

Sustained repetition of musical ideas can create cathartic moments; emotion is intensified as the listener hears the relentless repetition as a tragic scene unfolds. This technique is not specific to any particular time period; it can be heard in the final laments of Monteverdi and Purcell and in the minimal music of Phillip Glass. Puccini is a master of this technique and employed it throughout his canon; it can be seen in the Embarkation Scene in *Manon Lescaut*, the execution of Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and the Calaf's obsessive infatuation with Turandot at the end of Act I.

In Act II of *Madama Butterfly*, repetition creates wrenching despair as we watch the American consul reveal to Butterfly the contents of the letter from Pinkerton: he will not be returning. At the start of the scene, the following ostinato (repetitive theme) is introduced:



Example #2 – Letter Duet from Act II

The consistent repetition of this theme, developed with a series of countermelodies, can be seen to represent Butterfly's single-minded belief and blinding hope that he will return. The audience, of course, knows that this will not happen, but as Puccini spins out this musical scene, minute after minute, the emotional power of her false hope becomes unbearable to watch.

These same themes become the basis for the "Humming Chorus", the quiet music that accompanies the start of *Butterfly*, Suzuki and the child's vigil upon hearing the sound of Pinkerton's ship in the harbour. By adding the sound of the human voice to the offstage, it is as if we ourselves have joined the story as witness to the heroine's soon to be broken dreams.

## Exotic Elements

The "exotic" sounds incorporated into the score are more readily heard. In preparation to compose *Butterfly*, Puccini studied Japanese folk music and included a wide range of melodies learned through this study. While still very much in the Italian tradition, this Japanese style and at times the melodies themselves are incorporated throughout the score. The clipped staccato narrative of the marriage broker Goro creates a studied Japanese character; pentatonic scales evoke the sounds of folk tunes at Butterfly's wedding, repeated crashes of the gong herald the Bonze's condemnation of Butterfly's marriage outside the faith, and Suzuki's Act II prayer to the gods is based on an Eastern chant.



Takai-Yama, traditional Japanese melody, heard in Act II Scene I, Suzuki's Prayer

A full listing of the Japanese melodies found in *Madama Butterfly* can be found at <http://daisyfield.com/music/jpm/Puccini.htm>.



## Orchestration

While melody provides the framework for consistent character development, it is the orchestration that creates the intensity of emotion that makes this work so compelling.

The great aria *Un bel di, vedremo* highlights Puccini's mastery in this arena. Solo violin and muted strings mirror the opening vocal phrases where Butterfly begins to paint the picture of her lover's return. Low strings and winds take the lead when the ship appears; horns take the melody as she hears the guns saluting his arrival. As she timidly decides to wait for him at the top of the hill rather than running to the harbour, the orchestration thins out, and her melody is no longer doubled.

The next section, where Butterfly sees the lone figure of Pinkerton emerge from the crowd, is lightly underscored with strings, this time anticipating the beat and creating dramatic tension as she yearns for his embrace. The orchestra lightens as she decides again not to answer his cries, "partly for fun and partly as not to die at their meeting." On the word "morire," the melody returns with full strings, horn and trumpet – a momentary outburst that quiets as she hears Pinkerton call out his pet names for her. She soon breaks the story to tell Suzuki "all this will happen, I promise you. Keep your fears to yourself, I shall await him with unspeakable faith".

With this return to reality, Puccini unleashes the full power of the orchestra, a wellspring of sound that evokes Butterfly's personal strength and undying belief. The quiet 15-year-old geisha is called upon to dominate this massive orchestral sound with a vocal, dramatic, and spiritual intensity that is the power of this work.

These are but a few of the examples that illustrate the creative brilliance of Puccini's music. Every note in the score, vocal and instrumental, is carefully chosen to create an emotional impact that is instantly understood, whether it is being heard for the first or hundredth time by a musical novice or seasoned professional. As you listen to this beloved work, enjoy Puccini's compositional mastery: its brilliance can fill your heart, captivate your mind, and move your soul.



Ai-Lan Zhu (Cio-Cio-San) in *Madama Butterfly*, Manitoba Opera, 2009.

Photo: R. Tinker

# Student Activities

Curriculum Connections to the Manitoba curriculum Frameworks for Grade 9 - 12 are provided below each activity. For a more in-depth look at the connections, view our Manitoba Curriculum Connections documents at [www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/learn](http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/learn).

