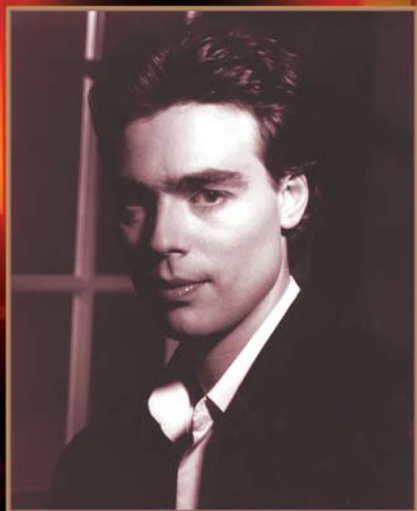




YVES ABEL

CHAN 3070(2)

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Lebrecht Collection

Giacomo Puccini

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)

Madam Butterfly

Opera in two acts (final, Paris version)

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after the book by John Luther Long and the play by David Belasco

English version based on that of R.H. Elkin

Cio-Cio-San (Madam Butterfly)	Cheryl Barker <i>soprano</i>
Suzuki, her maid	Jean Rigby <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
B.F. Pinkerton, Lieutenant in the United States Navy	Paul Charles Clarke <i>tenor</i>
Sharpless, United States consul at Nagasaki.....	Gregory Yurisich <i>baritone</i>
Goro, a marriage broker	Stuart Kale <i>tenor</i>
Prince Yamadori	D’Arcy Bleiker <i>baritone</i>
The Bonze	Clive Bayley <i>bass</i>
The Imperial Commissioner	Roland Wood <i>bass</i>
Kate Pinkerton	Ann Taylor <i>mezzo-soprano</i>

Yakuside Simon Birchall *bass* • The Official Registrar Frances Brett *bass*

Cio-Cio-San’s mother Anne Sheridan Jinks *soprano* • The Aunt Paula Bott *soprano*

Cio-Cio-San’s relations and friends and servants

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Philharmonia Orchestra

Christopher Moulds assistant conductor

Yves Abel

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

	Time	Page
[1] Introduction	1:05	[p. 70]
[2] 'So the walls and the ceiling...' <i>Pinkerton, Goro</i>	2:06	[p. 70]
[3] 'I think Your Honour's smiling' <i>Suzuki, Pinkerton, Goro</i>	2:17	[p. 71]
[4] 'It can't be much further now!' <i>Sharpless, Goro, Pinkerton</i>	1:20	[p. 71]
[5] 'The whole world over'	2:22	[p. 72]
[6] 'Fate can't crush him' <i>Pinkerton, Sharpless</i>	1:13	[p. 73]
[7] 'Is the bride very pretty?' <i>Sharpless, Goro, Pinkerton</i>	1:06	[p. 73]
[8] 'True love or fancy' <i>Pinkerton, Sharpless</i>	3:23	[p. 73]
[9] 'See them! They're climbing the summit of the hill!' <i>Goro, Butterfly's Girl Friends, Butterfly, Sharpless</i>	3:30	[p. 74]
[10] 'We are honoured' <i>Butterfly, Girl Friends, Pinkerton, Sharpless, Goro</i>	3:34	[p. 75]
[11] 'The Imperial Commissioner' <i>Goro, Pinkerton, Relations and Friends, Butterfly, Yakuside</i>	1:48	[p. 77]
[12] 'Oh, indeed, my friend, you're lucky!' <i>Sharpless, Butterfly</i>	1:16	[p. 78]

	Time	Page
[13] 'Come, my beloved' <i>Pinkerton, Butterfly, Goro</i>	3:25	[p. 79]
[14] 'My fate I have to follow' <i>Butterfly</i>	1:17	[p. 80]
[15] 'Silence! Silence!' <i>Goro, Commissioner, Girl Friends, Butterfly</i>	1:52	[p. 80]
[16] 'Congratulations' <i>Commissioner, Pinkerton, Sharpless, Registrar, Relatives, the Bonze, Goro</i>	4:33	[p. 81]
[17] 'Dearest, my dearest, weep no more' <i>Pinkerton, Butterfly, Suzuki</i>	2:06	[p. 83]
[18] 'Evening is falling...' <i>Pinkerton, Butterfly, Suzuki</i>	3:31	[p. 83]
[19] 'Child, from whose eyes the witchery is shining' <i>Pinkerton, Butterfly</i>	3:52	[p. 84]
[20] 'Ah, love me a little' <i>Butterfly, Pinkerton</i>	7:28	[p. 85]

Act II

Part 1

[21] 'Izaghi Izanami' <i>Suzuki, Butterfly</i>	6:47	[p. 86]
[22] 'One fine day' <i>Butterfly</i>	4:35	[p. 88]

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COMPACT DISC TWO

	Time	Page
[1] 'Come, let's enter' <i>Goro, Sharpless, Butterfly</i>	4:22	[p. 89]
[2] 'Yamadori, and has your unrequited love not yet released you?' <i>Butterfly, Yamadori, Sharpless, Goro</i>	4:53	[p. 91]
[3] 'Now, at last!' <i>Sharpless, Butterfly</i>	3:01	[p. 93]
[4] 'Just two things I could do'	2:07	[p. 95]
[5] 'This child! This child, then!' <i>Butterfly, Sharpless</i>	1:49	[p. 96]
[6] 'Do you know, my darling' <i>Butterfly</i>	3:24	[p. 96]
[7] 'I must be going' <i>Sharpless, Butterfly, Suzuki</i>	1:43	[p. 96]
[8] 'Ah! Ah!' <i>Goro, Suzuki, Butterfly</i>	1:52	[p. 97]
[9] 'Look, it's a man-of-war!' <i>Suzuki, Butterfly</i>	2:33	[p. 98]
[10] Flower duet: 'Shake the cherry tree' <i>Butterfly, Suzuki</i>	9:55	[p. 98]
[11] Humming chorus	2:55	[p. 101]

Act II
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[12] Prelude	4:29	[p. 101]
[13] Daybreak over Nagasaki	2:52	[p. 101]
[14] 'It's morning' <i>Suzuki, Butterfly</i>	2:01	[p. 101]
[15] 'Who is it?...' <i>Suzuki, Pinkerton, Sharpless</i>	2:42	[p. 102]
[16] 'I know for such misfortune there is no consolation' <i>Sharpless, Suzuki, Pinkerton</i>	3:59	[p. 103]
[17] 'Farewell, oh happy home!' <i>Pinkerton, Sharpless</i>	1:51	[p. 104]
[18] 'Then will you tell her?' <i>Kate, Suzuki</i>	1:19	[p. 104]
[19] 'Suzuki, where are you?'	1:47	[p. 105]
[20] 'You, Suzuki, you're always so faithful' <i>Butterfly, Suzuki</i>	1:14	[p. 105]
[21] 'Viper! I want you to answer' <i>Butterfly, Suzuki, Sharpless, Kate</i>	3:40	[p. 105]
[21] 'Your little fluttering heart is beating' <i>Suzuki, Butterfly</i>	2:55	[p. 106]
[23] 'Death with honour is better than life with dishonour' <i>Butterfly</i>	5:04	[p. 107]

TT 72:33

Giacomo Puccini: *Madam Butterfly*

Puccini declared *Madama Butterfly* to be his favourite work, a verdict with which I heartily concur. In terms of construction, musical continuity, emotional weight and subtle characterisation, in the case of the protagonist, it has no peer among his opus. That makes it all the more surprising that it was such a fiasco at its premiere in February 1904 at La Scala, Milan until one realises that its original form was faulty, as its composer immediately realised. By the time he had extensively revised it over the next months, it was acclaimed at Brescia on 28 May 1904, which might therefore be regarded as truly the first performance of a work that thereafter conquered the operatic world and has held its place in the genre's hall of fame for virtually a century now, a tribute to its appeal to its public.

Its genesis is simply told. When Japan opened its ports, in the 1860s, to Western shipping the West became fascinated with the inaccessibly exotic of the Orient. Stage works on the subject began to proliferate, among them in 1900 a one-act play by David Belasco called *Madam Butterfly*, first performed that year in New York. That, in turn was based on

a crudely realistic novella by an American lawyer, John Luther Long, published in an American magazine, *The Century*, dealing with the accepted practice of naval officers of foreign countries contracting 'marriages' with geishas that could be terminated on their recall home. Belasco substantially adapted Long's original. *Butterfly* doesn't die at the end in Long; in Belasco she dies in Pinkerton's arms (how sensible and moving is Puccini's solution to that denouement!). The play's success was repeated when it was staged in London, where by chance Puccini, in the British capital to see a production of *Tosca*, attended a performance. Although he couldn't follow the dialogue, he understood its gist and immediately realised its potential as an opera plot.

After an abortive attempt to write an opera on the subject of Marie Antoinette, Puccini sent his librettist Illica an Italian translation of Long's original story. Ricordi, Puccini's publisher, was lukewarm at first, but was finally convinced by Illica of the story's viability, so Puccini received permission from the original play's publisher and author to turn it into an opera.

The concept of composer and librettists changed course several times during its lengthy period of gestation, veering from the extremes of a one-acter to a three-act drama. The score was eventually completed towards the end of 1903. The eventual decision was to play it in two acts of one hour and one hour and a half respectively, but after the failure of the premiere, Puccini and the librettists re-drafted it, making numerous cuts (whose restoration in some stagings of late have only proved the good sense of the composer in making them).

He shortened the scenes of local colour, which can become tedious, in Act I, (there were further excisions for the Paris version – the one used on this recording) and divided Act II into two scenes, adding a tenor aria to the second, which became one of the piece's most popular numbers. At the Brescia 'second premiere', five numbers had to be encored, something that would definitely be frowned on today – but that is good enough evidence of how Puccini had unerringly hit the spot in transferring a very human and tragic story into memorable music.

That music is imbued with Puccini's fascination for things Japanese; records in his possession at the time, now at a museum in the family home at Celle in Tuscany, indicate

his interest in such things. In the First Act hints of Japanese melodies and the evocation of Japanese religion and tradition, such as the quaint wedding ceremony, form a suitable frame for the gradual development of the central character of the fifteen-year-old geisha Cio-Cio-San. Once on stage, after her arresting slow entry, she dominates the remainder of the work. In no other Puccini opera, not even in the case of Mimì in *Bohème*, or *Tosca* or *Turandot*, is the heroine asked to bear the brunt of the action to such an extent. Sharpless, the American consul, and the erring, even callous Lieutenant Pinkerton are not uninteresting, but their parts pale before the dominance of *Butterfly* herself.

At the start of Act I, Puccini – in masterly fashion – defines the three principal male characters: insouciant, macho Pinkerton; sympathetic, world-weary Sharpless; and creepy, subservient Goro, the marriage-broker, who has procured *Butterfly* for Pinkerton's delectation. In his customary way, Puccini mixes quasi-recitative with unforgettable and pertinent melody to depict all three so that they are established in our minds even before *Butterfly* arrives. After her unforgettable entry, a golden though taxing opportunity for the leading soprano to introduce herself, Cio-Cio-

San's simple thoughts on marriage and fidelity, and her brief telling of her life story, are wonderfully presented in the following moments.

She is already at her most touching and vulnerable both when she gives her view on being poor ('Nessuno si confessa mai' 'For no one likes to own that he was born so very poor') and as she describes, at 'Ieri son salita tutta sola' 'Now, I'd like to tell you that in secret I visited the mission', how she has adopted her new religion of Christianity as a result of her forthcoming marriage with Pinkerton. Once the Bonze, a disagreeable priestly relative of Cio-Cio-San, has done his worst to condemn her and the lovers are left alone, Puccini unleashes the most erotic music he ever penned in the longest love duet he ever wrote, evidence enough of how high was his level of inspiration at the time and of his identification with his adored heroine.

Butterfly's complete faith in Pinkerton is touchingly evoked as is his overwhelming desire, but even at this moment of maximum happiness there is a faint suggestion, in the harmonies and a palpable sense of longing, of foreboding and melancholy. Maybe Puccini derived some of that feeling from study of the love duet in Act II of *Tristan und Isolde*. As the

pair go off to consummate their love with such devastating consequences, Puccini brings to bear the full force of his large orchestra as the singers mount to their highest register. Inevitably and rightly, in anything like a good performance, this duet brings down the house.

Some suspension of disbelief is needed for us to imagine exactly what has happened to Cio-Cio-San between her moment of supreme happiness at the end of Act I and her appearance at the start of Act II. She has obviously given birth to a little boy and presumably given him tender, loving care with the assistance of the ever-faithful and obedient Suzuki. With her belief in Pinkerton unshaken, Butterfly continues to endure poverty, content to remain in her little house and await Pinkerton's promised return. In some productions, such is her conviction in all things American, she seems as far as possible to have taken on Western characteristics in her home.

She inveighs against the doubts expressed by Suzuki, even threatening to kill her, a sign of the steel that is part of her psychological makeup. Tenderly she quotes Pinkerton's parting words, starting 'O Butterfly, piccina mogliettina' 'O Butterfly, my dearest little darling', promising to return when the robins nest, the first of so many heart-rending phrases

Puccini produces for his beloved heroine throughout Act II. Suzuki's doubts are finally put to flight in the opera's most famous solo, 'One fine day' (Un bel dì), describing in highly emotive words and music how she imagines her lover's return in her mind. In it Butterfly discloses many the facets of her character and her love, as the details are laid before us with increasing intensity.

When Sharpless arrives, his attempts to disabuse her of hope by reading her a letter from Pinkerton are doomed to failure. When he tells her of the letter, she immediately seizes on this sign of apparent hope by declaring in a graceful phrase, 'Io son la donna più lieta del Giappone' 'Then I'm the happiest lady in Japan'. Then she ingenuously asks Sharpless when the robins nest in America, a question he cannot answer. The arrival of Yamadori, a local suitor for Butterfly's hand, is treated with humorous derision by her. Yamadori is given a lovely, if intentionally weak, melody by which to make his case.

Sharpless resumes his reading of the letter, but Butterfly insists on putting a positive spin on what would be for her a devastating message could she but comprehend it. At last he asks her what she would do if Pinkerton didn't return. The music turns abrupt and

tragic as she considers either resuming as a geisha or dying. In ineffable words, Butterfly utters the hurt he has caused her. Then she produces her child and, over him, she pours out her heart and soul in the solo 'Che tua madre' 'That your mother should take you on her shoulder', declaiming to the boy that she couldn't go begging: death would be much preferable. This is perhaps the most searing passage in the whole opera as it evinces the depth of Cio-Cio-San's feelings in inexpressibly direct and emotional music.

The Consul departs, and Butterfly almost murders Goro for suggesting nobody knows who is the child's father (he is rescued by Suzuki's intervention). Then, in an inspired change of mood, elicited by Puccini, we hear a cannon from the harbour, marking the sighting of Pinkerton's ship. Butterfly's delight is shown in such a magnificent outburst of joy, in which she tells us she was always right, the doubters wrong, that most audiences share in her delusion and break out into spontaneous applause. You may think this is manipulation of a grand scale on Puccini's part, but the effect, in the theatre, is overwhelming. Then, to perhaps the happiest and simplest music in the score, she and Suzuki bedeck the home in flowers in expectation of the beloved's return.

The pair, with the child, start a vigil to hypnotic strains in the orchestra. As dawn comes at the start of the second scene (often Act III in the opera house), Puccini writes a prelude in the most advanced vein to date in his works. It was obviously influenced by the Debussy of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which appeared two years earlier, in 1902. The harmonies are ruminative and equivocal in a Debussian mode, and the end in sight is just as tragic as that in Debussy's opera.

In this denouement, Pinkerton expresses all his remorse in 'Addio fiorito asil' 'Farewell, oh happy home', Sharpless is in 'I-told-you-so' vein, and Suzuki is fearful of the tragedy to come, particularly when she spies Kate, Pinkerton's new wife. Puccini subtly keeps his heroine off the scene until the last possible moment. Her expected happiness and release is shattered when she sees Kate and realises who she must be. In broken phrases she shows her profound grief, she tells Kate – in possibly the score's most eloquent passage – that nobody in the world can be happier than her (Kate): 'Under the great sky above us' ('Sotto il gran ponte del cielo'). No Butterfly worth her salt can fail here: librettist and composer have given her a phrase literally to die for.

All that is left her is to commit hari-kari.

In a vain effort to prevent the terrible deed, Suzuki sends in the child who, uncomprehending, receives Butterfly's dying words of love. She blindfolds the boy, does the deed, and as she lies dying the desperate Pinkerton arrives crying out her name. Too late. Once more, as throughout, Puccini's dramatic timing is unerring. The audience, sharing a moment of personal disaster, is totally shattered by Butterfly's fatal predicament.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

Pinkerton's house, near Nagasaki

Goro, a marriage broker, is showing Pinkerton, a Lieutenant in the United States Navy, over the house which Pinkerton has rented for his bride-to-be, Cio-Cio-San, the geisha Madam Butterfly. He is about to marry her in accordance with the Japanese law which holds that the husband's absence, even for so short a time as a month, constitutes a divorce. The first wedding guest to arrive is Sharpless, the American Consul, who begs him not to

enter into the marriage so lightly. Pinkerton, however, cannot believe that Butterfly would take the ceremony seriously, and looks forward to the day when he will marry a real, American, wife.

Butterfly arrives and the marriage contract is signed. Suddenly her uncle the Bonze appears and denounces her: he has learnt that Butterfly has taken the irrevocable step of renouncing her religion. Her family and friends curse her and leave. Pinkerton consoles his wife and Suzuki dresses her for her wedding night. Butterfly declares her love for Pinkerton and he replies that she is his forever.

Act II

Part 1

Three years later

Pinkerton has been recalled to America shortly after his marriage and Butterfly is living, practically impoverished, with her faithful Suzuki.

COMPACT DISC TWO

In spite of Suzuki's disbelief, Butterfly is sure of Pinkerton's return and refuses an offer of marriage from Prince Yamadori, a Japanese who has made a fortune in trade with

America. Butterfly tells him that she considers herself bound by the laws of her husband's country. Sharpless produces a letter from Pinkerton announcing that he is returning with an American wife and asking Sharpless to break the news to Butterfly. Butterfly is so excited at the news of her husband's return that Sharpless has no opportunity to read her the whole letter. He tries to persuade her to accept Yamadori's offer, but she shows him Pinkerton's son as proof of his affection for her. Sharpless leaves, unable to bring himself to deliver his message.

The harbour cannon is heard. It is Pinkerton's ship, the *Abraham Lincoln*. In a fever of excitement Butterfly and Suzuki decorate the house with flowers in honour of his arrival, and wait all night for him.

Part 2

As dawn breaks the calls of the sailors are heard from the harbour. Butterfly is still waiting for Pinkerton. Suzuki persuades her to go and rest. Sharpless arrives with Pinkerton and Kate, the American wife. Pinkerton, realising the strength of Butterfly's devotion, is filled with remorse, and rushes out, leaving Kate and Sharpless to meet Butterfly. They tell Suzuki that Kate wishes to adopt her husband's

son. Butterfly learns the truth from Kate and asks that Pinkerton himself should come himself to fetch the child. Left alone, she takes a last farewell of her son, and kills herself.

English National Opera

Cheryl Barker was born in Sydney, Australia, where she studied with the late Dame Joan Hammond. Since making her debut in 1984 as Blondchen in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for the State Opera of South Australia she has appeared with The Royal Opera as Jennifer (*The Midsummer Marriage*); with English National Opera as Musetta (*La bohème*), Butterfly, Donna Elvira, Giorgetta and Sister Angelica (*Il trittico*). Other roles include Violetta (Hamburg State Opera, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand); Butterfly (Hamburg State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand, Minnesota Opera); Tatyana (Scottish Opera, Opera Queensland); and Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), the title role in *Maria Stuarda*, the Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*) and the Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*). She has undertaken many roles for Flanders Opera including Mimì, Liù (*Turandot*), Butterfly, Desdemona and Sister Angelica.

