Madama Butterfly

GIACOMO PUCCINI / 1904

SUNG IN ITALIAN
APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 130 minutes

Sweet Cio-Cio-San's is probably the sweetest death ever told about throughout the history of Opera music. Audiences were and will be moved by the superb score Puccini composed and the ultimate sacrifice of this passionate but also neglected love. This gentle and restrained opera in 3 acts shows the hopes and the pain of a woman madly in love with a man who turns out to be a player.

The dramatic tension, the compassion and the unspoken compassion are highlighted by an extremely rich and complex musical score which also includes 7 Japanese tunes. Being denied honour and true love, this opera's heroin ends up taking her life. The "un bel di vedremo" aria is, by far, the highest moment of the entire play.

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MAIN CHARACTERS

Cio-Cio-San, known as "Madame Butterfly" young geisha and Pinkerton's spouse (soprano)
Suzuki, her maid (mezzo-soprano)
Benjamin-Franklin Pinkerton, US Navy Lieutenant (tenor)
Sharpless, USA consul in Nagasaki (baritone)
Kate Pinkerton, Pinkerton's American spouse (mezzo-soprano)
Goro, nakodo (tenor)
Prince Yamadori, Cio-Cio's suitor (tenor)
Le bonze, Cio-Cio-San's uncle (basso)

THE PLOT

Nagasaki, beginning of the 20th century. US Navy Lieutenant Pinkerton marries young geisha Cio-Cio-San, known by the name of Madama Butterfly, who also carries his child. During Pinkerton's 3 years long staying in the US Butterfly keeps on faithfully waiting for him but the Lieutenant eventually comes back with his American spouse and tries to adopt Butterfly's baby. Devastated and deprived of her honour Cio-Cio-San takes her own life.

Act 1: The marriage

Butterfly and Pinkerton are getting married in the Japanese custom in the house he bought for her spouse. United States consul Sharpless is concerned with the young Japanese girl genuinely believing in Pinkerton's love, who is only after some fun, instead. The wedding is abruptly interrupted by Cio-Cio-San's uncle, fuming over his niece's decision to embrace Christianity. Although it has resulted in her whole family disowning her, she is still happy with her choice and madly in love with the Lieutenant.

Act 2: The waiting

Three years later, Butterfly, who is living alone with her son and her maid Suzuki, is still waiting for his husband to return from America. In spite of her poverty and her life being quite harsh, she keeps faithful to Pinkerton and also turns down Prince Yamadori's marriage proposal. Sharpless gives her a letter from Pinkerton and tries to prepare the young lady for the blow that is about to hit her. Butterfly, however, gets radiant at the idea her spouse is coming back thus failing to read between the lines and command her maid to tidy up and prepare the house for Pinkerton's return, instead.

Act 3: The Return

It's dawn and Pinkerton, alongside with Sharpless, is discreetly conversing with Suzuk but quickly runs away upon learning Butterfly is on her way back home. Once she has got back home, Liutenant's American spouse Kate informs Butterfly that the couple is in Japan only to adopt Pinkerton's child. This devastates Butterfly who is ready to accept only if Pinkerton himself will ask her. Gutted and dishonoured, she farewells her son and takes her life while Pinkerton calls her name from far away

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