## Activity #1: Using the Five C's, Have your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama

**CHARACTERS:** Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

**CONFLICT:** What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

**CLIMAX:** To what climax does the conflict lead?

**CONCLUSION:** How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

**CONTEXT:** What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettists.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

## Activity #2: Create a Poster, Set, Costume, Press Release, or Ad

- Choose a time and place to set your production.
- Have the students design a poster for *Madama Butterfly*, including such details as the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *Madama Butterfly*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Madama Butterfly*, including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for the opera. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 4.1.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2; DR-C3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-C3

## Activity #3: A Review

### *Step 1 – Think-Group-Share*

Individually, students will write, in point-form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
3. If you were the stage director, would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

### *Step 2 – Class Discussion*

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

### *Step 3 – Outlining your review*

Go over the essential aspects of a review including a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, and revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

1. Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
2. Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
3. Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
4. Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
5. Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
6. Summary/Closing Paragraph

### *Step 4 - Peer Conferencing*

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

### *Step 5 - Creating the final draft*

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces and organize them into a newspaper.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 3.1.3; 3.3.1; 4.1.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.2.2; 5.2.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1; DR-R2; DR-R3; DR-R4

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R1; M-R2; M-R3; M-R4

## Activity #4: Have Your Students Act Out the Story

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

CIO-CIO-SAN / PINKERTON / SUZUKI / SHARPLESS / THE BONZE

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

*Pretend you are that character and answer the following questions:*

1. What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
2. What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
3. What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, race, others' actions)?
4. What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
5. What is your relationship to the other characters?
6. How is the character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
7. Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
8. If this character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
9. What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 2.1.2; 3.3.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-M2; DR-M3

## Activity #5: Write a Letter from One Character to Another

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another. Explore how they would be feeling about the events of the day.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 1.1.3; 2.3.5; 4.2.2; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R3

## Activity #6: Cast *Madama Butterfly*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Madama Butterfly*. Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.1; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 4.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-C3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-R4

## Activity #7: Research and Report

Have the students study the history and politics of Puccini's time, particularly the year when *Madama Butterfly* premiered (1904). Which authors were popular? What scientific discoveries were being made? What was the social and political life in America and Japan at the time (as well as in Canada)?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.3.1; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2

## Activity #8: *Madama Butterfly* Mood Board

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *Madama Butterfly*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent the opera.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 2.2.3; 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 4.4.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

## Activity #9: Musical Interpretation of Literature

### *Step 1 - Prepare a Musical Outline*

Working in small groups, have your students choose a play, novel, or story that they've read and think about how they'd go about adapting it into an opera. Have them write out an outline and try to structure the beginnings of the opera. Which parts of the drama would be highlighted with which types of music? Would they have a large chorus to back up the principal singers or would the opera be more intimate? Which singing voices (soprano, baritone, tenor, etc.) would best suit each character?

### *Step 2 - Compose and Perform an Overture*

How could the elements of music (ie., rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) be used to communicate the mood of the piece within the overture? Which instruments would be used? Allow them some time to work on composing their overture based on their answers to these questions. Students can then perform their overture for the class either as a composed and rehearsed piece or improvised. Alternatively, they may choose to present their overture by describing the characteristics of the elements of the music within their piece.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 2.3.5; 2.2.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 4.1.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.2; 4.2.5; 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.4

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-CR2; DR-M1; DR-M2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-CR2; M-CR3; M-M3

## Activity #10: Active Listening

Play the first few minutes of the *Madama Butterfly* CD. Ask your students to listen closely to the music and jot down their thoughts, feelings, and first impressions. Then have your students share their reactions with the classroom. Ask them to listen again and pay close attention to the elements of music (ie. rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) then explore questions such as the following:

- What are the instruments used to make the music?
- How does this music make me feel?
- What is the mood of the piece?
- What type of emotions do the singers bring forth?
- Does the music have a steady beat or pulse?
- What is the size of the ensemble?
- What do the singing voices tell us about those characters?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.12; 1.2.2; 2.3.1; 2.2.3; 4.4.3; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2



**Activity #11: Opera Comprehension Tests***The Opera*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest male vocal range.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Considered the first opera.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The highest female vocal range.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for two voices.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest female vocal range.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The middle male vocal range.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ He/she is in charge of all the action on the stage.