In concert Cheryl Barker has appeared at the Royal Albert Hall (*War Requiem* and Verdi's *Requiem*), at the Spoleto Festival in Italy, at London's Wigmore Hall, at the Melbourne International Festival, and in Belgium. Video recordings include *La bohème* and *Harry Enfield's Guide to Opera*.

Paul Charles Clarke was born in Liverpool, studied at the Royal College of Music with Neil Mackie, and was the winner of the 1989 Kathleen Ferrier Competition. Roles include the Duke (*Rigoletto*); Fenton (*Falstaff*) in Japan and at the Edinburgh Festival; for Welsh National Opera High Priest of Neptune (*Idomeneo*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Alfredo (*La traviata*); for Scottish Opera Alfredo, and Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*); for Opera North Rodolfo and Dmitri (*Boris Godunov*); and for The Royal Opera Froh (*Das Rheingold*), Cassio (*Otello*), Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*) and Alfredo. Internationally he has appeared with Seattle Opera, the Metropolitan Opera (Jenik in *The Bartered Bride*, and Roméo), Houston Grand Opera and in Monte Carlo. He has sung the role of Pinkerton with Houston Grand Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and at the Met in the Parks Festival.

Concert appearances include a European

tour with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Sir Simon Rattle in performances of Beethoven 9 (which he has also sung with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra), and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in Rome.

Recordings include Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Arturo (*Lucia*), and for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation the title role in Gounod's *Faust*.

Jean Rigby studied at the Royal Birmingham School of Music and then at the Royal Academy of Music with Patricia Clarke, with whom she continues to work. With English National Opera she has sung Helen (*King Priam*), Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*), Penelope (*The Return of Ulysses*) Jocasta, Carmen, Octavian and Lucretia. Other appearances include Nicklausse (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) with The Royal Opera and for San Diego Opera; *L'italiana in Algeri* at the Buxton Festival; the title role in *La Cenerentola*, and Idamante (*Idomeneo*) for Garsington Opera; Genevieve (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), and Irene (*Theodora*) (amongst many roles) at the Glyndebourne Festival; and Charlotte (*Werther*) for Seattle Opera.

Concert engagements include Mahler's Second and Eighth Symphonies at the London Promenade concerts, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and

St Paul, *Les nuits d'été*, and Verdi's *Requiem*.

Recordings for Chandos include *The Rape of Lucretia*, Delius's *A Mass of Life*, Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, and *Rigoletto* (for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Gregory Yurisch's recent portrayals of the great Verdi repertory have earned him tremendous critical praise. Acclaimed performances include *Nabucco* at the Bregenz Festival, with The Royal Opera and in Geneva; the title role in *Rigoletto* in Israel, Australia and Athens; the title role in *Simon Boccanegra*, and Escamillo (*Carmen*) for English National Opera; the title role *Falstaff* in Australia; Germont Père (*La traviata*) for San Francisco Opera, Australian Opera, in Tel-Aviv and Geneva; Iago (*Otello*) with Plácido Domingo for the Los Angeles Opera and in Brisbane; Amonasro (*Aida*), Stankar (Verdi's *Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), and the four villains (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), for The Royal Opera.

Gregory Yurisch's international concert appearances include Mahler's Eighth Symphony at the Edinburgh Festival; Alberich (*Siegfried*) in concert, Salieri (Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*) and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for the Australian ABC Television network.

Recordings include Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), a solo disc devoted to the songs of Peter Dawson, and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, Scarpia (*Tosca*).

Stuart Kale is internationally recognised as one of the most outstanding singing actors in the operatic world and his roles cover a huge range of repertoire, from Monteverdi to Messiaen. He began his career at Welsh National Opera before joining English National Opera, where he remained for eight years, singing roles such as Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (Martin's *Julietta*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) and Nanki-Poo in Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado*.

Notable engagements include the High Priest (*Idomeneo*) at Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) in Nancy, San Francisco and at the Opera du Rhin in Strasbourg, Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) in Strasbourg, Bordeaux and Montpellier, Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) for ENO's 1990 Russian Tour, Truffaldino (*The Love for Three Oranges*) for ENO, Zinoviev (*Lady Macbeth*) in Toulouse and Marseille, the three tenor roles in Lulu at the Châtelet. Recordings include Shuisky in *Boris Godunov* (highlights) and Roderigo (*Otello*) for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Trained at the Royal Northern College of Music, **Clive Bayley** is already well established with the major opera companies throughout Great Britain and he regularly sings in concert. His repertoire of principal and supporting roles has steadily grown since he graduated, and now ranges from Monteverdi to Verdi, Puccini and Berg. For The Royal Opera he has appeared as Colline in *La bohème*, Hans Foltz in *Die Meistersinger* and Castro in *La fanciulla del West*. In addition he has had notable successes with Opera North in Verdi's *Jerusalem*, with English National Opera in *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck*, and *Dr Faust*, with Opera Factory in *Don Giovanni*, and Colline in *La bohème* at the Royal Albert Hall. Abroad he has appeared with Netherlands Opera and Seattle Opera and in concert with Les Arts Florissants on tour in Europe.

Recordings for Chandos include *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd*, and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Don Giovanni*, *Boris Godunov* (highlights), *Don Pasquale* and *Il trovatore*.

D'Arcy Bleiker was born in Yorkshire and studied with Robert Alderson at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was

supported by the Peter Moores Foundation and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Roles at the RNCM included Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), Schaunard (*La bohème*) and Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*). He has also sung with Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and The Classical Opera Company at the Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden. He has been a member of the Glyndebourne Festival Chorus and has appeared in concert throughout the north of England. With the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra he has sung *Elijah*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, roles in *Candide*, and the King in a concert performance of *Aida*. He has also sung the role of Polydorus in *L'enfance du Christ* at the Bridgewater Hall, conducted by Kent Nagano.

Roland Wood was born in Berkshire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Patrick McGuigan and Robert Alderson, then at the National Opera Studio with support from the Peter Moores Foundation and English National Opera. He began his operatic career as a bass-baritone and early roles included Silva (*Ernani*) and Colline (*La bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) and Martino (*L'occasione fa il ladro*) for the Walton Trust in Ischia; and Zaretsky

(*Eugene Onegin*) for European Union Opera. Having made the transition to baritone, more recent roles include Josev Prasov in the world premiere of *The Bridge*, and the Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*) at the RNCM and Opera Holland Park. He has also covered a number of roles for Glyndebourne Festival Opera and English National Opera. Recordings include Donizetti's *Belisario* for Opera Rara.

Geoffrey Mitchell's singing career has encompassed a remarkably wide repertoire from early to contemporary music and has taken him to Scandinavia, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, Canada and Australasia. Early conducting experience with the BBC led to a wider involvement with his own singers and in turn to the establishment of the **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Early recordings resulted in the Choir's long-term involvement with Opera Rara for which it has made over thirty recordings. The Choir is enjoying a growing reputation with further work from the BBC and international recording companies. For Chandos the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir has participated in numerous recordings in the acclaimed Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation.

From auspicious beginnings in 1945, when it was established by Walter Legge primarily as a recording orchestra, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** went on to attract some of the twentieth century's greatest conductors. Associated most closely with the Orchestra have been Otto Klemperer (first Principal Conductor), Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Carlo Maria Giulini, Sir Andrew Davis, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Under current Principal Conductor Christoph von Dohnanyi and with Leonard Slatkin as Principal Guest Conductor the Orchestra has consolidated its central position in British musical life, not only in London where it is Resident Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, but also in the wider community through regional residencies.

The Orchestra has received several major awards and won critical acclaim for its vitality and unique warmth of sound. It has been praised as well for its innovative programming, at the heart of which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new music by the world's leading living composers, among them its current Visiting Composer James MacMillan.

The Orchestra tours frequently abroad and is the world's most recorded symphony

orchestra with well over 1000 releases to its credit. Among these are, for Opera Rara, several discs of operatic arias as well as eleven complete operas (Donizetti's *Ugo, conte di Parigi*, *Ne m'oubliez pas*, *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'assedio di Calais*, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* and *Maria de Rudenz*, Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*, Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*, Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi*, Pacini's *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* and Rossini's *Otello*). The Orchestra has recorded numerous discs for Chandos including, in the Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation, *The Elixir of Love*, *Faust*, *La bohème*, the award-winning *Tosca* and six solo recital albums of operatic arias (with Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny and John Tomlinson.)

Yves Abel was born in Canada and is quickly becoming established as one of his generation's most important conductors in both the operatic and symphonic repertoires. He studied at the Mannes College of Music and at the Tanglewood Music Center where he was guided by Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Gunther Herbig and Roger Norrington.

In opera, he has made critically acclaimed debuts with Opera North for *Don Carlos*;

Glyndebourne Festival Opera for *Le Comte Ory*; Lyric Opera of Chicago for *L'elisir d'amore*; the Opera de Monte Carlo for *Il turco in Italia*; the Netherlands Opera for *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*; the San Francisco Opera conducting *Hamlet*; the Royal Danish Opera for *L'elisir d'amore* and *Un ballo in maschera*; the Opera de Nice conducting Massenet's *Thais*, *Luisa Miller* for Spoleto Festival USA, and *Zampa* for l'Opera Français de New York. Other appearances include the *Festival dei due Mondi* in Spoleto for performances and a film of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* to celebrate the 85th birthday of Gian Carlo Menotti, the Paris Opéra, New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St Louis, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Theater of Connecticut, and at the

Wexford Opera Festival and the Wolf Trap Opera

Yves Abel is equally at home in orchestral repertoire and recent engagements include concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Nova Scotia Orchestra and Orquesta Cuidad de Granada. He has won significant critical acclaim for his achievements as Music Director of L'Opéra Français de New York. Since the company's inception in 1990, he has conducted such rarities as Offenbach's *Barbe-Bleue*; Bizet's *La jolie fille de Perth*; Cherubini's *Médée* and *Les Deux Journées*; Milhaud's *Le Pauvre Matelot* and *Esther de Carpentras*; Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*; Bizet's *Docteur Miracle*; and Grétry's *Les Deux Avides*.

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire, the son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read modern languages – he was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera, however, which was his great love. He had worked at Glyndebourne Festival Opera before going up to university, and after Oxford he became a production student at the Vienna State Opera, combining this with a three-year course at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year at the Academy Moores had produced the Vienna premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty being paramount, he returned to Liverpool.

From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985; from 1988 to 1992 he was a director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In May 1992 he became Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and in the New Year's Honours List for 1991, he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started



Christina Burron/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL

giving financial support to various young artists, several of whom – Joan Sutherland, Colin Davis and the late Geraint Evans amongst them – were to become world-famous. In 1964 he set aside a substantial part of his inheritance to establish the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young and to improve race relations.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

the recording of operas from the core repertoire sung in English translation; the recording or staging of rare Italian opera from the *bel canto* era of the early nineteenth century (repertoire which would otherwise only be accessible to scholars); the nurturing of promising young opera singers; new operatic work.

The Foundation awards scholarships annually to students and post-graduates for furthering their vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition, project awards may be given to facilitate language tuition in the appropriate country, attendance at masterclasses or summer courses, specialised repertoire study with an acknowledged expert in the field, or post-graduate performance training.

The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

Since 1964 the Foundation has supported the recording of more than forty operas, many of these sung in English, in translation. It has always been Peter Moores's belief that to enjoy opera to the full, there must be no language barrier, particularly for newcomers and particularly in the popular repertoire – hence the *Opera in English* series launched with Chandos in 1995. This includes many of the English language recordings funded by the Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s, and is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English.

Giacomo Puccini: *Madam Butterfly*

Puccini bezeichnete *Madama Butterfly* als sein Lieblingswerk – ein Urteil, dem ich persönlich von Herzen zustimme. Was den Aufbau, die musikalische Kontinuität, das emotionale Gewicht und die subtile Charakterisierung der Hauptpartie anbelangt, steht diese Oper allein im Gesamtwerk des Komponisten. Daher ist es umso überraschender, daß die Uraufführung an der Mailänder Scala im Februar 1904 ein derartiges Fiasko war, bis man versteht, daß die Form der Originalversion fehlerhaft war, was dem Komponisten sofort klar wurde. Nachdem Puccini das Werk im Laufe der nächsten Monate umfassend überarbeitet hatte, kam es am 28.5.1904 in Brescia mit großem Erfolg zur Aufführung – eigentlich die wahre Uraufführung jenes Werkes, das anschließend die Opernwelt erobern und einen Platz in der Ruhmeshalle dieses Genres erhalten sollte, den es dank seiner Publikumswirkung nun seit beinahe einem Jahrhundert innehat.

Die Entstehungsgeschichte des Werks ist schnell erzählt. Als Japan in den sechziger Jahren des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts der westlichen Schifffahrt seine Häfen öffnete,

wuchs im Westen die Faszination für die unerreichbare Exotik des Orients. Bühnenwerke zu diesem Thema begannen zu entstehen, unter anderem ein einaktiges Theaterstück namens *Madam Butterfly* von David Belasco, das 1900 in New York uraufgeführt wurde. Dies basierte wiederum auf einer grob-realistischen Novelle eines amerikanischen Rechtsanwalts, John Luther Long, die in der amerikanischen Zeitschrift *The Century* erschienen war; sie behandelte die weitverbreitete Praxis, daß Marineoffiziere fremder Länder "Ehen" mit Geishas abschlossen, die jedoch bei ihrem Rückruf nach Hause null und nichtig wurden. Belasco überarbeitete Longs Original weitgehend. In der Longschen Fassung überlebt Butterfly am Schluß, während sie bei Belasco in Pinkertons Armen stirbt. (Puccinis Lösung ist dagegen sowohl sinnvoll als auch ergreifend.) Das Theaterstück war auch in London äußerst erfolgreich, wo Puccini, der sich in der britischen Hauptstadt aufhielt, um eine Produktion von *Tosca* zu sehen, zufälligerweise einer Aufführung beiwohnte. Obwohl er dem Dialog nicht folgen konnte, verstand er doch

den Sinn und erkannte sofort das dramatische Potential der Handlung als Opernstoff.

Nach einem mißlungenen Versuch, eine Oper über Marie Antoinette zu schreiben, schickte Puccini seinem Librettisten Illica eine italienische Übersetzung von Longs Original. Ricordi, Puccinis Verleger, reagierte zunächst skeptisch, ließ sich aber schließlich doch durch Illica von der Realisierbarkeit der literarischen Vorlage überzeugen, und Puccini erhielt sowohl vom Verleger als auch vom Autor des Originalbühnenstücks die Genehmigung, es in eine Oper umzuwandeln.

Während der langen Entstehungszeit des Werkes änderte sich das Konzept des Komponisten und der Librettisten mehrmals und schwankte zwischen den Extremen Einakter und dreiaktiges Drama. Die Partitur war schließlich gegen Ende des Jahres 1903 fertig. Die endgültige Entscheidung war zu Gunsten von zwei Akten, die jeweils eine bzw. eineinhalb Stunden dauerten, gefallen. Nach dem Mißerfolg der Uraufführung arbeiteten Puccini und die Librettisten das Stück um und nahmen zahlreiche Striche vor (deren Wiederaufnahmen in Inszenierungen der jüngsten Zeit nur bestätigt haben, wie vernünftig die Entscheidung des Komponisten war).

Puccini verkürzte die dem örtlichen Kolorit gewidmeten Szenen des ersten Akts, die gewisse Längen aufweisen können – für die auf dieser CD eingespielte Pariser Fassung gab es noch weitere Striche –, und unterteilte den zweiten Akt in zwei Szenen, wobei der zweiten eine Tenorarie hinzugefügt wurde, die zu einer der beliebtesten Nummern der ganzen Oper werden sollte. Bei der "zweiten Uraufführung" in Brescia mußten fünf Nummern als Zugabe wiederholt werden, was heutzutage mit Sicherheit verpönt wäre. Es zeigt aber, wie Puccini mit seiner Umsetzung einer äußerst menschlichen und tragischen Geschichte in unvergeßliche Musik genau ins Schwarze getroffen hatte.

Diese Musik ist von Puccinis Faszination für alles Japanische durchdrungen; auf sein Interesse für diese Dinge verweisen beispielsweise Schallplatten, die sich zu jener Zeit in seinem Besitz befanden, und die nun in einem Museum in dem Familienhaus im toskanischen Celle zu sehen sind. Die allmähliche Entwicklung der Hauptperson, der fünfzehnjährigen Geisha Cio-Cio-San, erhält im ersten Akt durch Anklänge japanischer Melodien und die Darstellungen japanischer Religion und Tradition, wie etwa der idyllischen Hochzeitszeremonie, einen

passenden Rahmen. Ist sie, nach ihrem atemberaubend langsamen Auftritt dann einmal auf der Bühne, so dominiert sie den Rest des Stückes. In keiner anderen Oper Puccinis – nicht einmal im Falle der Mimì in *La bohème*, oder bei *Tosca* oder *Turandot* – muß die Heldin die Handlung dermaßen mittragen. Zwar sind Sharpless, der amerikanische Konsul, und der falsche, sogar herzlose, Leutnant Pinkerton keine uninteressanten Partien, sie verblassen jedoch neben der Dominanz der Butterfly selbst.

Am Anfang des ersten Akts zeichnet Puccini auf meisterhafte Art und Weise die drei männlichen Hauptpersonen: den unbekümmerten Macho Pinkerton; den wohlwollenden, weltmüden Sharpless; und den unheimlichen, unterwürfigen Goro, den Heiratsvermittler, der Butterfly zur Unterhaltung Pinkertons herbeigeschafft hat. Auf die ihm eigene Art mischt Puccini in der Schilderung der drei Charaktere Quasi-Rezitativ mit unnachahmlicher und treffender Melodik, so daß das Publikum noch vor Butterflys erstem Auftritt ein klares Bild von ihnen hat. Nach dem unvergesslichen Auftritt Butterflys, einer hervorragenden Gelegenheit für die Sopranistin, in der jedoch auch ihr Können auf die Probe gestellt wird,

beschreiben die anschließenden Momente auf wunderbare Art und Weise Cio-Cio-Sans einfache Gedanken über Ehe und Treue und erzählen ihre kurze Lebensgeschichte.

Sie zeigt bereits ihre rührendste und verletzbarste Seite, wenn sie ihre Meinung zum Thema Armut erklärt ("Nessuno si confessa mai" "For no one likes to own that he was born so very poor"), und ebenso wenn sie bei "Ieri son salita tutta sola" ("Now, I'd like to tell you that in secret I visited the mission") beschreibt, wie sie angesichts ihrer bevorstehenden Heirat mit Pinkerton die christliche Religion angenommen hat. Nachdem der Bonze, ein unangenehmer priesterlicher Verwandter Cio-Cio-Sans, sie förmlich verdammt hat, und das Liebespaar nun allein ist, entfesselt Puccini seine erotischste Musik in dem längsten Liebesduett, das er je schrieb. Auch daran zeigt sich das hohe Maß seiner Inspiration, und wie sehr er sich mit seiner angebeteten Heldin identifizierte.

Puccini zeichnet auf anrührende Art und Weise Butterflys völliges Vertrauen zu Pinkerton sowie dessen überwältigendes Begehren, wobei auch schon in diesem Augenblick des größten Glücks in den Harmonien und in der spürbaren Sehnsucht

der Musik eine gewisse Vorahnung und Melancholie mitschwingen. Möglicherweise kam dieses Gefühl zum Teil durch Puccinis Studium des Liebesduetts aus dem 2. Aufzug von *Tristan und Isolde* zustande. Die beiden gehen ab, um sich ihrer Liebe hinzugeben – mit katastrophalen Folgen –, und Puccini setzt die volle Kraft seines großen Orchesters ein, während die Sänger in ihre höchsten Lagen hinaufsteigen. In jeder annähernd guten Vorstellung bringt dieses Duett zwangsläufig und zu Recht das Publikum zum Rasen.

Um sich vorzustellen, was Cio-Cio-San zwischen ihrem vollkommenen Glück am Ende des ersten Akts und ihrem Auftritt zu Anfang des zweiten widerfahren sein mag, bedarf es etwas Fantasie. Offensichtlich hat sie einen kleinen Jungen zur Welt gebracht und mit Hilfe der immer treuen und gehorsamen Suzuki voll zärtlicher und liebender Zuwendung für ihn gesorgt. Ihr Glaube an Pinkerton ist unerschüttert, und Butterfly erträgt ihre Armut weiter, zufrieden, in ihrem Häuschen zu bleiben und Pinkertons versprochener Wiederkehr zu harren. In manchen Inszenierungen ist sie dermaßen von allem Amerikanischen überzeugt, daß ihr Zuhause mit möglichst vielen westlichen Merkmalen ausgestattet ist.

Sie beschimpft Suzuki wegen der von ihr geäußerten Zweifel und droht sogar, sie zu töten, was auf die eiserne Härte, die einen Teil von Butterflys Charakter ausmacht, hindeutet. Voller Zärtlichkeit zitiert sie Pinkertons Abschiedsworte, beginnend mit "O Butterfly, piccina mogliettina" ("O Butterfly, my dearest little darling") und sein Versprechen, zurückzukehren, wenn die Rotkehlchen wieder nisten. Dies ist die erste von vielen herzerreißenden Phrasen, die Puccini im zweiten Akt für seine geliebte Heldin schreibt. Suzukis Zweifel werden schließlich durch das berühmteste Solo der ganzen Oper "Un bel dì" ("One fine day") in die Flucht geschlagen, und Butterfly beschreibt in höchst emotionaler Musik und Worten, wie sie sich die Wiederkehr ihres Geliebten vorstellt. Sie enthüllt dabei in immer intensiver werdenden Einzelheiten viele Facetten ihrer Persönlichkeit und ihrer Liebe.

Sharpless tritt ein, doch seine Versuche, sie von ihrer irrigen Hoffnung abzubringen, indem er ihr einen Brief Pinkertons vorliest, sind zum Scheitern verurteilt. Als er von dem Brief erzählt, sieht sie darin sofort einen Hoffnungsschimmer und erklärt in einer anmutigen Phrase, "Io son la donna più lieta del Giappone" ("Then I'm the happiest lady in Japan"). Dann fragt sie Sharpless naiv, wann

die Rotkehlchen in Amerika nisten, eine Frage die er nicht zu beantworten vermag. Die Ankunft Yamadoris, eines einheimischen Heiratskandidaten, nimmt Butterfly humorvoll-spöttisch auf. Yamadori hält mit einer sehr schönen, wenn auch absichtlich schwachen, Melodie um ihre Hand an.

Sharpless liest den Brief weiter vor, doch Butterfly dreht alles ins Positive, was richtig verstanden für sie niederschmetternde Neuigkeiten wären. Schließlich fragt er sie, was sie tun würde, wenn Pinkerton nicht zurückkäme. Als Butterfly die Möglichkeit abwägt, entweder wieder Geisha zu werden oder zu sterben, wird die Musik unruhig und tragisch. Nach Worten ringend verleiht Butterfly dem von ihm verursachten Schmerz Ausdruck. Dann holt sie ihr Kind und schüttet über ihm in dem Solo "Che tua madre" ("That your mother should take you on her shoulder") ihr Herz und ihre Seele aus, indem sie vor dem Jungen deklamiert, sie könne nicht betteln gehen: der Tod wäre viel wünschenswerter. Es handelt sich hier womöglich um die Passage aus der ganzen Oper, die am meisten unter die Haut geht, da in ihr die Tiefe von Cio-Cio-Sans Gefühlen durch unaussprechlich direkte und emotionale Musik an den Tag tritt.

Der Konsul geht, und Butterfly bringt Goro fast um, weil er andeutet, daß niemand genau wisse, wer der Vater des Kindes sei. Nur Suzukis Eingreifen rettet ihn. Dann nimmt Puccini einen inspirierten Stimmungswechsel vor, und man hört eine Kanone vom Hafen – das Zeichen, daß Pinkertons Schiff gesichtet worden ist. Butterflys Freude äußert sich in einem solch herrlichen Ausbruch – sie hatte immer recht und die Zweifler unrecht –, daß die meisten Zuschauer ihre Fehleinschätzung teilen und in spontanen Applaus ausbrechen. Vielleicht denkt man, Puccini handle hier in hohem Maße manipulativ, die Wirkung im Theater ist jedoch wirklich außerordentlich. Es folgt die vielleicht glücklichste und einfachste Musik in der ganzen Partitur, wenn dann Butterfly und Suzuki in Erwartung der Rückkehr des Geliebten die Wohnung mit Blumen schmücken.

Die beiden halten zusammen mit dem Kind Wache, begleitet von hypnotisierenden Orchesterklängen. Bei Tagesanbruch zu Anfang der zweiten Szene (im Opernhaus oft der dritte Akt) schreibt Puccini ein Prelude, das stilistisch weiter fortgeschritten ist, als seine gesamte bisherige Musik. Der Einfluß von Debussys 1902, also zwei Jahre zuvor, erschienener Oper *Pelléas et Mélisande* ist

deutlich zu spüren. Die grübelnde und zweideutige Harmonik ist ganz im Stil des französischen Komponisten, und das Ende, das sich langsam abzeichnet, ist ebenso tragisch wie das in Debussys Oper.

In "Addio fiorito asil" ("Farewell, oh happy home") drückt Pinkerton seine ganze Reue aus, Sharpless nimmt für sich in Anspruch, alles vorher gewußt zu haben, und Suzuki fürchtet die bevorstehende Tragödie, zumal sie Kate, die neue Frau Pinkertons, erspäht hat. Puccini hält auf subtile Art und Weise seine Heldin so lange wie möglich von der Bühne fern. Die von ihr erwartete Glückseligkeit und Befreiung werden in dem Moment zerschlagen, als sie Kate sieht und ihr klar wird, wer sie sein muß. In gebrochenen Phrasen bringt sie ihren unermesslichen Schmerz zum Ausdruck und sagt zu Kate – in der vielleicht beredtesten Stelle der ganzen Oper –, in der ganzen Welt könne niemand glücklicher sein als diese: "Sotto il gran ponte del cielo" ("Under the great sky above us"). Keine Butterfly, die der Partie auch nur einigermaßen gewachsen ist, kann hier etwas falsch machen: Librettist und Komponist haben ihr eine Phrase geschenkt, für die man buchstäblich sterben würde.

Es bleibt ihr nur das Harakiri. Umsonst

versucht Suzuki die schreckliche Tat zu verhindern, indem sie das Kind hineinschickt, das ohne zu verstehen, was vorgeht, Butterflys Abschiedsworte der Liebe empfängt. Sie verbindet ihm die Augen, begeht die Tat, und als sie im Sterben liegt, tritt der verzweifelte Pinkerton, ihren Namen rufend, ein. Es ist zu spät. Wieder einmal – wie im gesamten Werk – ist Puccinis Sinn für dramatisches Timing perfekt. Das Publikum nimmt an dieser persönlichen Katastrophe Anteil und ist durch Butterflys fatales Schicksal vollkommen erschüttert.

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Handlung

COMPACT DISC ONE

1. Akt

Das Haus Pinkertons, in der Nähe von Nagasaki Goro, ein Heiratsvermittler, zeigt Pinkerton, einem Leutnant der US-Marine, das Haus, das dieser für seine zukünftige Braut Cio-Cio-San, die Geisha Madam Butterfly, gemietet hat. Pinkerton will sie heiraten, und zwar nach japanischem Gesetz, laut dem eine Abwesenheit des Ehemanns, und dauert sie auch nicht länger als einen Monat, einer

Scheidung gleichkommt. Der erste Hochzeitsgast ist Sharpless, der amerikanische Konsul, der Pinkerton drängt, den Ehestand nicht so leicht zu nehmen. Doch Pinkerton kann einfach nicht glauben, daß Butterfly die Zeremonie wirklich ernst nimmt, und er freut sich auf den Tag, an dem er eine richtige – amerikanische – Braut zur Frau nehmen wird.

Butterfly tritt auf, und der Ehevertrag wird unterschrieben. Plötzlich erscheint ihr Onkel, der Bonze, und macht ihr Vorhaltungen, denn er hat erfahren, daß Butterfly den unwiderruflichen Schritt getan hat, ihre Religion aufzugeben. Ihre Familie und Freunde verfluchen sie und gehen ab. Pinkerton tröstet seine Ehefrau, und Suzuki kleidet sie für die Hochzeitsnacht. Butterfly erklärt ihre Liebe zu Pinkerton, und er antwortet, daß sie für immer die Seine bleiben werde.

2. Akt

1. Teil

Drei Jahre später

Pinkerton ist kurz nach der Eheschließung nach Amerika zurückgerufen worden, und Butterfly lebt nahezu mittellos mit der treuen Suzuki.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Trotz Suzukis Zweifeln ist sich Butterfly der Rückkehr Pinkertons sicher und lehnt einen Hochzeitsantrag des Fürsten Yamadori, eines Japaners, der beim Handel mit Amerika ein Vermögen gemacht hat, ab. Butterfly sagt ihm, sie sehe sich durch die Gesetze des Landes ihres Ehemannes gebunden. Sharpless zeigt ihr einen Brief Pinkertons, in dem dieser ankündigt, daß er mit einer amerikanischen Gattin wiederkehren werde und Sharpless bittet, Butterfly diese Nachricht schonend beizubringen. Butterfly freut sich aber so sehr über die baldige Rückkehr ihres Mannes, daß Sharpless keine Gelegenheit bekommt, den ganzen Brief vorzulesen. Er versucht sie dazu zu überreden, Yamadoris Angebot anzunehmen, doch sie zeigt ihm Pinkertons Sohn als Beweis für dessen Liebe zu ihr. Sharpless bringt es nicht über sich, seine Botschaft zu überbringen, und geht.

Man hört die Hafenkanone. Sie kündigt Pinkertons Schiff, die *Abraham Lincoln*, an. In feberhafter Erregung schmücken Butterfly und Suzuki das Haus zu Ehren von Pinkertons Ankunft mit Blumen und warten die ganze Nacht auf ihn.

2. Teil

Bei Tagesanbruch hört man die Rufe der Matrosen vom Hafen. Butterfly wartet noch immer auf Pinkerton. Suzuki überredet sie, sich etwas auszuruhen. Sharpless kommt mit Pinkerton und Kate, dessen amerikanischer Ehefrau. Pinkerton, der sich der Stärke von Butterflys Liebe bewußt wird, ist voller Reue und eilt fort, so daß Kate und Sharpless alleine auf Butterfly treffen. Sie erzählen Suzuki von Kates Wunsch, den Sohn ihres Mannes zu adoptieren. Butterfly erfährt von Kate die Wahrheit und bittet darum, daß Pinkerton selbst das Kind holen kommen möge. Einmal allein verabschiedet sie sich noch ein letztes Mal von ihrem Sohn und nimmt sich das Leben.

English National Opera

Übersetzung: Bettina Reinke-Welsh

Cheryl Barker wurde in Sydney, Australien, geboren, wo sie bei der verstorbenen Dame Joan Hammond studierte. Seit ihrem Debüt als Blondchen in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* an der State Opera of South Australia im Jahre 1984 trat sie u.a. an der Royal Opera als Jennifer (*The Midsummer Marriage*), und an der English National Opera als Musetta (*La bohème*), Butterfly, Donna Elvira,

Giorgetta und Suor Angelica (*Il trittico*) auf. Weitere Partien umfassen u.a. Violetta (Hamburger Staatsoper, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand); Butterfly (Hamburger Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand, Minnesota Opera); Tatjana (Scottish Opera, Opera Queensland) und Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) sowie die Titelrolle in *Maria Stuarda*, die Gräfin (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*) und die Gouvernante (*The Turn of the Screw*). Außerdem übernahm sie zahlreiche Partien für die Vlaamse Opera, wie etwa Mimi, Liù (*Turandot*), Butterfly, Desdemona und Suor Angelica.

Zu Cheryl Barkers Konzerttätigkeit gehören Auftritte in der Royal Albert Hall (*War Requiem* und Verdi *Requiem*), bei den Spoleto Festspielen (Italien), in der Londoner Wigmore Hall und beim Melbourne International Festival, und in Belgien. Auf Video ist sie in *La bohème* sowie in *Harry Enfield's Guide to Opera* zu erleben.

Paul Charles Clarke wurde in Liverpool geboren, studierte am Royal College of Music bei Neil Mackie und gewann im Jahre 1989 den ersten Preis des Kathleen-Ferrier-Wettbewerbs. Zu seinen Rollen gehören der

Herzog von Mantua (*Rigoletto*); Fenton (*Falstaff*) in Japan und beim Edinburgh Festival; der Hohepriester des Poseidon (*Idomeneo*) an der Welsh National Opera; Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Alfredo (*La traviata*); sowie an der Scottish Opera Alfredo und Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*); an der Opera North Rodolfo und Dmitri (*Boris Godunow*); und an der Royal Opera Froh (*Das Rheingold*), Cassio (*Otello*), Tybald (*Roméo et Juliette*), und Alfredo. Weitere Engagements an internationalen Bühnen schließen Auftritte an der Seattle Opera, Metropolitan Opera (Jenik in *Die verkaufte Braut*, und Roméo), an der Houston Grand Opera und in Monte Carlo ein. Die Partie des Pinkerton sang Paul Charles Clarke an der Houston Grand Opera, sowie an der Deutschen Oper Berlin und bei den Park-Festivals der Met.

Zu Auftritten im Konzertbereich gehören ein Europatournee mit dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment unter Leitung von Sir Simon Rattle mit Beethovens 9. Sinfonie (welche er ebenfalls mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra gesungen hat), sowie Mendelssohns *Elias* in Rom.

Seine Aufnahmen schließen Tybald (*Roméo et Juliette*), Arturo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), und für die Chandos/Peter Moores

Foundation die Titelrolle in Gounods *Faust* ein.

Jean Rigby studierte an der Royal Birmingham School of Music und anschließend an der Royal Academy of Music bei Patricia Clarke, der sie auch weiterhin verbunden bleibt. An der English National Opera sang sie die Partien der Helen (*King Priam*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Penelope (*The Return of Ulysses*), Jocasta, Carmen, des Oktavian und der Lucretia. Weitere Engagements umfassen auch die Rolle des Niklaus (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) an der Royal Opera und der San Diego Opera; *L'italiana in Algeri* beim Buxton Festival; sowie die Titelrolle in *La Cenerentola* und Idamante (*Idomeneo*) für Garsington Opera; Geneviève (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) und Irene (*Theodora*) (neben vielen anderen Partien) beim Glyndebourne Festival; und die Rolle der Charlotte (*Werther*) an der Seattle Opera.

Im Konzertsaal war sie u.a. bei den Londoner Promenaden-Konzerten in der Zweiten und der Achten Sinfonie von Gustav Mahler zu hören, ebenso im *Elias* und *Paulus* von Mendelssohn, mit den *Les Nuits d'été* und im Verdi *Requiem*.

Zu ihrer Aufnahmen für Chandos zählen

The Rape of Lucretia, *A Mass of Life* von Frederick Delius, Mendelssohns *Paulus* und *Rigoletto* (für die Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Gregory Yurisich wurde für seine jüngsten Darstellungen der großen Verdi-Partien von der Kritik gefeiert. Zu seinen erfolgreichsten Rollen gehören *Nabucco* bei den Bregenzer Festspielen, an der Royal Opera sowie in Genf; die Titelrolle im *Rigoletto* in Israel, Australien und in Athen; die Titelrolle in *Simon Boccanegra* sowie Escamillo (*Carmen*) an der English National Opera; die Titelrolle im *Falstaff* in Australien; Germont (*La traviata*) an der San Francisco Opera, der Australian Opera, in Tel Aviv und in Genf; Iago (*Otello*) zusammen mit Plácido Domingo an der Los Angeles Opera und in Brisbane; Amonasro (*Aida*), Stankar (Verdis *Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*) und die vier Verkörperungen des Bösen (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) an der Royal Opera.

Im Konzertsaal gehören die 8. Sinfonie von Mahler beim Edinburgh Festival, Alberich, in einer konzertanten Aufführung des *Siegfried*, Salieri (*Mozart und Salieri* von Rimsky-Korsakow) und die Baßpartie der 9. Sinfonie von Beethoven für das australische

ABC-Fernsehnetz zu Gregory Yurisich internationalen Auftritten.

Zu seinen Aufnahmen gehören Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), eine Solo-CD mit Liedern von Peter Dawson, sowie Scarpia (*Tosca*) für die Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Stuart Kale ist international anerkannt als einer der herausragenden singenden Schauspieler der Opernwelt, und seine Rollen decken ein riesengroßes Repertoire von Monteverdi bis Messiaen ab. Er begann seine Karriere an der Welsh National Opera und wechselte dann zur English National Opera (ENO) über, wo er acht Jahre blieb und Rollen wie Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (in Martinis *Julietta*), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) und Nanki-Poo in Jonathan Millers Inszenierung von *The Mikado* sang.

Zu seinen denkwürdigen Engagements zählen der Oberpriester (*Idomeneo*) in Covent Garden, der Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) in Nancy, San Francisco und an der Opéra du Rhin in Straßburg, Schuiski (*Boris Godunow*) in Straßburg, Bordeaux und Montpellier, Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) anlässlich der Russlandtournee der ENO im Jahr 1990, Truffaldino (*Die Liebe zu den drei Orangen*) an der ENO, Sinowi (*Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*)

in Toulouse und Marseille und die drei Tenorrollen in *Lulu* am Théâtre du Châtelet. Auf Tonträger hat er unter anderem Schuiski in *Boris Godunow* (Auszüge) und Roderigo (*Otello*) für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation aufgenommen.

Clive Bayley studierte am Royal Northern College of Music und ist bereits an allen großen Opernhäusern Großbritanniens sowie im Konzertsaal zu Hause. Seit Abschluß seines Studiums hat sich sein Repertoire an Haupt- und Nebenrollen stetig vergrößert und reicht jetzt von Monteverdi bis Verdi, Puccini und Berg. An der Royal Opera war er als Colline in *La bohème*, Hans Foltz in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* und Castro in *La fanciulla del West* zu hören. Außerdem konnte er an der Opera North mit Verdis *Jerusalem*, an der English National Opera mit *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck* und *Dr. Faust* sowie als *Don Giovanni* mit Opera Factory und als Colline in *La bohème* in der Royal Albert Hall beachtliche Erfolge verzeichnen. Außerhalb Großbritanniens trat er an der Nederlandse Opera und der Seattle Opera auf und nahm mit Les Arts Florissants an einer Konzerttournee durch Europa teil.

Zu seinen Aufnahmen für Chandos gehören u.a. *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd* und für

die Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Don Giovanni*, Ausschnitte aus *Boris Godunow* sowie *Don Pasquale* und *Il trovatore*.

D'Arcy Bleiker wurde in Yorkshire geboren und absolvierte sein Studium mit der Unterstützung der Peter-Moores Foundation und des Countess of Munster Musical Trust bei Robert Alderson am Royal Northern College of Music. Zu seinen Rollen am Royal Northern College of Music gehörten Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), Schaunard (*La bohème*) und Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Außerdem wirkte er bei der Glyndebourne Festival Opera und The Classical Opera Company am Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden mit.