*Madama Butterfly*

1. Who is the composer? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the name of *Madama Butterfly's* most famous aria? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In which year did the premiere performance take place? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which language is the opera performed? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where does the story of *Madama Butterfly* take place? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who wrote the libretto for *Madama Butterfly*? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How old is the character of Cio-Cio-San at the beginning of the story? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who is Suzuki? \_\_\_\_\_
9. The role of Cio-Cio-San is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
10. The role of Pinkerton is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
11. Which hit musical was inspired by the story of *Madama Butterfly*? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Who keeps trying to convince Cio-Cio-San that Pinkerton is not coming back? \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### General Opera

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra pit or “the pit”
5. *Daphne*
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage director

### *Madama Butterfly*

1. Giacomo Puccini
2. *Un bel di, vedremo*
3. 1904
4. Italian
5. Nagasaki, Japan
6. Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
7. Fifteen
8. Cio-Cio-San’s maid
9. Soprano
10. Tenor
11. *Miss Saigon*
12. Suzuki

Manitoba Opera would be pleased to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Livia Dymond, Education and Outreach Coordinator  
Manitoba Opera, 1060 - 555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or

[education@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:education@manitobaopera.mb.ca)

# Winnipeg Public Library

## Resources

### Books

The New Grove masters of Italian opera :  
Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini  
[by Philip Gossett]  
New York: Norton c1983  
Call Number: 782.1092 NEW

Puccini: A Biography  
[by Mary Jane Phillips-Matz]  
Boston: Northeastern University Press c2002  
Call Number: B Puccini

Puccini Without Excuses: a refreshing reassessment  
of the world's most popular composer  
[by William Berger]  
New York: Vintage Books, 2005  
Call Number: 782.1092 PUCCINI 2005

### DVD

Madama Butterfly  
Deutsche Grammophon, [2005]  
Call Number: DVD 792.542 MAD

### Scores

Opera's greatest melodies [music] : 71 favorite  
selections from 42 operas transcribed for  
simplified piano solo, lower intermediate level  
Author: Neely, Blake.  
Milwaukee, WI : Hal Leonard, [2000]  
ISBN: 9780634005541

Madama Butterfly, in full score [music]  
Author: Puccini, Giacomo.  
Place of publication not identified: Dover, [1990]  
Call Number: SCORE 782.1 PUC  
ISBN: 9780486263458

### Sounds Recordings

Madama Butterfly  
Deutsche Grammophon, [2011]  
Call Number: CD OPERA PUCCINI MAD

Madama Butterfly  
EMI Classics, [2009]  
Call Number: CD OPERA PUCCINI MAD

Madama Butterfly  
Decca Records, [2002]  
Call Number: CD OPERA PUCCINI MAD

### Electronic Resources (Available on Hoopla)

Puccini: Madama Butterfly  
Author: hoopla digital.  
United States: Warner Classics:  
Made available through hoopla, 2008.  
Call Number: STREAMING

Puccini: Madama Butterfly  
Author: Tebaldi, Renata.  
United States: Decca:  
Made available through hoopla, 1994.  
Call Number: STREAMING

Madama Butterfly  
Author: Price, Leontyne.  
United States: Classic Music International:  
Made available through hoopla, 2010.  
Call Number: STREAMING

Karaoke Opera: Puccini & Verdi for Tenor  
Author: Oakman, John.  
United States: Musical Concepts:  
Made available through hoopla, 2009.  
Call Number: STREAMING

Karaoke Opera: Soprano Passions  
Author: McCulloch, Susan.  
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*This study guide was compiled cumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed since 2000:*

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The Canadian Opera Company  
Encyclopedia of Manitoba  
Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen  
Fort Worth Opera Study Guide  
GradeSaver.com  
La Scena  
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Manitoba Archives  
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musicwithease.com  
Music.MSN.com  
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Opera News  
Operas Every Child Should Know  
Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide  
Opera Today  
Orchestra London Study Guide  
Pacific Opera  
San Diego Opera Study Guide  
San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide  
schubincave.com  
A Season of Opera  
Skeletons from the Opera Closet  
timelines.com  
Tulsa Opera Study Guide  
University of Chicago Press  
University of Manitoba  
University of Texas  
University of Waterloo  
Rimrock Study Guide  
Virginia Opera Study Guide  
Winnipeg Free Press  
Wikipedia  
The World's Great Operas



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