Er war Mitglied des Glyndebourne Festival Chorus und ist in ganz Nordengland bei verschiedenen Konzerten aufgetreten. Mit dem Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra führte er den *Elias*, Puccinis *Messa di Gloria*, Rollen aus *Candide* und den König in einer Konzertfassung von *Aida* auf. Außerdem sang er in der Bridgewater Hall, Manchester unter Leitung von Kent Nagano die Rolle des Polydorus in *L'Enfance du Christ*.

Roland Wood wurde in der englischen Grafschaft Berkshire geboren und studierte zunächst am Royal Northern College of Music bei Patrick McGuigan und Robert Alderson; später mit Unterstützung der Peter-Moores-Stiftung und der English National Opera am National Opera Studio. Er begann seine Opernkarriere als Baß-Bariton, und zu seinen frühen Rollen gehörten Silva (*Ernani*) und Colline (*La bohème*), Luka (*The Bear*) und Martino (*L'Occasione fa il Ladro*) für die Walton-Stiftung auf Ischia, außerdem Saretski (*Eugen Onegin*) mit der Oper der Europäischen Union. Nach dem Wechsel ins Baritonfach schließen seine jüngsten Partien Josev Prasov in der Welturaufführung von *Die Brücke*, sowie den Grafen (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) am Royal Northern College of Music und bei der Opera Holland Park ein. Für die Glyndebourne Festival Opera und die English National Opera war er in etlichen Produktionen als Zweitbesetzung vorgesehen. Aufnahmen liegen u.a. von Donizettis *Belisario* mit Opera Rara vor.

Geoffrey Mitchells Gesangskarriere hat ihm ein bemerkenswert breitgefächertes Repertoire von der alten bis zur neuen Musik beschert und ihn nach Skandinavien, Deutschland, in

die ehemalige Tschechoslowakei, nach Kanada und Australasien geführt. Nachdem er bei der BBC erste Dirigiererfahrungen gesammelt hatte, begann er mit eigenen Sängern zu arbeiten und gründete den **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Aus ersten Aufnahmen entwickelte sich eine langfristige Zusammenarbeit des Chors mit Opera Rara, für die er über dreißig Tonträger aufgenommen hat. Der Chor genießt wachsendes Ansehen und ist bei der BBC und internationalen Plattenfirmen gefragt. Für Chandos hat der Geoffrey Mitchell Choir an zahlreichen Aufnahmen der hervorragend kritisierten Reihe Opera in English unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation teilgenommen.

Seit seinen vielversprechenden Anfängen 1945, als es von Walter Legge hauptsächlich für Schallplattenaufnahmen gegründet wurde, hat das **Philharmonia Orchestra** einige der bedeutendsten Dirigenten des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts für sich gewonnen. Besonders enge Beziehungen zu dem Orchester haben Otto Klemperer (der erste Chefdirigent), Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Carlo Maria Giulini, Sir Andrew Davis, Vladimir Ashkenazy und Esa-Pekka Salonen unterhalten. Unter seinem derzeitigen

Chefdirigenten Christoph von Dohnanyi und mit Leonard Slatkin als Erstem Gastdirigenten hat das Orchester seine zentrale Position im britischen Musikleben gefestigt, und zwar nicht nur in London, wo es als Hausorchester der Royal Festival Hall fungiert, sondern mit Hilfe regionaler Gastspiele auch für ein breiteres Publikum.

Das Orchester hat mehrere bedeutende Preise gewonnen und mit seiner Vitalität und seinem einzigartig warmen Klang den Beifall der Kritik gefunden. Außerdem wurde es für seine innovative Programmgestaltung gepriesen, in deren Kern die Zielsetzung steht, neue Stücke der weltweit führenden lebenden Komponisten, zum Beispiel seines derzeitigen Gastkomponisten James MacMillan, zu spielen und in Auftrag zu geben.

Das Orchester unternimmt oft Auslandstourneen und kann als das am häufigsten aufgenommene Sinfonieorchester der Welt über tausend Einspielungen für sich verbuchen. Darunter befinden sich (für die Reihe Opera Rara) mehrere Aufnahmen mit Opernarien und elf vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen (Donizettis *Ugo, conte di Parigi*, *Ne m'oubliez pas*, *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'assedio di Calais*, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* und *Maria de Rudenz*, Meyerbeers *Dinorah*, Mayrs

Medea in Corinto, Mercadantes *Orazi e Curiazi*, Pacinis *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* und Rossinis *Otello*). Das Orchester hat für Chandos zahlreiche Aufnahmen auf Tonträger vorgenommen, beispielsweise für die Reihe Opera in English unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation *L'elisir d'amore*, *Faust*, *La bohème*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und sechs Soloalben mit Opernarien (mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny und John Tomlinson).

Yves Abel wurde in Kanada geboren und ist dabei, sich sowohl im sinfonischen Repertoire als auch auf dem Gebiet der Oper als einer der führenden Dirigenten seiner Generation zu etablieren. Er studierte am New Yorker Mannes College of Music sowie am Tanglewood Music Center, wo er von Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Günther Herbig und Roger Norrington Anleitung erfuhr.

Im Bereich der Oper erhielt er von Seiten der Kritik viel Anerkennung für seine Debüts etwa mit *Don Carlos* an der Opera North; *Le Comte Ory* mit der Glyndebourne Festival Opera; *L'elisir d'amore* an der Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Il turco in Italia* an der Opéra de Monte Carlo; *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* an

der Nederlandse Opera; *Hamlet* an der San Francisco Opera; *L'elisir d'amore* sowie *Un ballo in maschera* an der Königlichen Dänischen Oper; außerdem für sein Dirigat von Massenets *Thaïs* an der Opéra de Nice sowie für *Luisa Miller* beim Spoleto Festival USA, und *Zampa* an der Opéra Française de New York. Weitere Auftritte schließen Aufführungen und eine Verfilmung von *Amahl and the Night Visitors* anlässlich des 85. Geburtstags von Gian Carlo Menotti beim Festival dei due Mondi in Spoleto, sowie Dirigat an der Opéra de Paris, der New York City Opera, der Seattle Opera, beim Opera Theater of St. Louis, an der Florida Grand Opera, beim Opera Theater of Connecticut, beim Wexford Opera Festival und mit der Wolf Trap Opera ein.

Yves Abel ist jedoch ebenso im

Orchesterrepertoire zu Hause, und zu seinen jüngsten Engagements gehören Konzerte mit dem San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, dem Toronto Symphony Orchestra, dem Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, dem Nova Scotia Orchestra und dem Orquesta Ciudad de Granada. Für seine Leistungen als musikalischer Leiter der Opéra Française de New York hat er von Seiten der Kritik viel Anerkennung erhalten. Seit Entstehung dieses Ensembles im Jahre 1990 hat er solche Seltenheiten wie *Barbe-Bleue* von Offenbach, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* von Bizet, *Médée* und *Les Deux Journées* von Cherubini, *Le Pauvre Matelot* und *Esther de Carpentras* von Milhaud, *Iphigénie en Aulide* von Gluck, *Docteur Miracle* von Bizet, und *Les Deux Avars* von Grétry zur Aufführung gebracht.

Giacomo Puccini: *Madam Butterfly*

Puccini donnait *Madam Butterfly* comme son œuvre favorite, jugement auquel je m'associe de tout cœur. En termes d'organisation, de continuité musicale, de charge affective ou de subtilité de la caractérisation, s'agissant de la protagoniste, elle n'a pas son égal dans tout le catalogue puccinien. Ce qui rend d'autant plus surprenant le fiasco de sa création à La Scala de Milan, en février 1904, à moins qu'on ne réalise, comme le compositeur lui-même le fera aussitôt, que la version originale est imparfaite. Après de multiples révisions apportées au cours des mois suivants, l'œuvre est acclamée à Brescia le 28 mai 1904. C'est donc cette seconde date qui devrait être considérée comme la véritable création d'un opéra qui a par la suite conquis le monde lyrique et qui figure au panthéon lyrique depuis près d'un siècle, témoignage de la séduction exercée sur le public.

Sa genèse tient en quelques mots. Lorsque le Japon, dans les années 1860, ouvre ses ports aux navires occidentaux, l'Occident se prend de fascination pour l'exotisme inaccessible de l'Orient. Les pièces de théâtre sur ce thème se mettent à proliférer, donnant notamment

naissance à une *Madam Butterfly* en un acte de David Belasco, montée pour la première fois cette même année à New York. Elle a elle-même pour antécédent une longue nouvelle crûment réaliste d'un avocat américain, John Luther Long, publiée dans la revue américaine *The Century*, qui traite d'une pratique bien établie consistant, pour les officiers de marine étrangers, à contracter avec une geisha un "mariage" auquel ils peuvent mettre fin le jour où ils rentrent chez eux. Belasco a substantiellement modifié l'histoire de Long. Chez ce dernier, Butterfly ne meurt pas à la fin; chez Belasco, elle meurt dans les bras de Pinkerton (quel dénouement sensé et émouvant que celui retenu par Puccini!). La pièce de Belasco est reprise avec le même succès à Londres, où Puccini, venu voir une production de *Tosca*, a l'occasion d'assister à une représentation. Bien qu'incapable de suivre les dialogues, il saisit l'essentiel de l'intrigue et perçoit aussitôt son potentiel lyrique. Ayant renoncé à écrire un opéra sur le thème de Marie-Antoinette, Puccini envoie à son librettiste Illica une traduction italienne de la nouvelle originale de Long. Malgré son peu

d'enthousiasme initial, Ricordi, l'éditeur de Puccini, finit par se laisser convaincre par Illica de la viabilité de l'histoire, et le compositeur est autorisé par l'éditeur de la pièce et par son auteur à en faire le sujet d'un opéra.

Compositeur et librettistes changent plusieurs fois d'avis sur la conception globale de l'œuvre pendant sa longue gestation, hésitant entre les deux extrêmes d'un acte unique et d'un drame en trois actes. Achievée vers la fin de l'année 1903, la partition adopte finalement une structure en deux actes, le premier représentant une heure de musique, le second, une heure et demie; mais l'échec de la création convainc Puccini et ses librettistes de remanier l'œuvre et de procéder à de nombreuses coupures (dont la réintégration, lors de certaines productions récentes, n'a servi qu'à montrer combien elles avaient été justifiées).

Les épisodes de couleur locale de l'acte I, susceptibles de traîner en longueur, sont abrégés (avec quelques coupures supplémentaires dans la version parisienne entendue ici), et l'acte II est divisé en deux tableaux, le second contenant un nouvel air de ténor qui deviendra l'un des numéros les plus populaires de tout l'opéra. Lors de la "seconde première", à Brescia, cinq numéros doivent

être bissés, ce qui ferait indubitablement froncer les sourcils aujourd'hui mais témoigne du flair avec lequel Puccini a su transformer cette histoire éminemment humaine et tragique en une musique mémorable.

Cette musique est imprégnée de la fascination de Puccini pour tout ce qui est japonais – fascination dont témoignent les disques en sa possession à l'époque, désormais conservés au musée installé dans la propriété familiale de Celle, en Toscane. Dans le premier acte, les échos de mélodies japonaises et l'évocation de la religion et de traditions nationales comme la pittoresque cérémonie de mariage forment un cadre idéal pour le développement progressif du personnage central, Cio-Cio-San, une geisha âgée de quinze ans. Une fois sur scène, passé sa lente et saisissante entrée, elle domine tout le reste de l'œuvre. Aucune autre héroïne de Puccini, pas même Mimì dans *La bohème*, ni Tosca, ni Turandot, n'est amenée à porter à ce point tout le poids de l'action. Ni le consul, Sharpless, ni le faillible, voire insensible lieutenant Pinkerton ne sont inintéressants, mais leur rôle pâlit devant la prééminence de Butterfly elle-même.

Au début de l'acte I, Puccini définit – de magistrale façon – les trois principaux personnages masculins: Pinkerton, insouciant

et macho; Sharpless, compatissant et las du monde; et Goro, l'obséqueux et repoussant entremetteur qui a déniché Butterfly pour satisfaire la volupté de Pinkerton. Selon son habitude, Puccini utilise pêle-mêle un quasi-récitatif et d'inoubliables et pertinentes mélodies pour décrire les trois hommes, si bien qu'ils sont clairement établis dans nos esprits avant même l'arrivée de Butterfly. Après cette mémorable entrée en scène, idéale quoique éprouvante pour le premier soprano, Puccini nous présente de merveilleuse façon, dans les minutes qui suivent, les idées naïves de Cio-Cio-San sur le mariage et la fidélité, et un bref résumé de son existence passée.

C'est déjà sous son aspect le plus touchant et le plus vulnérable qu'elle nous apparaît lorsqu'elle parle de la pauvreté ("Nessuno si confessava mai", "For no one likes to own that he was born so very poor"), puis lorsqu'elle décrit son adoption du christianisme comme nouvelle religion, en conséquence de son prochain mariage avec Pinkerton ("Ieri son salita tutta sola", "Now, I'd like to tell you that in secret I visited the mission"). Dès que l'odieux Bonze, proche parent de Cio-Cio-San, a déversé tout son fiel en la maudissant, les amants restent seuls, et Puccini donne libre cours à la musique la plus érotique jamais née

de sa plume au cours du plus long duo d'amour qu'il ait jamais écrit, ce qui témoigne bien de son haut niveau d'inspiration à l'époque et de son identification avec son héroïne adorée.

La foi totale de Butterfly en Pinkerton est évoquée de manière touchante, comme l'est le désir qui envahit ce dernier; pourtant, même en cet instant de bonheur suprême, l'harmonie et un sentiment palpable de nostalgie laissent percer une ombre de mélancolie, de prémonition. Peut-être Puccini a-t-il été inspiré en ce sens par l'étude du duo d'amour à l'acte II de *Tristan et Isolde*. Alors que le couple s'éloigne pour consommer son amour avec les conséquences tragiques que l'on sait, Puccini déploie toute la force de son immense orchestre tandis que les chanteurs atteignent les limites aiguës de leur tessiture. Pour peu que la distribution soit à la hauteur, c'est un duo qui ne manque jamais, à juste raison, de transporter l'auditoire.

Oublions un instant notre incrédulité afin d'imaginer ce qui est précisément arrivé à Cio-Cio-San entre son moment d'intense bonheur à la fin de l'acte I et son apparition au début de l'acte II. De toute évidence, elle a donné naissance à un petit garçon qu'elle a probablement entouré de toute sa tendresse et

de tout son amour avec l'aide de l'éternellement fidèle et obéissante Suzuki. Préservant une foi intacte en Pinkerton, Butterfly continue à endurer la pauvreté, satisfaite de rester dans sa petite maison à attendre le retour promis par Pinkerton. Dans certaines productions, sa confiance en tout ce qui est américain est telle qu'elle semble avoir recréé l'Occident chez elle dans la mesure du possible.

Elle réagit vivement lorsque Suzuki exprime ses doutes, menaçant même de la tuer, dévoilant ainsi la part d'inexorabilité constitutive de sa personnalité. Avec tendresse, elle cite les dernières paroles de Pinkerton à son départ ("O Butterfly, piccina mogliettina", "O Butterfly, my dearest little darling"), lorsqu'il lui a promis de revenir à la saison où le rouge-gorge fait son nid, première d'une longue suite de phrases déchirantes confiées par Puccini à son héroïne bien-aimée tout au long de l'acte II. Dans son air le plus célèbre de tout l'opéra, "Un bel dì" ("One fine day"), elle chasse enfin bien loin tous les doutes de Suzuki, décrivant par des paroles et une musique éminemment émouvantes le retour de son amant, tel qu'elle se l'imagine. Ainsi Butterfly nous dévoile-t-elle de nombreuses facettes de sa personnalité et de son amour, au fil des détails évoqués avec une intensité croissante.

Lorsque Sharpless arrive et veut la désillusionner en lui lisant une lettre de Pinkerton, sa tentative est vouée à l'échec. Dès qu'il lui parle de la lettre, elle se saisit de ce signe d'espoir apparent en déclarant avec grâce: "Io son la donna più lieta del Giappone" ("Then I'm the happiest lady in Japan"). Puis elle demande ingénument à Sharpless à quelle époque les rossignols font leur nid en Amérique, question à laquelle il ne peut répondre. L'arrivée de Yamadori, prétendant local qui souhaite épouser Butterfly, est traitée par elle avec humour et dérision. La mélodie par laquelle il cherche à défendre sa cause est certes plaisante, mais intentionnellement faible.

Sharpless reprend la lecture de sa lettre, mais Butterfly s'obstine à interpréter de manière positive tout ce que ce message aurait pour elle de dévastateur si seulement elle acceptait de comprendre. Le consul finit par lui demander ce qu'elle ferait si Pinkerton ne revenait pas. Alors qu'elle envisage les deux possibilités: redevenir une geisha ou mourir, la musique devient soudain abrupte et tragique. En termes ineffables, Butterfly dit à Sharpless combien il lui a fait de mal. Puis elle fait venir son enfant et, le tenant contre elle, exhale tout ce qu'elle a dans le cœur et dans l'âme,

affirmant à l'enfant, au cours de l'air "Che tua madre" ("That your mother should take you on her shoulder"), qu'elle ne pourrait se résoudre à mendier et que la mort serait mille fois préférable. C'est sans doute le passage le plus déchirant de tout l'opéra en ce qu'il révèle la profondeur des sentiments de Cio-Cio-San en une musique d'une inexprimable émotion et immédiateté.

Le Consul s'en va, et Butterfly est à deux doigts de tuer Goro (sauvé par l'intervention de Suzuki) lorsqu'il suggère que personne ne sait qui est le père de l'enfant. Puis, par un changement d'ambiance inspiré introduit par Puccini, on entend sur le port tirer le canon: le bateau de Pinkerton est en vue. Le ravissement de Butterfly se traduit par une si magnifique explosion de joie l'amenant à souligner combien elle a toujours eu raison et combien ceux qui doutaient avaient tort, que la plupart du temps le public partage son illusion et se laisse spontanément aller à applaudir. Magistrale manipulation de la part de Puccini, direz-vous peut-être, mais au théâtre l'effet est irrésistible. Suit une page qui est sans doute la plus heureuse et la plus simple de toute la partition, au cours de laquelle Butterfly et Suzuki jonchent la maison de fleurs en prévision du retour du bien-aimé.

Les deux femmes et l'enfant s'installent pour une longue veille aux accents hypnotiques de l'orchestre. Le prélude inspiré à Puccini par l'aube qui point au début du second tableau (ou de l'acte III, bien souvent, à l'Opéra) utilise l'écriture la plus avancée jusque-là dans son œuvre. On y décèle l'évidente influence du *Pelléas et Mélisande* de Debussy, publié deux ans auparavant, en 1902. L'harmonie est ruminative et équivoque à la manière debussyste, et la conclusion qui s'annonce tout aussi tragique que dans l'opéra de Debussy.

Au cours de ce dénouement, Pinkerton exprime tout son remords dans l'air "Addio fiorito asil" ("Farewell, oh happy home"); Sharpless ne cesse de penser "Je vous l'avais bien dit"; et Suzuki appréhende la tragédie à venir, surtout lorsqu'elle aperçoit Kate, la nouvelle épouse de Pinkerton. Avec finesse, Puccini tient son héroïne éloignée de la scène aussi longtemps que possible. Le bonheur, la libération auxquels elle s'attendait s'évanouissent lorsqu'elle voit Kate et comprend de qui il s'agit. S'exprimant de manière hachée, elle montre son immense douleur et, en un passage qui est probablement le plus éloquent de toute la partition, dit à Kate qu'il ne peut y avoir de femme plus heureuse qu'elle [Kate] "Under the

great sky above us" ("Sotto il gran ponte del cielo"). Aucune Butterfly digne de ce nom ne peut rater cette scène: librettiste et compositeur lui ont donné une phrase qui mérite littéralement que l'on meurt pour elle.

Il ne lui reste plus qu'à se faire hara-kiri. Dans une vaine tentative pour empêcher cette horreur, Suzuki fait entrer l'enfant qui, sans comprendre, reçoit les dernières paroles d'amour de sa mère avant sa mort. Butterfly noue un bandeau sur les yeux de son petit garçon et passe à l'acte; alors qu'elle gît à l'agonie, Pinkerton, désespéré, arrive en criant son nom. Trop tard. Une fois de plus, comme tout au long de cet opéra, Puccini montre une parfaite maîtrise du tempo dramatique. Plongé au cœur de cette tragédie intime, l'auditeur est totalement dévasté par le sort fatal de Butterfly.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Acte I

La demeure de Pinkerton, près de Nagasaki
Goro, un entremetteur, fait visiter à Pinkerton, lieutenant de la Marine américaine, la maison

qu'il a louée pour sa future épouse, Cio-Cio-San, la geisha Madam Butterfly. Il est sur le point de se marier selon la loi japonaise qui prescrit que l'absence du mari, même pour une période aussi brève qu'un mois, constitue un motif de divorce. Le premier invité aux noces est Sharpless, le consul américain, qui l'exhorte de ne pas s'engager aussi légèrement dans le mariage. Pinkerton ne peut toutefois s'imaginer que Butterfly prendra la cérémonie au sérieux, et il attend le jour où il convolera avec une vraie épouse, de souche américaine.

Butterfly arrive et le contrat de mariage est signé. Soudain, son oncle, le Bonze, apparaît et l'accuse: il a appris que Butterfly avait pris l'irrévocable décision de renoncer à sa religion. Sa famille et ses amis la maudissent et partent. Pinkerton console son épouse et Suzuki l'habille pour la soirée de noces. Butterfly déclare son amour à Pinkerton qui répond qu'elle sera à lui pour toujours.

Acte II

Partie 1

Trois ans plus tard

Pinkerton a été rappelé en Amérique peu après son mariage et Butterfly vit, presque dans l'indigence, avec sa fidèle Suzuki.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Malgré le scepticisme de Suzuki, Butterfly est certaine que Pinkerton reviendra et elle refuse la demande en mariage du prince Yamadori, un japonais qui a fait fortune dans le commerce avec le nouveau continent. Butterfly lui dit qu'elle se considère liée par les lois de la patrie de son époux. Sharpless exhibe une lettre de Pinkerton dans laquelle il annonce qu'il va revenir avec une épouse américaine et demande à Sharpless d'en informer Butterfly. Butterfly est tellement excitée par la nouvelle du retour de son époux que Sharpless ne trouve pas l'occasion de lui lire la lettre en entier. Il tente de la persuader d'accepter la demande en mariage de Yamadori, mais elle lui présente le fils de Pinkerton comme preuve de son affection pour elle. Sharpless s'en va, incapable de se résoudre à lui délivrer son message.

Une sirène retentit dans le port. C'est le navire de Pinkerton, l'*Abraham Lincoln*. Dans la fièvre de l'excitation, Butterfly et Suzuki décorent la maison de fleurs en honneur de son arrivée, et l'attendent toute la nuit.

Partie 2

Au point du jour, les voix des marins retentissent dans le port. Butterfly attend

toujours Pinkerton. Suzuki la persuade d'aller se reposer. Sharpless arrive avec Pinkerton et Kate, son épouse américaine. Pinkerton, se rendant compte de l'intensité de l'attachement de Butterfly, est rongé par le remords et prend la fuite, laissant Kate et Sharpless aller à la rencontre de Butterfly. Ils annoncent à Suzuki que Kate souhaite adopter le fils de son mari. Butterfly qui apprend la vérité de la bouche de Kate, demande que Pinkerton lui-même vienne chercher l'enfant. Puis, laissée seule, elle dit un dernier adieu à son fils et se suicide.

English National Opera

Traduction: Josée Bégau

Cheryl Barker naquit à Sydney, en Australie, où elle eut comme professeur la très regrettée Dame Joan Hammond. Depuis ses débuts, en 1984, dans le rôle de Blondchen (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) pour le State Opera of South Australia, elle s'est produite avec The Royal Opera dans le rôle de Jennifer (*The Midsummer Marriage*), avec l'English National Opera dans les rôles de Musetta (*La bohème*), Butterfly, Donna Elvira, Giorgetta et Sister Angelica (*Il tritico*). Ses autres rôles sont notamment Violetta (Opéra d'Etat de Hambourg, Opera Australia, Opera New

Zealand), Butterfly (Opéra d'Etat de Hambourg, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand, Minnesota Opera), Tatyana (Scottish Opera, Opera Queensland), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), le rôle titre dans *Maria Stuarda*, la Comtesse (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*) et la Gouvernante (*The Turn of the Screw*). Au nombre des rôles interprétés pour l'Opéra des Flandres, citons Mimì, Liù (*Turandot*), Butterfly, Desdemona et Sister Angelica.

Cheryl Barker s'est produite en concert au Royal Albert Hall (*War Requiem* et *Requiem* de Verdi), au Festival de Spoleto en Italie, au London's Wigmore Hall, au Melbourne International Festival et en Belgique. Au nombre de ses enregistrements vidéo figurent *La bohème* et *Harry Enfield's Guide to Opera*.

Paul Charles Clarke naquit à Liverpool. Il fit ses études au Royal College of Music et y eut comme professeur Neil Mackie. Il fut lauréat du Concours Kathleen Ferrier en 1989. Parmi ses rôles figurent le Duc (*Rigoletto*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) au Japon et au Festival d'Edimbourg, le Grand Prêtre de Neptune (*Idomeneo*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Alfredo (*La traviata*) pour le Welsh National Opera, Alfredo et Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) pour le Scottish

Opera, Rodolfo et Dmitri (*Boris Godunov*) pour l'Opera North et, pour The Royal Opera, Froh (*Das Rheingold*), Cassio (*Otello*), Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*) et Alfredo. Il s'est produit à l'échelon international avec le Seattle Opera, le Metropolitan Opera (Jenik dans *La Fiancée vendue*, et Roméo), le Houston Grand Opera et à Monte-Carlo. Il a interprété le rôle de Pinkerton avec le Houston Grand Opera, le Deutsche Oper Berlin et au Parks Festival du Met.

Il s'est produit en concert lors d'une tournée en Europe avec l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment et sir Simon Rattle dans des exécutions de la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven (qu'il a aussi interprétée avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra) et d'*Elias* de Mendelssohn à Rome.

Parmi ses enregistrements figurent ses interprétations de Tybalt (*Roméo et Juliette*), Arturo (*Lucia*), et, pour Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, du rôle titre dans *Faust* de Gounod.

Jean Rigby a fait ses études au Royal Birmingham School of Music, puis à la Royal Academy of Music et y a eu comme professeur Patricia Clarke, avec laquelle elle poursuit sa formation. Elle s'est produite avec l'English

National Opera dans les rôles de Helen (*King Priam*), Rosina (*Le barbier de Séville*), Pénélope (*Le retour d'Ulysse*), Jocasta, Carmen, Octavian et Lucretia. Citons parmi ses autres productions: Nicklausse (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) avec The Royal Opera et pour le San Diego Opera, *L'italiana in Algeri* au Buxton Festival, le rôle titre dans *La Cenerentola*, Idamante (*Idomeneo*) pour le Garsington Opera, Geneviève (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Irene (*Theodora*) (parmi de nombreux autres rôles) au Glyndebourne Festival, ainsi que Charlotte (*Werther*) pour le Seattle Opera.

En concert, mentionnons ses engagements pour les Deuxième et Huitième Symphonies de Mahler au London Promenade concerts, pour *Elias*, *Paulus* et *Le songe d'une nuit d'été* de Mendelssohn ainsi que pour le *Requiem* de Verdi.

Pour Chandos, Jean Rigby a enregistré *The Rape of Lucretia*, *A Mass of Life* de Delius, *Paulus* de Mendelssohn et *Rigoletto* (pour Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Les récents portraits du grand répertoire de Verdi de **Gregory Yurisich** ont été salués par les critiques et le public avec beaucoup d'éloges. Au nombre de ces interprétations très applaudies figurent celles du rôle de *Nabucco*

au Festival de Bregenz, avec The Royal Opera, et à Genève; du rôle titre dans *Rigoletto* en Israël, en Australie et à Athènes; du rôle titre dans *Simon Boccanegra* et du rôle d'Escamillo (*Carmen*) pour l'English National Opera; du rôle titre dans *Falstaff* en Australie; des rôles de Germont Père (*La traviata*) pour le San Francisco Opera et l'Australian Opera ainsi qu'à Tel Aviv et Genève; du rôle d'Iago (*Otello*) avec Plácido Domingo pour le Los Angeles Opera et à Brisbane; des rôles d'Amonasro (*Aida*), Stankar (dans *Stiffelio* de Verdi), Scarpia (*Tosca*) ainsi que des quatre mauvais génies (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) pour The Royal Opera.

Gregory Yurisich s'est produit en concert sur diverses scènes internationales notamment dans la Huitième Symphonie de Mahler au Festival d'Edimbourg, dans le rôle d'Alberich (*Siegfried*) en concert, dans le rôle de Salieri (*Mozart et Salieri* de Rimski-Korsakov) et dans la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven pour la chaîne Australian ABC Television.

Gregory Yurisich a réalisé divers enregistrements notamment dans les rôles de Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) et de Scarpia (*Tosca*) pour la Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation. Il a aussi enregistré un disque en soliste consacré aux mélodies de Peter Dawson.

Stuart Kale est reconnu dans le monde entier comme l'un des acteurs chanteurs les plus exceptionnels du monde de l'opéra, et ses rôles couvrent un très vaste répertoire allant de Monteverdi jusqu'à Messiaen. Il commença sa carrière au Welsh National Opera avant d'entrer à l'English National Opera où il resta pendant huit ans, chantant des rôles tels que Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (*Julietta* de Martinů), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) et Nanki-Poo dans la production de Jonathan Miller du *Mikado*.

Parmi ses engagements importants, on citera le Grand Prêtre (*Idomeneo*) au Royal Opera de Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) à Nancy, à San Francisco et à l'Opéra du Rhin à Strasbourg, Shuisky (*Boris Godounov*) à Strasbourg, Bordeaux et Montpellier, Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) pour la tournée 1990 en Russie de l'English National Opera, Zinoviev (*La Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*) à Toulouse et à Marseille, les rôles des trois ténors dans *Lulu* au Théâtre du Châtelet à Paris. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent Shuisky dans *Boris Godounov* (extraits) et Roderigo (*Otello*) pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation.

Clive Bayley, formé au Royal Northern College of Music, s'est déjà fait un nom auprès des grandes troupes d'opéra de Grande-Bretagne et il chante régulièrement en concert. Son répertoire de rôles principaux et secondaires s'est développé régulièrement depuis la fin de ses études et s'étend maintenant de Monteverdi à Verdi, Puccini et Berg. Il a interprété, pour The Royal Opera, les rôles de Colline dans *La bohème*, Hans Foltz dans *Die Meistersinger* et Castro dans *La fanciulla del West*. Il a en outre été très applaudi dans *Jerusalem* de Verdi avec l'Opera North, dans *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck* et *Dr Faust* avec l'English National Opera, dans *Don Giovanni* avec l'Opera Factory, ainsi que pour son interprétation du rôle de Colline dans *La bohème* au Royal Albert Hall. A l'étranger, il s'est produit avec l'Opéra des Pays-Bas et le Seattle Opera, et, en concert, avec Les Arts Florissants, lors d'une tournée en Europe.

Pour Chandos, il a enregistré *Troilus and Cressida* et *Billy Budd*, et, pour Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *Il trovatore* ainsi que des extraits de *Boris Godounov*.

D'Arcy Bleiker est né dans le Yorkshire. Il a été formé par Robert Alderson au Royal

Northern College of Music où il a bénéficié du soutien de la Peter Moores Foundation et du Countess of Munster Musical Trust. Les rôles qu'il a interprétés au RNCM sont Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), Schaunard (*La bohème*) et Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Il a aussi chanté avec le Glyndebourne Festival Opera et avec The Classical Opera Company au Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden. Il a fait partie du Glyndebourne Festival Chorus et s'est produit en concert sur plusieurs scènes du nord de l'Angleterre. Avec le Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, il a interprété *Elias*, la *Messa di Gloria* de Puccini, divers rôles dans *Candide* et le Roi dans une version de concert de *Aida*. Il a aussi interprété le rôle de Polydorus dans *L'enfance du Christ* au Bridgewater Hall, sous la direction de Kent Nagano.

Roland Wood est né dans le Berkshire et a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music avec Patrick McGuigan et Robert Alderson. Il a poursuivi sa formation au National Opera Studio avec le soutien de la Peter Moores Foundation et de l'English National Opera. C'est comme baryton-basse qu'il a commencé sa carrière dans l'opéra et ses premiers rôles ont été Silva (*Ernani*) et Colline (*la bohème*),

Luka (*The Bear*) et Martino (*L'occasione fa il ladro*) pour le Walton Trust à Ischia ainsi que Zaretsky (*Eugene Onegin*) pour l'European Union Opera. Devenu baryton, Roland Wood interpréta plus récemment les rôles de Josev Prasov lors de la création mondiale de *The Bridge* et du Comte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) au RNCM et au Opera Holland Park. Il a aussi interprété un certain nombre de rôles pour le Glyndebourne Festival Opera et l'English National Opera. Quant à ses enregistrements, citons *Belisario* de Donizetti.

Durant sa carrière de chanteur, Geoffrey Mitchell aborda un répertoire remarquablement varié, depuis la musique ancienne jusqu'à la musique contemporaine, se produisant en Scandinavie, en Allemagne, dans l'ancienne Tchécoslovaquie, au Canada et en Australasie. Après avoir fait ses premières armes de chef d'orchestre avec la BBC, il décida de prendre une part active dans ce domaine avec ses propres chanteurs et fonda le **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. L'ensemble travaille depuis longtemps avec Opera Rara pour qui il a réalisé plus de trente enregistrements. Ce Chœur ne cesse d'élargir sa réputation, travaillant avec la BBC et plusieurs maisons de disques internationales. Pour Chandos, le

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir a participé à plusieurs enregistrements pour Opera in English, une série de disques très prisés financée par la Peter Moores Foundation.

Depuis ses excellents débuts en 1945, lorsqu'il fut fondé par Walter Legge essentiellement pour jouer dans des enregistrements, le **Philharmonia Orchestra** n'a cessé d'attirer certains des plus grands chefs d'orchestre du XXe siècle. Certains furent associés de près à l'Orchestre: Otto Klemperer (son tout premier chef principal), Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Carlo Maria Giulini, Sir Andrew Davis, Vladimir Ashkenazy et Esa-Pekka Salonen. Sous la direction de leur chef principal actuel, Christoph von Dohnanyi, et celle de Leonard Slatkin, souvent invité à prendre sa relève, l'Orchestre s'est fermement installé au cœur de la vie musicale britannique, non seulement à Londres puisqu'il est orchestre en résidence au Royal Festival Hall, mais aussi en province où il se produit régulièrement.

Le Philharmonia Orchestra a remporté plusieurs prix importants et soulevé l'enthousiasme des critiques pour la vitalité et la chaleur exceptionnelle de son jeu. On a aussi fait l'éloge de ses programmes novateurs dans lesquels l'ensemble s'engage à interpréter

et commander des œuvres nouvelles par les plus grands compositeurs contemporains, comme James MacMillan, son actuel compositeur en résidence.

L'Orchestre fait souvent des tournées internationales; aucun autre orchestre symphonique dans le monde ne possède une discographie aussi importante, avec plus de mille disques à son actif. Notons entre autres plusieurs disques d'airs d'opéra pour Opera Rara ainsi que onze intégrales d'opéras (*Ugo, conte di Parigi*, *Ne m'oubliez pas*, *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'assedio di Calais*, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* et *Maria de Rudenz* de Donizetti, *Dinorah* de Meyerbeer, *Medea in Corinto* de Mayr, *Orazi e Curiazi* de Mercadante, *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* de Pacini et *Otello* de Rossini). L'Orchestre a fait de nombreux disques pour Chandos, en particulier, dans la série Opera in English financée par la Peter Moores Foundation, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Faust*, *La bohème*, une version primée de *Tosca* et six récitals solistes d'airs d'opéra (avec Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny et John Tomlinson.)

Yves Abel est né au Canada. Il est entrain d'accéder rapidement au rang des plus importants chefs d'orchestre de sa génération,

tant dans le répertoire symphonique qu'à l'opéra. Il a fait ses études au Mannes College of Music et au Tanglewood Music Center où il fut guidé par Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Gunther Herbig et Roger Norrington.

A l'opéra, il a été salué par les critiques lors de ses débuts dans l'interprétation des œuvres suivantes: *Don Carlos* avec l'Opera North, *Le Comte Ory* avec le Glyndebourne Festival Opera, *L'elisir d'amore* avec le Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Il turco in Italia* avec l'Opéra de Monte-Carlo, *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* avec l'Opéra des Pays-Bas, *Hamlet* avec le San Francisco Opera, *L'elisir d'amore* et *Un ballo in maschera* avec le Royal Danish Opera, *Thaïs* de Massenet avec l'Opéra de Nice, *Luisa Miller* pour le Spoleto Festival USA et *Zampa* pour l'Opéra Français de New York. Mentionnons aussi diverses productions au *Festival dei due Mondi* à Spoleto et le film *Amahl and the Night Visitors* en honneur du 85^e anniversaire de Gian Carlo Menotti ainsi que des productions avec différents opéras tels l'Opéra

de Paris, le New York City Opera, le Seattle Opera, l'Opera Theatre of St Louis, le Florida Grand Opera, l'Opera Theater of Connecticut, le Wolf Trap Opera et au Wexford Opera Festival.

Yves Abel maîtrise avec autant de perfection le répertoire orchestral et parmi ses engagements récents, citons des concerts avec le San Francisco Symphony, le Toronto Symphony, le Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, le Nova Scotia Orchestra et l'Orquesta Cuidad de Granada. Il a été particulièrement salué par la critique pour ses réalisations en tant que directeur musical de l'Opéra Français de New York. Depuis les débuts de la compagnie en 1990, il a dirigé des œuvres aussi rarement jouées que *Barbe-Bleue* d'Offenbach, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* de Bizet, *Médée* et *Les Deux Journées* de Cherubini, *Le Pauvre Matelot* et *Esther de Carpentras* de Milhaud, *Iphigénie en Aulide* de Gluck, *Docteur Miracle* de Bizet et *Les Deux Avars* de Grétry.



Cheryl Barker as
Madam Butterfly in the
1997 Opera Australia
production

Giacomo Puccini: *Madam Butterfly*

Puccini dichiarò che *Madama Butterfly* era la sua opera preferita, e io mi trovo completamente d'accordo. Per quanto riguarda la costruzione, la continuità musicale, la forza dei sentimenti e la penetrante descrizione dei personaggi, nel caso della protagonista, non ha eguali nella sua produzione. Per questo risulta ancora più sorprendente il fatto che la prima del febbraio 1904 alla Scala di Milano fosse un gran fiasco, finché non ci si rende conto che la forma originale era difettosa, cosa che il compositore comprese immediatamente. Dopo un approfondito lavoro di revisione nei mesi successivi, la nuova versione ebbe successo a Brescia il 28 maggio 1904, e questa può quindi essere considerata la vera prima di un'opera che da allora in poi ha conquistato il mondo della lirica e occupa un posto di diritto nel pantheon del suo genere praticamente da un secolo, in omaggio al favore di cui gode presso il suo pubblico.

La storia della sua genesi è semplice. Quando il Giappone aprì i porti alle navi occidentali, nel decennio del 1860, l'Occidente rimase vittima del fascino dell'Oriente, con il suo impenetrabile

esotismo. Cominciarono a proliferare opere teatrali sull'argomento, e tra esse, nel 1900, un dramma di un atto di David Belasco, intitolato *Madam Butterfly*, rappresentato per la prima volta a New York. La pièce, a sua volta, si basava sulla novella crudamente realistica di un legale americano, John Luther Long, pubblicata da una rivista americana, *The Century*; in essa veniva descritta la pratica accettata degli ufficiali di marina dei paesi stranieri di contrarre con le geishe dei "matrimoni" che era possibile annullare al momento del loro richiamo in patria. Belasco sostanzialmente adattò l'originale di Long. Alla fine della novella di Long, la Butterfly non muore; nella versione di Belasco muore tra le braccia di Pinkerton (com'è saggia e commovente invece la soluzione scelta da Puccini per l'epilogo!). Il successo della pièce si ripeté quando venne rappresentata a Londra; Puccini, che si trovava nella capitale inglese per un allestimento della *Tosca*, assisté per caso a una rappresentazione. Sebbene non riuscisse a seguire il dialogo, ne comprese la storia e si rese immediatamente conto del suo potenziale come trama operistica.

Dopo un tentativo fallito di comporre un'opera su Maria Antonietta, Puccini inviò a Illica, suo librettista, una traduzione italiana della storia originale di Long. Ricordi, l'editore di Puccini, inizialmente si dimostrò poco entusiasta, ma alla fine Illica riuscì a convincerlo del valore della storia e Puccini ottenne l'autorizzazione dell'editore e dell'autore della pièce originale per trasformarla in un'opera.

Durante il lungo periodo di gestazione, il concetto del compositore e dei librettisti cambiò direzione diverse volte, virando dagli estremi di un dramma di un solo atto a quello di un dramma di tre atti. La partitura venne completata verso la fine del 1903. Si decise infine per due atti di un'ora e un'ora e mezza rispettivamente, ma dopo il fiasco della prima, Puccini e i librettisti la riscrissero, apportando numerosi tagli (ripristinati in alcuni degli ultimi allestimenti solo per dimostrare la saggezza della decisione del compositore nell'effettuarli).

Puccini abbreviò le scene di colore locale, che possono rivelarsi noiose nell'Atto I (ci furono altri tagli per la versione di Parigi, utilizzata in questa registrazione) e divise l'Atto II in due scene, aggiungendo alla seconda un'aria per tenore, che divenne uno

dei numeri più popolari dell'opera. Alla "seconda prima" di Brescia, il pubblico chiese il bis di cinque numeri; oggi questo non sarebbe ammesso, ma rappresenta una dimostrazione sufficiente del fiuto infallibile di Puccini nel tradurre una storia molto umana e tragica in musica memorabile.

Questa musica è intrisa della passione di Puccini per tutte le cose giapponesi; l'interesse del compositore per l'Oriente è dimostrato da alcune prove in suo possesso all'epoca, che oggi si trovano in un museo nella casa di famiglia di Celle, in Toscana. Nel primo atto accenni a melodie giapponesi e l'evocazione della religione e della tradizione giapponesi, come la pittoresca cerimonia nuziale, creano una cornice adatta per lo sviluppo graduale del personaggio protagonista, la quindicenne geisha Cio-Cio-San. Una volta sulla scena, dopo un lento ingresso che inchioda l'attenzione, domina il resto dell'opera. Nessun'altra opera di Puccini, nemmeno la *Bohème* per Mimì oppure *Tosca* o *Turandot*, impone all'eroina il peso dell'azione fino a tal punto. Sharpless, il console americano, e il vagabondo e insensibile tenente Pinkerton non sono figure prive di interesse, ma impallidiscono davanti alla statura di Butterfly.

All'inizio dell'Atto I Puccini, magistralmente, definisce i tre principali personaggi maschili: Pinkerton, spensierato e virile; Sharpless, solidale, stanco del mondo; Goro, il sensale di matrimonio, che ha offerto Butterfly per soddisfare i piaceri Pinkerton, strisciante e servile. Nella consueta maniera, Puccini accosta brani quasi recitati e melodie indimenticabili e riuscite per descriverli tutti e tre, in modo di farceli conoscere chiaramente anche prima che arrivi Butterfly. Dopo il suo indimenticabile ingresso, un'opportunità aurea, ma difficile, per il soprano protagonista di presentarsi, i semplici pensieri di Cio-Cio-San sul matrimonio e la fedeltà e la sua breve narrazione della storia della sua vita, sono meravigliosamente presentati nei momenti successivi.

La fanciulla è già commovente e vulnerabile al massimo, sia quando esprime la sua opinione sulla povertà ("Nessuno si confessa mai" "For no one likes to own that he was born so very poor") sia quando descrive, in "Ieri son salita tutta sola" "Now, I'd like to tell you that in secret I visited the mission", di aver adottato il cristianesimo quale sua nuova religione in vista dell'imminente matrimonio con Pinkerton. Quando il bonzo, uno sgradevole sacerdote parente di Cio-Cio-San,

ha fatto di tutto per condannarla e i due innamorati rimangono soli, Puccini scatena la musica più erotica da lui mai composta nel più lungo duetto d'amore di una sua opera, il che basta a dimostrare quanto fosse elevato il suo livello di ispirazione all'epoca e quanto si identificasse con l'adorata eroina.

La fiducia incondizionata di Butterfly per Pinkerton viene evocata in maniera commovente, come il desiderio travolgente dell'uomo, ma anche in questo momento di massima felicità rimane un debole accenno di presentimento e tristezza, nelle armonie e nel palpabile senso di struggimento. Forse per questo Puccini si ispirò in parte al duetto d'amore dell'Atto II di *Tristan und Isolde*. Mentre la coppia si allontana per consumare le nozze che avranno tragiche conseguenze, Puccini utilizza tutte le risorse della sua vasta orchestra, mentre i cantanti salgono fino al registro più elevato. Inevitabilmente e giustamente, in ogni buona rappresentazione, a questo punto si scatena un applauso ravvolgente.

Da parte nostra è necessaria una buona dose di credulità per immaginare esattamente cosa sia accaduto a Cio-Cio-San dal momento di suprema felicità alla fine dell'Atto I all'inizio

dell'Atto II. È evidente che ha dato alla luce un bambino, che ama e alleva con l'aiuto della fedele e obbediente Suzuki. Con una fiducia incrollabile nel marito, Butterfly continua a sopportare la povertà, contenta di rimanere nella sua piccola casa ad aspettare il promesso ritorno di Pinkerton. In alcune versioni dell'opera, tale è la sua fiducia per tutto ciò che è americano che sembra aver adottato per quanto possibile delle caratteristiche occidentali nella sua casa.

La donna inveisce contro i dubbi espressi da Suzuki, addirittura minacciando di ucciderla, un segno della forza della sua costituzione psicologica. Teneramente, cita le parole d'addio di Pinkerton: "O piccina mogliettina", ("O Butterfly, my dearest little darling") e la promessa di ritornare quando i pettirossi fanno la nidata, la prima di tante strazianti frasi che Puccini crea per la sua amata eroina nell'Atto II. I dubbi di Suzuki vengono finalmente fugati dal più famoso brano dell'opera, "Un bel dì" ("One fine day") vedremo, che descrive in parole e musica altamente emotive il ritorno dell'innamorato nella fantasia di Butterfly, rivelando molte sfaccettature del suo carattere e il suo amore, con crescente intensità.

Sopraggiunge Sharpless, che tenta, inutilmente, di toglierle ogni speranza

leggendole una lettera di Pinkerton.

All'annuncio della lettera, lei immediatamente si aggrappa a questo segno di apparente speranza dichiarando con una graziosa frase "Io son la donna più lieta del Giappone" ("Then I'm the happiest lady in Japan"). Poi chiede ingenuamente a Sharpless quando fanno la nidata i pettirossi in America, una domanda a cui l'uomo non sa rispondere. Arriva Yamadori, pretendente locale alla mano di Butterfly, che viene da lei trattato con umoristica derisione. Yamadori tenta di perorare la propria causa con una melodia deliziosa, ma intenzionalmente debole.

Sharpless riprende a leggere la lettera, ma Butterfly insiste nel vedere il lato positivo di quello che sarebbe per lei un messaggio di rovina. Alla fine lui le chiede cosa farebbe se Pinkerton non tornasse. La musica diventa brusca e tragica, mentre la donna riflette se riprendere la vita di geisha o morire. Con parole ineffabili, Butterfly rivela il dolore provocato dalla domanda. Poi esibisce il suo bambino e apre il suo cuore e la sua anima nel brano "Che tua madre" ("That your mother should take you on her shoulder"), dichiarando al bambino che lei non potrebbe chiedere la carità: la morte

sarebbe molto preferibile. Questo è forse il brano più caldo di tutta l'opera, in quanto rivela la profondità dei sentimenti di Cio-Cio-San con una musica indicibilmente diretta e sentita.

Il Console si allontana e Butterfly quasi uccide Goro per aver insinuato che nessuno sa chi sia il padre del bambino (a salvarlo è l'intervento di Suzuki). Poi, in un ispirato cambiamento di umore, suggerito da Puccini, udiamo un cannone dal porto: è stata avvistata la nave di Pinkerton. La felicità di Butterfly si manifesta con una magnifica esplosione di gioia: aveva sempre avuto ragione lei e torto gli scettici. È talmente convincente che il pubblico condivide la sua illusione e si lascia andare a uno spontaneo applauso. Si potrebbe pensare che questa sia una manipolazione su larga scala da parte di Puccini, ma l'effetto, in teatro, è trascinate. Poi, sulla musica forse più felice e semplice della partitura, Butterfly e Suzuki ornano di fiori la casa, nell'attesa del ritorno dell'amato.

Le due donne, con il bambino, iniziano una veglia su melodie ipnotiche dell'orchestra. Con l'arrivo dell'alba all'inizio della seconda scena (spesso l'Atto III in teatro), Puccini compone un preludio nella vena più avanzata fino a quel punto delle sue opere. È evidente l'influenza di

Debussy del *Pelléas et Mélisande*, opera comparsa due anni prima, nel 1902. Le armonie sono meditative ed equivoche in modalità debussiana e la conclusione che s'intravede è altrettanto tragica.

In quest'epilogo, Pinkerton esprime tutto il proprio rimorso in "Addio fiorito asil" ("Farewell, oh happy home"), Sharpless è in vena di recriminazioni e Suzuki teme la tragedia prossima, particolarmente quando scorge Kate, la nuova moglie di Pinkerton. Puccini delicatamente tiene lontana dalla scena la sua eroina fino all'ultimo momento possibile. La felicità e sollievo a cui aspirava vengono distrutte quando vede Kate e capisce di chi si tratta. Con frasi spezzate, che dimostrano il suo profondo dolore, dice a Kate, nel brano forse più eloquente della partitura, che nessuno al mondo può essere più felice di lei: "Sotto il gran ponte del cielo non v'è donna di voi più felice" ("Under the great sky above us"). Nessuna cantante valida può fallire qui: il librettista e il compositore le hanno dato una frase da togliere il fiato.

Ormai non resta che l'harakiri. In un vano tentativo di impedire il terribile gesto, Suzuki manda nella stanza il bambino, ignaro, che raccoglie le ultime parole d'amore di Butterfly. La madre gli benda gli occhi e si pugnala.

Mentre giace moribonda arriva Pinkerton, disperato, gridando il suo nome, ma è troppo tardi. Ancora una volta, come sempre, il tempismo drammatico di Puccini è infallibile. Il pubblico, coinvolto in questo momento di tragedia personale, è affranto.

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COMPACT DISC ONE

Atto I

La casa di Pinkerton, nei pressi di Nagasaki
Goro, un sensale di matrimonio, mostra a Pinkerton, tenente della marina statunitense, la casa che quest'ultimo ha preso in affitto per Cio-Cio-San, sua futura sposa, la geisha Madam Butterfly. Il tenente sta per sposarla nel rispetto della legge giapponese, secondo cui l'assenza del marito, anche per un mese soltanto, è ragione sufficiente per il divorzio. Arriva il primo ospite della cerimonia, Sharpless, il console americano, che lo supplica di non sposarsi con tanta leggerezza. Pinkerton, però non riesce a credere che la fanciulla giapponese possa prendere sul serio la cerimonia e pregusta il giorno in cui avrà una vera moglie americana.

Arriva Butterfly e viene firmato il contratto di matrimonio. Improvvisamente compare il bonzo, suo zio, e la denuncia: ha saputo che Butterfly ha preso l'iniziativa irrevocabile di rinnegare la propria religione. La famiglia e gli amici di lei la maledicono e se ne vanno. Pinkerton consola sua moglie e Suzuki la prepara per la notte delle nozze. Butterfly dichiara a Pinkerton il suo amore e l'uomo risponde che lei è sua per sempre.

Atto II

Parte I

Tre anni dopo

Pinkerton è stato richiamato in America poco dopo il matrimonio e Butterfly, impoverita, vive con la fedele Suzuki.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Nonostante l'incredulità di Suzuki, Butterfly è sicura del ritorno di Pinkerton e rifiuta un'offerta di matrimonio del principe Yamadori, un giapponese che ha fatto fortuna attraverso il commercio con l'America. Butterfly gli dice che si considera impegnata dalle leggi del paese di suo marito. Sharpless le fa vedere una lettera di Pinkerton; in essa,

l'uomo annuncia il proprio ritorno con una moglie americana e chiede a Sharpless di comunicare la notizia a Butterfly. Butterfly è talmente eccitata alla notizia del ritorno del marito che Sharpless non ha la possibilità di leggere la lettera per intero. Cerca di convincerla ad accettare l'offerta di Yamadori, ma la donna gli mostra il figlio avuto da Pinkerton come prova del suo affetto per lei. Sharpless si allontana, incapace di trasmettere il messaggio.

Dal porto si sente un colpo di cannone. È la nave di Pinkerton, l'*Abraham Lincoln*. Con febbrile eccitazione, Butterfly e Suzuki ornano di fiori la casa in onore del suo arrivo e lo attendono tutta la notte.

Parte 2

È l'alba e dal porto sale il richiamo dei marinai. Butterfly aspetta ancora Pinkerton. Suzuki la convince ad andare a riposarsi. Arriva Sharpless con Pinkerton e Kate, la moglie americana. Rendendosi conto della forza dell'affetto di Butterfly, Pinkerton è pieno di rimorso e si precipita fuori, lasciando Kate e Sharpless ad affrontare Butterfly. I due dicono a Suzuki che Kate desidera adottare il figlio di suo marito. Butterfly apprende la verità da Kate e chiede che sia Pinkerton a venire di persona a prendere

il bambino. Rimasta sola, dopo un ultimo addio al figlioletto, si uccide.

English National Opera

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Cheryl Barker è nata a Sydney, in Australia, dove ha studiato con la compianta dame Joan Hammond. Ha esordito nel 1984 per la State Opera of South Australia nel ruolo di Blondchen in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*; quindi è comparsa con la Royal Opera nelle vesti di Jennifer (*The Midsummer Marriage*); con l'English National Opera nei ruoli di Musetta (*La bohème*), Butterfly, Donna Elvira, Giorgetta and Suor Angelica (*Il trittico*). Tra gli altri ruoli si ricordano Violetta (Opera di Amburgo, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand); Butterfly (Opera di Amburgo, Deutsche Oper di Berlino, Opera Australia, Opera New Zealand, Minnesota Opera); Tatiana (Scottish Opera, Opera Queensland); Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), il ruolo di protagonista in *Maria Stuarda*, la Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*) e la Governante (*The Turn of the Screw*). Ha interpretato numerosi ruoli per l'Opera delle Fiandre, tra cui Mimì, Liù (*Turandot*), Butterfly, Desdemona e Suor Angelica.

In concerto Cheryl Barker è comparsa alla Royal Albert Hall (*War Requiem* e *Requiem* di Verdi), al Festival di Spoleto, alla Wigmore Hall di Londra, al Festival Internazionale di Melbourne, e in Belgio. Le registrazioni su video comprendono *La bohème* e *Harry Enfield's Guide to Opera*.

Paul Charles Clarke è nato a Liverpool, ha studiato presso il Royal College of Music con Neil Mackie e ha vinto il concorso dedicato a Kathleen Ferrier nel 1989. I suoi ruoli comprendono il duca (*Rigoletto*); Fenton (*Falstaff*) in Giappone e al festival di Edimburgo; l'Alto sacerdote di Nettuno (*Idomeneo*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Alfredo (*La traviata*) per la Welsh National Opera; Alfredo e Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*) per la Scottish Opera; Rodolfo e Dmitri (*Boris Godunov*) per Opera North; Froh (*Das Rheingold*), Cassio (*Otello*), Tebaldo (*Roméo et Juliette*) e Alfredo per la Royal Opera. La sua carriera internazionale ha compreso apparizioni con l'Opera di Seattle, la Metropolitan Opera (Jenik nella *Sposa venduta* e Roméo), la Houston Grand Opera e l'opera di Monte Carlo. Ha interpretato il ruolo di Pinkerton con la Houston Grand Opera, la Deutsche Oper di Berlino, e al festival Met in the Parks.

Le apparizioni in concerto comprendono una tournée europea con l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment e sir Simon Rattle, nell'interpretazione della Nona sinfonia di Beethoven (interpretata anche con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra), ed *Elijah* di Mendelssohn a Roma.

La discografia comprende Tebaldo (*Roméo et Juliette*), Arturo (*Lucia*), e per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation il ruolo di protagonista nel *Faust* di Gounod.

Jean Rigby ha studiato presso la Royal Birmingham School of Music e poi alla Royal Academy of Music con Patricia Clarke, con cui continua a lavorare. Per English National Opera ha interpretato Helen (*King Priam*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Penelope (*Il ritorno di Ulisse*) Jocasta, Carmen, Ottaviano e Lucretia. Altre apparizioni comprendono Nicklausse (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) con la Royal Opera e l'Opera di San Diego; *L'italiana in Algeri* al festival di Buxton; il ruolo di protagonista ne *La Cenerentola*, e Idamante (*Idomeneo*) per la Garsington Opera; Genevieve (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) e Irene (*Theodora*) per Glyndebourne Festival; Charlotte (*Werther*) per l'Opera di Seattle.

In concerto ha interpretato la Seconda e l'Ottava sinfonia di Mahler ai concerti londinesi della serie Promenade, *Elijah* e *St Paul* di Mendelssohn, *Les nuits d'été*, e il *Requiem* di Verdi.

La discografia per Chandos comprende *The Rape of Lucretia*, *A Mass of Life* di Delius, *St Paul* di Mendelssohn e *Rigoletto* (Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation).

Gregory Yurisich si è conquistato il favore della critica con le sue ultime interpretazioni del grande repertorio verdiano. Le interpretazioni più apprezzate comprendono *Nabucco* al Festival di Bregenz, con la Royal Opera e a Ginevra; il ruolo di protagonista del *Rigoletto* in Israele, Australia e ad Atene; il ruolo di protagonista nel *Simon Boccanegra*, ed Escamillo (*Carmen*) per English National Opera; il protagonista nel *Falstaff* in Australia; Germont padre (*La traviata*) per l'Opera di San Francisco, la Australian Opera, a Tel-Aviv e Ginevra; Iago (*Otello*) con Plácido Domingo per l'Opera di Los Angeles e a Brisbane; Amonasro (*Aida*), Stankar (Verdi, *Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), e le quattro personificazioni del cattivo genio (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), per la Royal Opera.

Le apparizioni internazionali in concerto di

Gregory Yurisich comprendono l'Ottava sinfonia di Mahler al Festival di Edimburgo, Alberich (*Siegfried*) in concerto, Salieri (*Mozart e Salieri* di Rimskij-Korsakov) e la Nona sinfonia di Beethoven per la rete televisiva australiana ABC.

La discografia comprende Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), un disco di brani solistici dedicato alle canzoni di Peter Dawson e, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, Scarpia (*Tosca*).

Stuart Kale si è conquistato una fama a livello internazionale come uno dei più notevoli attori-cantanti del mondo della lirica. Vanta un repertorio enorme che riunisce ruoli di compositori che vanno da Monteverdi a Messiaen. Ha iniziato la sua carriera presso la Welsh National Opera prima di entrare all'English National Opera, dove è rimasto per otto anni, interpretando ruoli quali Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Michael (*Julietta* di Martinů), Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) e Nanki-Poo nell'allestimento di *The Mikado* per la regia di Jonathan Miller.

Tra i suoi impegni importanti vanno ricordati l'Alto sacerdote (*Idomeneo*) al Covent Garden, Hauptmann (*Wozzeck*) a Nancy, San Francisco e all'Opéra du Rhin di Strasburgo,

Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) a Strasburgo, Bordeaux e Montpellier, Peter Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) per la tournée russa del 1990 dell'ENO, Truffaldino (*L'amore delle tre melarance*) per l'ENO, Zinoviev (*Lady Macbeth*) a Tolosa e Marsiglia, i tre ruoli tenorili nella *Lulu* allo Châtelet. La discografia comprende Shuisky nel *Boris Godunov* (brani scelti) e Roderigo (*Otello*) per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation.

Dopo gli studi presso il Royal Northern College of Music, **Clive Bayley** si è affermato presso importanti compagnie liriche della Gran Bretagna e si esibisce regolarmente in concerto. Il suo repertorio di ruoli di protagonista e di sostegno si è ampliato costantemente e oggi va da Monteverdi a Verdi, Puccini e Berg. Per la Royal Opera ha interpretato Colline nella *Bohème*, Hans Foltz in *Die Meistersinger* e Castro ne *La fanciulla del West*. Inoltre ha riscosso notevoli successi con Opera North in *Jérusalem* di Verdi, con English National Opera in *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck*, e *Dr Faust*, con Opera Factory in *Don Giovanni*, ed è stato Colline nella *Bohème* alla Royal Albert Hall. All'estero è comparso con l'Opera dei Paesi Bassi e l'Opera di Seattle e in concerto con Les Arts Florissants in tournée in Europa.

Le registrazioni per Chandos comprendono *Troilus and Cressida*, *Billy Budd*, e, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Don Giovanni*, momenti salienti del *Boris Godunov*, *Don Pasquale* e *Il trovatore*.

D'Arcy Bleiker è nato nello Yorkshire e ha studiato con Robert Alderson presso il Royal Northern College of Music, con l'appoggio della Peter Moores Foundation e del Countess of Munster Musical Trust. I suoi ruoli per il RNCM hanno compreso Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*), il sovrintendente Budd (*Albert Herring*), Schaunard (*La bohème*) e Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Ha cantato inoltre con la Glyndebourne Festival Opera e la Classical Opera Company al Linbury Theatre, Covent Garden. Ha fatto parte del Glyndebourne Festival Chorus ed è apparso in concerto nell'Inghilterra del nord. Con la Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra ha cantato *Elijah*, la *Messa di Gloria* di Puccini, ha interpretato alcuni ruoli nel *Candide* di Bernstein, e la parte del re in un'interpretazione in concerto di *Aida*. Ha inoltre interpretato il ruolo di Polydorus in *L'enfance du Christ* diretta da Kent Nagano al Bridgewater Hall.

Roland Wood è nato nel Berkshire e ha studiato presso il Royal Northern College of Music con Patrick McGuigan e Robert Alderson, quindi presso il National Opera Studio con l'appoggio della Peter Moores Foundation e dell'English National Opera. Ha iniziato la sua carriera teatrale come baritono basso e i suoi primi ruoli hanno compreso Silva (*Ernani*) e Colline (*La bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) e Martino (*L'occasione fa il ladro*) per il Walton Trust ad Ischia; Zaretsky (*Eugenio Onieghin*) per l'Opera dell'Unione Europea. Dopo il passaggio a baritono, gli ultimi ruoli comprendono Josev Prasov nella prima mondiale di *The Bridge*, e il Conte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) con il Royal Northern College of Music e Opera Holland Park. Ha inoltre interpretato diversi ruoli per la Glyndebourne Festival Opera e l'English National Opera. La sua discografia comprende *Belisario* di Donizetti per Opera Rara.

La carriera di cantante di Geoffrey Mitchell racchiude un repertorio notevole che spazia dalla musica antica a quella contemporanea e che l'ha portato in Scandinavia, Germania, nella ex Cecoslovacchia, in Canada e Australasia. L'esperienza di direzione degli inizi

con la BBC lo ha condotto ad un maggiore coinvolgimento con i suoi stessi cantanti e inoltre alla creazione del **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Le prime registrazioni sono sfociate nel coinvolgimento a lungo termine del Coro con Opera Rara, per la quale ha inciso più di trenta registrazioni. Il Coro gode di una fama sempre maggiore con ulteriore lavoro dalla BBC e da case discografiche internazionali. Per la Chandos il Geoffrey Mitchell Choir ha partecipato a numerose registrazioni nelle applaudite serie di Opera in English con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation.

Dai buoni auspici degli inizi nel 1945, quando fu creata da Walter Legge principalmente come orchestra di registrazione, la **Philharmonia Orchestra** ha continuato ad attirare alcuni fra i direttori più importanti del ventesimo secolo. Hanno collaborato più frequentemente con l'Orchestra Otto Klemperer (primo Direttore Principale), Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Carlo Maria Giulini, Sir Andrew Davis, Vladimir Ashkenazy e Esa-Pekka Salonen. Attualmente diretta dal Direttore Principale Christoph von Dohnanyi e con Leonard Slatkin in qualità di Direttore Ospite Principale, l'Orchestra ha

consolidato la sua posizione centrale nella vita musicale britannica, non solo a Londra dove è Orchestra Residente al Royal Festival Hall, ma anche nella società in senso più ampio attraverso soggiorni sul territorio.

L'Orchestra ha ricevuto diversi premi importanti ed ha conquistato il plauso della critica grazie alla sua vitalità e al calore unico del suono. È stata lodata sia per la sua programmazione innovativa, al centro della quale vi è un impegno ad interpretare e commissionare una musica nuova dei principali compositori viventi al mondo, tra i quali l'attuale Compositore in Visita James MacMillan.

L'Orchestra si reca frequentemente all'estero in tournée ed è l'orchestra sinfonica più registrata al mondo con ben più di 1000 incisioni all'attivo. Tra queste vi sono, per Opera Rara, parecchi dischi di arie d'opera nonché undici opere complete (*Ugo, conte di Parigi*, *Ne m'oubliez pas*, *Emilia di Liverpool*, *L'assedio di Calais*, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* e *Maria de Rudenz* di Donizetti, *Dinorah* di Meyerbeer, *Medea in Corinto* di Mayr, *Orazi e Curiazi* di Mercadante, *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* di Pacini e l'*Otello* di Rossini). L'Orchestra ha registrato numerosi dischi per

la Chandos, tra cui, nelle serie di Opera in English con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Faust*, *La bohème*, *Tosca* vincitrice di un premio e sei album con recital da solista di arie d'opera (con Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny e John Tomlinson).

Yves Abel è nato in Canada e si sta rapidamente affermando tra i più importanti direttori d'orchestra nel repertorio operistico e sinfonico. Ha studiato presso l'istituto musicale di Mannes e il Music Center di Tanglewood dove è stato seguito da Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Gunther Herbig e Roger Norrington.

L'esordio in teatro, tra l'apprezzamento della critica, è venuto con *Don Carlos* per Opera North; seguivano *Le Comte Ory* per la Glyndebourne Festival Opera; *L'elisir d'amore* per la Lyric Opera di Chicago; *Il turco in Italia* per l'Opéra de Monte Carlo; *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* per l'Opera dei Paesi Bassi; *Hamlet* per l'Opera di San Francisco; *L'elisir d'amore* e *Un ballo in maschera* per l'Opera danese; *Thais* di Massenet per l'Opéra de Nice, *Luisa Miller* per Spoleto Festival USA, e *Zampa* per l'Opéra Français de New York. Altre apparizioni

comprendono il *Festival dei due Mondi* di Spoleto e un film di *Amahl and the Night Visitors* a ricordo dell'85° compleanno di Gian Carlo Menotti, l'Opéra di Parigi, la New York City Opera, l'Opera di Seattle, l'Opera Theatre of St Louis, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Theater of Connecticut, Wexford Opera Festival e Wolf Trap Opera.

Yves Abel si trova a proprio agio anche nel repertorio orchestrale e i suoi ultimi impegni comprendono concerti con la San Francisco Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Royal

Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Nova Scotia Orchestra e Orquesta Cuidad de Granada. Ha riscosso significativi consensi da parte della critica per la sua attività di Direttore musicale dell'Opéra Français de New York. Dall'inaugurazione della compagnia nel 1990, ha diretto opere rare come *Barbe-Bleue* di Offenbach; *La Jolie Fille de Perth* di Bizet; *Médée* e *Les Deux Journées* di Cherubini; *Le Pauvre Matelot* ed *Esther de Carpentras* di Milhaud; *Iphigénie en Aulide* di Gluck; *Docteur Miracle* di Bizet; e *Les Deux Avers* di Grétry.



Jean Rigby as Suzuki and Cheryl Barker as Madam Butterfly in the 2000 De Vlaamse Opera production of *Madam Butterfly*

On session with Chandos



Bill Cooper

Stuart Kale and Jean Rigby

On session with Chandos



Bill Cooper

Gregory Yurisich and
Cheryl Barker

On session with Chandos



Roland Wood

Bill Cooper

On session with Chandos



Paul Charles Clarke

Bill Cooper

On session with Chandos



Bill Cooper

Clive Bayley

On session with Chandos



Bill Cooper

Yves Abel

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

[1] *A Japanese house, terrace and garden. Below, in the background, is the bay, harbour and town of Nagasaki. From the room at the back of the little house, Goro, with much bowing, leads in Pinkerton; with much ostentation but still obsequiously he draws his attention to the details of the structure. Goro makes a partition slide out at the back, and explains its use to Pinkerton. They come forward a little onto the terrace.*

Pinkerton (*surprised at all he sees*)

[2] So the walls and the ceiling...

Goro (*enjoying Pinkerton's surprise*)

Come and go at your pleasure

however you may fancy.

Every room, every doorway –

as you see it is really most convenient.

Pinkerton (*looking around*)

And can you tell me, where's

the bedroom?

Goro (*pointing in two directions*)

Here or there!... depending...

Pinkerton

A wonderful contrivance!

The hallway?

Goro (*showing the terrace*)

Here, sir.

Pinkerton (*amazed*)

In the open?...

Goro (*making the partitions slide out*)

The wall slides outward...

Pinkerton (*while Goro is making the partitions slide out*)

I see now!... And this one?...

Goro

Slides along!

Pinkerton

But is the whole thing strong enough?

Goro (*protesting*)

Strong as an iv'ry tower,

secure from floor to ceiling.

(*He invites Pinkerton to go down the garden.*)

Pinkerton

And it works just as smoothly.

Goro (*He claps his hands loudly three times. Two men and a woman enter. They humbly and slowly go down on their knees before Pinkerton.*)

This is the trusty handmaid

who waits upon your wife,

faithful and devoted.

The houseboy... And this the cook.

They're embarrassed

at such great honour.

Pinkerton (*impatiently*)

Their names are?

Goro (*pointing to Suzuki*)

Miss Gentle Breeze of Morning.

(*pointing to one servant and then the other*)

Ray of the Golden Sunbeam. Sweet-scented

Pinetree.

Suzuki (*still on her knees, growing bolder, raises her hand*)

[3] I think Your Honour's smiling.

A smile is like a flower,

said the wise Ocunama:

A smile conquers all, and

defies every trouble. Pearls may be won by smiling;

smiles can even open

the gates of Heaven.

The perfume of the Gods,

the fountain of Life...

(*Goro perceives that Pinkerton begins to be bored by Suzuki's loquacity. He claps his hands three times. The three rise and quickly disappear into the house.*)

Pinkerton

When women start to talk,

I find them all the same.

(*to Goro who has gone to the back to look out*)

What is it?

Goro

I am watching for the bride.

Pinkerton

Are we ready?

Goro

Every detail.

(*He bows ingratiatingly.*)

Pinkerton

A dealer worth a million.

Goro

There will come: the official

registrar, the relations, and then your Consul,

your future wife. Then you'll sign the contract

and solemnise the marriage.

Pinkerton

Are there many relations?

Goro

Her mother, grandma, and the Bonze, her uncle,

(he'll hardly honour us with his appearance)

and her cousins, male and female,

in strict ascending order.

And other blood relations, a round two dozen.

Now as to your descendants...

(*with obsequious presumption*)

that matter can be safely

left to you, sir, and lovely Butterfly.

Pinkerton

A dealer worth a million.

(*Goro thanks him with a deep bow.*)

Sharpless (*off-stage, quite distant*)

[4] It can't be much further now!

Stumbling! And spluttering!

Goro (*who has run to the background, announces:*)
Here comes the Consul.

Sharpless (*he enters, quite out of breath. Goro bows low before the Consul.*)

Ah! The climb up here
has left me breathless!

Pinkerton (*he goes to meet the Consul: they shake hands.*)

You're very welcome.

Sharpless
Ough!

Pinkerton

Quickly, Goro,
fetch some refreshment.

(*Goro hurries into the house.*)

Sharpless (*panting and looking around*)
It's high here.

Pinkerton (*pointing to the view*)
But lovely!

Sharpless (*looking at the sea and the town below*)
Nagasaki, the ocean,
the harbour...

Pinkerton (*pointing to the house*)
This house is so fragile
that it stands up by magic.

Sharpless
Your house?

Pinkerton

Yes, I have bought
it for nine hundred and ninety-nine years,
but with the option, of every
month, to cancel the contract!
I must say, in this country,
the houses and the contracts are elastic!

Sharpless

And western man has found it useful.

(*Goro comes bustling out of the house, followed by two servants. They bring glasses and bottles and two wicker chairs; placing the glasses and bottles on a small table, they return to the house.*)

Pinkerton (*inviting Sharpless to be seated*)
Surely.
(*frankly*)

- [5] The whole world over,
wherever Yankees wander,
we gain our pleasure
scorning all danger.
Wherever Fate decrees, he casts his anchor...
(*He breaks off to offer Sharpless a drink.*)
Milk punch or whisky?
(*resuming*)
...till with a change of wind
the ship swings round, then up go sails and
rigging.
And life is not worth living
If he can't win the fairest
girl in every country...
And then fire her with love.

Sharpless

That's an easy-going gospel
which brings life many pleasures
but sorrow in the end.

Pinkerton (*continuing*)

- [6] Fate can't crush him, he tries again undaunted.
No one and nothing
can break his spirit.
And so I'm marrying in Japanese style
for the next nine
hundred and ninety-nine
years. Free, though, to annul the marriage monthly!
(*standing up and raising his glass to Sharpless*)
'America for ever!'

Sharpless

'America for ever!'
(*They sit down on the terrace again.*)

- [7] – Is the bride
very pretty?

Goro (*having overheard, approaches the terrace, eagerly and officiously*)

Fair as a garland
of fragrant flowers. She's the brightest
star in the heavens.
Very cheap too; one hundred
Yen!
(*to the Consul*)
And if Your Honour would allow me,
I have a fine selection...
(*The Consul laughingly declines.*)

Pinkerton (*very impatiently*)
Go and bring her, Goro.

(*Goro runs to the back and disappears down the hill.*)

Sharpless

Are you out of your senses,
or is this mere
infatuation?

Pinkerton (*rising impatiently; Sharpless rises also.*)
Perhaps, perhaps. Depends what
you call infatuation!

- [8] True love or fancy,
I cannot tell you. All that I know is,
she, with her innocent charm, has entranced me.

Almost transparently fragile and slender,
Dainty in stature, delicate figure,
she seems to have stepped straight out of a
picture.

But from her background of varnish and lacquer,
suddenly light as a feather she flutters,
a butterfly that is hovering and settling,
silently charming and yet so seductive.
I'm all afire for her... I must possess her...
Although her wings might, in the game, be
broken.

Sharpless (*seriously and kindly*)
The other day, she came to
the Consulate all alone.

I did not see her, but I heard her speak.
And the mystery of her
voice touched my very soul.
Surely, love that is pure
and true speaks just like that.
Indeed it would be a pity
to tear those delicate wings,
and far too cruel to torment a trusting heart.
It could be a disaster.
No cry of anguish
should ever be uttered
by that gentle and trusting little voice.

Pinkerton

Dearly beloved Consul,
you know I mean no harm!
Men of your age look on life with mournful
eyes.

No harm I reckon
to play this game
and guide her to the tender flights of love!
(*He offers him more to drink.*)
Whisky?

Sharpless

Alright, I'll have one more.
(*Pinkerton mixes Sharpless some whisky and also
fills up his own glass. Sharpless raises his glass.*)
Here's to your friends and relations at home.

Pinkerton (*raises his glass*)

And here's to my real wedding day when I will
marry a real wife from America.

Goro (*reappears, running breathlessly up the hill*)

[9] See them! They're climbing the summit of the hill!
(*pointing towards the path*)

A crowd of women rustling,
like the wind among the branches,
here they come bustling!

(*Pinkerton and Sharpless retire to the back of the
garden, and look out at the path on the hillside.*)

Butterfly's Girl-Friends (*off-stage*)

Ah! Ah! Endless sea and endless sky!

Butterfly (*off-stage*)

There's one more step to climb.

The Girl Friends

How long you tarry.
At last the summit.
Look, oh look, the mass of flowers!

Butterfly (*still off-stage; serenely*)

He's waiting.
Across the earth and o'er the ocean,
Balmy breeze and scent of spring are blowing –
and soon I'll be the happiest maiden in Japan,
in all the world, friends.
I have obeyed the summons,
the sweet summons of love,
upon the threshold standing –
Ah, here the glory
That life or death can offer awaits me now.
My dear friends,
I hurried here at the call of love,
I have come at the call of love.

The Girl Friends

Joy to you, may joy attend you,
gentle maiden, but ere
you go beyond the threshold which invites you,
turn and admire
oh, the lovely sky, the lovely flowers and the sea!
Best of fortune attend on you, gentle maiden,
but ere you cross o'er the threshold
pause and look behind you
and admire the things you hold the dearest.

Sharpless

Oh, the lively joyous chattering of youth!

Butterfly (*to her friends*)

We're there now.
(*She sees the three men standing together and
recognises Pinkerton. She quickly closes her
sunshade and at once introduces him to her
friends.*)

B.F. Pinkerton. Down

(*She goes down on her knees.*)

The Girl Friends (*closing their sunshades and
going down on their knees*)

Down.

(*They all rise and ceremoniously approach
Pinkerton.*)

Butterfly

[10] We are honoured.

The Girl Friends (*bowing*)

We are honoured.

Pinkerton (*smiling*)

Did you find it
rather tiring?

Butterfly (*in a measured way*)

To a bride it's
not as tiring
as the weary
hours of waiting...

Pinkerton (*kindly, but a little teasingly*)

What a compliment
to pay me.

Butterfly (*ingenuously*)

I know better
ones than that...

Pinkerton

Yes, I'm certain.

Butterfly (*anxious to show off her stock of
compliments*)

Would you care for
some this moment?

Pinkerton

Thank you... no.

Sharpless (*after scanning the group of maidens
with curiosity, he approaches Butterfly who listens
to him attentively*)

Miss 'Butterfly'. How pretty, your name was well
chosen.
Are you from Nagasaki?

Butterfly

Sir, I am, and my people
were formerly wealthy.
(*to her friends*)
That is so!

The Girl Friends (*assenting with alacrity*)
That is so!

Butterfly (*quite naturally*)
For no one likes to own that he was born so very
poor.
Is not every beggar, when you listen to his tale,
of ancient lineage? And yet
indeed I have known riches. But the strongest
oak must fall
when the storm uproots the forest... and we had
to go as geishas
to earn our living.
(*to her friends*)
Truly!

The Girl Friends (*corroborating*)
Truly!

Butterfly
I don't deny it,
or feel ashamed for it.
(*noticing that Sharpless smiles*)
You're smiling? But why?... That's
how the world is.

Pinkerton (*he has listened with interest and turns
to Sharpless*)

(With her youthful innocence how she sets me
on fire.)

Sharpless (*he, too, is interested in Butterfly's prattle
and continues to question her*)
Do you have any sisters?

Butterfly
No, Your Honour. Just my mother.

Goro (*importantly*)
A most dignified lady.

Butterfly
But through no fault whatever,
she is now very poor.

Sharpless
What of your father?

Butterfly (*stops short in surprise then answers very
briefly*)
Dead.

(*The friends hang their heads. Goro is embarrassed.
They all fan themselves nervously.*)

Sharpless (*returning to Butterfly*)
May I ask your age?

Butterfly (*with almost childish coquetry*)
Now try to guess it!

Pinkerton
Ten years.

Butterfly
Guess higher.

Sharpless

Twenty.

Butterfly
Guess lower.
Fifteen exactly, fifteen.
(*slyly*)
I am old, am I not?

Sharpless
Only fifteen.

Pinkerton
Only fifteen.

Sharpless
The age
For dolls and...

Pinkerton
...and getting married!

Goro (*announcing with importance*)
[11] The Imperial Commissioner, the official
Registrar, the relations.

Pinkerton (*to Goro*)
Quickly, Goro.

(*Goro runs into the house. In the background
Butterfly's relations are seen climbing the hill and
passing along the path; Butterfly and her friends go
to meet them, bowing and kow-towing; the
relations stare curiously at the two Americans.
Pinkerton has taken Sharpless by the arm and,
leading him to one side, laughingly makes him look
at the quaint group of relations.*)

Pinkerton

Truly comic this procession,
of my worthy new relations
held on terms of monthly contract!

I feel sure that there, behind the
mighty fan of peacock's feathers,
my mother-in-law is hiding.
(*pointing to Yakuside*)
And that shabby-looking fellow
Is the mad and boozy uncle.

Relations and Friends (*to Butterfly*)
Where is he? Where is he?

Butterfly and other Friends (*pointing to Pinkerton*)
Look, there he is.

First Cousin and some Friends
Handsome he's not!
No, in good truth!

Butterfly (*offended*)
Handsome man
you never saw,
not in your dreams.

The Mother
I think he's fine!

Other Friends
He's worth a lot.

First Cousin (*to Butterfly*)
Why, Goro offered
him to me.
But I said no.

Butterfly (*contemptuously*)

To you, indeed!
A likely tale!

Some Friends

Because on her
his choice did fall,
she would look down
upon us all!

Other Friends (*looking pityingly at Butterfly*)

I think her beauty's
on the wane.

Some Friends

He'll never stay.

Cousin and all Relations and Friends

I hope he won't.

Goro (*annoyed at the idle chatter, he goes from one to another, entreating them to lower their voices*)
For goodness sake
be silent all.

Uncle Yakuside (*staring at the servants who are bringing wines and liqueurs*)
Is there no wine?

The Mother and the Aunt (*peering around, trying to keep out of sight*)
Let's look around.

Some Friends (*with satisfaction to Yakuside*)
I've just seen some
The hue of tea
And crimson too!

Pinkerton

Ah, she's a gem, a flower.
which in good faith I have gathered.
Her fascinating presence
fans the flame of my passion.

(*He points to Butterfly.*)

Sharpless (*to Pinkerton*)

^[12] Oh, indeed, my friend, you're lucky!

O very lucky Pinkerton,
since Fate has given to you
a flower hardly opened.

I have never seen fairer,
nor as beautiful a girl
as little Butterfly.

Don't look on this contract
and on her faith as folly,
Be careful, for she believes you.

Butterfly (*to her people*)

Attention, if you please.
(*to her mother*)
Mother, come here.
(*to the others*)

All of you look:
listen to me:
one, two, three,
all of you down!

(*At a sign from Butterfly they all kow-tow to Pinkerton and Sharpless.*)

(*Goro accompanies the Consul, the Commissioner and the Registrar to the table with writing materials. The Consul examines the papers and get the contract ready. Pinkerton draws near to Butterfly and gently offers her some sweets.*)

Pinkerton

^[13] Come, my beloved.
(*seeing that Butterfly appears embarrassed*)
Do you like our little home?

Butterfly (*rising*)

Mister B.F. Pinkerton, allow me...
(*She holds out her arms which are encumbered by stuffed-out sleeves.*)
May I show you a young girl's few
possessions?

Pinkerton

But where are they?

Butterfly (*pointing to her sleeves*)

They are here... do you mind them?

Pinkerton (*rather astonished, he smiles, then quickly and gallantly reassures her*)

Why should I mind,
my lovely Butterfly?

Butterfly (*she empties her sleeves, placing their contents one by one on a stool*)

Silken kerchiefs... A pipe... A coloured ribbon.
A little silver buckle...
And a mirror... and a fan...

Pinkerton (*He sees a jar.*)

What is that you have?

Butterfly

A little jar of carmine.

Pinkerton

Oh no!

Butterfly

You don't like it?
(*She throws away the pot of rouge.*)
There!

(*She draws forth a long narrow sheath.*)

Pinkerton

And that?

Butterfly (*very gravely*)

That I hold most sacred.

Pinkerton (*curiously*)

And am I not to see it?

Butterfly (*Beseeching and grave, she lays down the sheath very reverently.*)

Too many people.
Please forgive me.

Goro (*who has approached, whispers to Pinkerton*)

It was sent by
the Mikado to her father, with a message...

(*He imitates the action of suicide.*)

Pinkerton (*softly to Goro*)

And her father?

Goro

Was obedient.

(He withdraws, mingling with the guests.)

Butterfly *(She takes some tiny statuettes from her sleeves, and shows them to Pinkerton.)*

The Ottokè.

Pinkerton *(He takes one and examines it with curiosity.)*

These small puppets? But what are they?

Butterfly

The spirits of my forefathers.

Pinkerton

Ah! I bow before them.

(He puts down the images, then rises.)

Butterfly *(She leads Pinkerton to one side and speaks to him confidentially.)*

Now, I'd like tell you
that in secret I visited the Mission.
Entering on my new life, I wish to adopt
my husband's religion.

- [14] My fate I have to follow,
and full of humble faith,
I bow before the God of Mister Pinkerton.
The Fates have willed it.
In the same little chapel on my knees with you
I will pray to the same God.
And in order to please you
I shall also forget my race and kindred.

(She goes to pick up the statuettes.)

For you, my love!

(She cuts short her cry, alarmed lest her relations should have heard her, and throws the Ottokè down. Meanwhile Goro has approached the Consul and, having received his orders, thunders forth in stentorian tones.)

Goro

- [15] Silence! Silence!

(The chattering ceases: they all stop eating and drinking and come forward in a circle, listening with much interest. Pinkerton and Butterfly stand in the centre.)

The Commissioner *(reading out)*

Leave is given to the undersigned,
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton,
Lieutenant serving on the gunboat
Abraham Lincoln, a ship of the United States Navy
of North America:

And to the spinster known as Butterfly
from the quarter of Omara Nagasaki
To join bonds of wedlock; to wit
the former of his free accord and will.
...the bride with consent of her relations,
witnesses of the contract.

(He hands the contract for signature.)

Goro *(ceremoniously)*

The bridegroom.

(Pinkerton signs.)

Now the bride.

(Butterfly signs.)

And all is settled.

(The relations hasten to sign; the friends cluster round Butterfly congratulating her.)

The Girl Friends

Dear Madam Butterfly.

Butterfly *(correcting them)*

No. Mrs B.F. Pinkerton.

(The Registrar removes the contract and informs the Commissioner that everything is completed.)

The Commissioner *(congratulating Pinkerton)*

- [16] Congratulations.

Pinkerton

I thank you most sincerely.

The Commissioner *(to the Consul)*

May I ask, are you going?

Sharpless

I'll come with you.

(nodding to Pinkerton)

Shall we meet tomorrow?

Pinkerton

Until tomorrow.

The Registrar *(congratulating Pinkerton)*

A son and heir.

Pinkerton

I'll do my best.

Sharpless *(shaking Pinkerton's hand)*

Be careful!

We shall meet tomorrow.

Pinkerton

(Pinkerton accompanies the three as far as the path which leads down to the town, and waves his hand to them as they vanish from sight. They had first to pass between two files of friends and relatives, who saluted them with many ceremonious bows.

Butterfly has withdrawn close to her mother.

Pinkerton returns and is naturally anxious to get rid of the wedding guests.)

(This family party bores me.

Now how can I get rid of them?

How shall I do it?)

Drink up!

All *(toasting)*

O Kami! O Kami!

Pinkerton

Now drink to the newly married couple!

All

O Kami! O Kami!

The Bonze

Cio-Cio-San! Cio-Cio-San!

Abomination!

(At this shout, all the relations and friends are thunderstruck and huddle together in terror: Butterfly remains in a corner.)

All

It's her uncle!

Goro (*annoyed at the Bonze's arrival*)

A curse on this intruder!

What on earth could have brought him here
of all troublesome people?...

(*He signs to the servants to take away the tables,
stools and cushions; then prudently retires,
grumbling furiously.*)

The Bonze (*to Butterfly, who stands isolated from
the rest*)

What were
you doing at the Mission?

All

Give answer Cio-Cio-San.

Pinkerton (*angry at the scene made by the Bonze*)
Who the hell is that madman?

The Bonze

I ask you, what were you doing?

How then, don't you even falter?

Are these the fruits of evil?

(*shouting*)

She has renounced us all!

All (*scandalised, shouting long and loud*)

Hou! Cio-Cio-San!

The Bonze

She's renounced, let me tell you,
her true religion.

All

Hou! Cio-Cio-San!

(*Butterfly hides her face in her hands.*)

The Bonze (*hurling curses at Butterfly*)

Kami sarundasico!

And may the Gods condemn you
to eternal damnation!

(*Butterfly's mother comes forward to protect her but
the Bonze pushes her away roughly and approaches
Butterfly in a fury, shouting in her face.*)

Pinkerton (*He has lost his patience and intervenes
between the Bonze and Butterfly.*)

That's quite enough, d'you hear me?

(*At the sound of Pinkerton's voice the Bonze stops
short in amazement, then with a sudden resolve he
invites relations and friends to come away.*)

The Bonze

You all must leave her. Come with me.

(*to Butterfly*)

You have renounced us all...

All (*They retire to the back with arms outstretched
pointing at Butterfly.*)

And we renounce you!

Hou! Cio-Cio-San!

Kami sarundasico!

Pinkerton (*authoritatively*)

Leave my house, I command you. Here
I'm the master. I'll have no curses and no
disturbances.

(*At Pinkerton's words, they all rush hastily towards
the path which leads down to the town: Butterfly's
mother again tries to approach her but is dragged
away by the others. The Bonze disappears down the
path to the temple, followed by his acolytes. The
shouts gradually grow fainter. Butterfly remains
silent and motionless, her face in her hands, while
Pinkerton goes to the top of the path to make sure
that all these troublesome guests have gone.
Butterfly bursts into childish tears. Pinkerton hears
her and anxiously hastens to her side, supporting
her as she is fainting, and tenderly takes her hands
from her face.*)

[17] Dearest, my dearest, weep no more.
All their shouting means nothing.

Butterfly (*She holds her ears so as not to hear the
shouts.*)

Oh, how they curse!

Pinkerton (*cheering her*)

All your respected tribe
and all the Bonzes in Japan are not worth
a tear from those sweet almond eyes
I love so.

Butterfly (*smiling with childlike pleasure*)

Indeed? I'll weep no more.

(*Evening begins to fall.*)

And now I do not care that I'm deserted.

For your words bring me comfort
and they fall like gentle balm on my heart.

(*She stoops to kiss Pinkerton's hand.*)

Pinkerton (*gently stopping her*)

You kiss my hand?

Butterfly

They tell me
that abroad, where the people are more cultured,
this is a token of the highest honour.

Suzuki

Izaghi Izanami

sarundasico

Kami

Izaghi Izanami

sarundasico Kami.

Pinkerton (*wondering at the subdued murmurs*)

Who's murmuring in there?

Butterfly

It's Suzuki who offers up her prayer
for the night.

Pinkerton (*The night draws in more and more,
and Pinkerton leads Butterfly to the house.*)

[18] Evening is falling...

Butterfly

With shadows and quiet.

Pinkerton

You're here alone now –

Butterfly

Alone and rejected.

I'm rejected, yet I'm happy!

Pinkerton (*He claps his hands three times – the servants and Suzuki hurry in.*)
Suzuki, the shoshi.

(*The servants silently slide several partitions along.*)

Butterfly (*with deep feeling to Pinkerton*)
Yes, we are all alone...
The world is yonder.

Pinkerton
Your uncle breathing thunder!

(*He sits down and lights a cigarette.*)

Butterfly (*to Suzuki, who has come in with the servants and is awaiting orders*)
Suzuki, bring me my garments.

(*Suzuki rummages in a chest and gives Butterfly her night attire and a small box of toilet requisites.*)

Suzuki (*bowing low to Pinkerton*)
Good night, Sir.

(*Pinkerton claps his hands; the servants run away. Butterfly retires to a corner at the back and, assisted by Suzuki, carefully performs her toilet for the night, exchanging her wedding-garment for one of pure white; then she sits down on a cushion and, looking in a small hand-mirror, arranges her hair. Suzuki goes out.*)

Butterfly
I'm glad to be rid of
this cumbersome obi,...
A bride should be robbed in
a pure dress of silk.

He's peeping and smiling,
pretends not to see me.
He'll see how I'm blushing
I wish I could hide!
I know his angry voice
still shouting curses...
Butterfly... they've renounced me...
They've renounced me, yet I'm happy.

Pinkerton (*lounging in the wicker chair, watching Butterfly amorously*)

Why, all her pretty movements
are like a little squirrel's.
To think that pretty creature
is my wife! My wife!

But her charm is
so alluring, my heart
is beating madly
with passionate longing!
(*He stands up and gradually approaches Butterfly with outstretched arms.*)

[19] Child, from whose eyes the witchery is shining,
now you are all my own.
You're dressed all in white like a lily.
Your ebony tresses are shining
on ivory shoulders.

Butterfly (*She descends from the terrace, followed by Pinkerton.*)

I come like the Moon's little Goddess,
the little Moon-Goddess who comes down by
night from
her bridge in a sky full of stars!

Pinkerton
Bewitching all mortals...

Butterfly
Then she takes them,
and she folds them in mantle of white,
away she bears them
to realms high above.

Pinkerton
But darling, as yet you haven't told me,
you still have not told me you love me.
D'you think that my Goddess knows
the sweet words I am longing to her?

Butterfly
She knows, but perhaps will not tell you
For fear she may die of her love!

Pinkerton
Fear not, my darling, for love does not mean
dying,
no, it's living, and it smiles
Like a joy born in Heaven.
I see it shine, as in your eyes, darling, I'm gazing.

(*He draws close to Butterfly and takes her face in his hands.*)

Butterfly
But now, beloved,
you are the world, more than the world to me.
Indeed I loved you the very first moment
that I saw you.
(*Butterfly has a sudden panic and puts her hands to*

her ears, as though she still hears her relatives shouting; then she rallies and once more turns confidently to Pinkerton.)

You're so
strong, so handsome! Your laugh is
so open and so carefree.
You tell me things that I never could dream of.
Oh, I am happy.

(*Night has closed in completely; the sky is unclouded and closely strewn with stars: Butterfly slowly draws nearer to Pinkerton; and then tenderly, almost beseechingly*)

[20] Ah, love me a little,
oh, just a very little,
as you would love a baby.
That's all that I long for.
I come of a people
accustomed to little;
grateful for love that's silent;
light as a blossom
and yet everlasting
as the sky, as the fathomless ocean.

Pinkerton
Give me your hands that I may softly kiss them.
(*He exclaims, tenderly.*)
My Butterfly! What a good name they gave you,
fragile thing of beauty.

Butterfly (*At these words Butterfly's face clouds over and she withdraws her hands.*)
They say that in your country
if a butterfly is caught by man

(with an expression of fear)
then with a needle he will pierce it
(with anguish)
and then leave it to perish!

Pinkerton (taking her hands again gently and smiling)

In that there is some truth
and shall I tell you why?
So it cannot escape.
(with ardour, caressing her affectionately)
See, I have caught you...
I hold you as you flutter.
You're mine now.

Butterfly (She throws herself into his arms.)
Yes, yours for ever.

Pinkerton
Come then, come then...
(Butterfly draws back, as though ashamed of having been too bold.)

Love, what fear holds you trembling?
Have done with all misgivings.
(He points to the starlit sky.)

The starlight is shining
and the world lies a-sleeping!
Cast all fears away, my love.
Ah! How your heart is beating.
You're mine now!

Ah! Come then, see the whole world lies
a-sleeping!
Into my loving arms, ah, come!
Ah, come! Be mine.

Butterfly (looking at the sky, enraptured)
Ah! Night of wonder! Stars unending!
I have never seen such glory!
Trembling, sparkling, each star in heaven,
like a fiery eye is flashing.
Oh! How lovely are the heavens;
Every star that shines afar
is gazing on us,
lighting the future...
See the stars!
Ah, lovely night, thy perfect calm is breathing
love near and far!

Pinkerton (with passionate longing)
Ah! Come, beloved.

(They go up from the garden into the house.)

The curtain falls.

Act II

Part I

Inside Butterfly's house

*The curtain rises: the room is in semi-darkness
Suzuki, kneeling before the image of the Buddha, is
praying. From time to time she rings the prayer-
bell. Butterfly is standing rigid and motionless near
a screen.*

Suzuki (praying)
[21] Izaghi Izanami...
(stopping short)

My head is throbbing!
(She rings the bell to invoke the attention of the Gods.)
And thou,
Ten-Sjoo-daj!
(in a tearful voice, looking at Butterfly)
Grant me that Butterfly
shall weep no more, no more, no more!

Butterfly (without moving)
Lazy and fat are your
Gods of Japan!

The God my husband prays to will give an answer
far more quickly to those who bow before him.
But I'm afraid he's silent
for we're so far away here.
(She remains pensive. Suzuki rises and slides back
the partition at the back leading to the garden.)
Suzuki, what money have we left?

Suzuki (She goes to a small cabinet and opens a
casket to look for some money. She goes to Butterfly
and shows her a very few coins.)

This is
all that is left us.

Butterfly
No more? Oh, we've been careless.

Suzuki (She puts the money back into the cabinet
which she closes, sighing.)
Unless he comes, and quickly,
we'll have nothing to live on.

Butterfly (with decision)
He'll come soon.

Suzuki (shaking her head)
Will he come?

Butterfly (vexed, approaching Suzuki)
Why did he order
the Consul to provide this dwelling for us?
Now answer that!
(Suzuki is silent, Butterfly persists.)
And why was he so careful
to have the house provided with safe locks
if he did not intend to come again?

Suzuki
I don't know.

Butterfly (rather annoyed and surprised at such
ignorance)
You don't know?
(calming down again and with proud confidence)
Then I will tell you, so as to keep out
those spiteful plagues, my relations, who might
upset me;
And inside, just to give
to me, his wife, protection,
his beloved little wife, Butterfly.

Suzuki (still far from convinced)
I've never heard as yet
of a foreign husband
returning back to his nest.

Butterfly (furious, seizing hold of Suzuki)
Ah! Silence, or I'll kill you.
(still trying to convince her)
Why, on the very day he left

I asked – you'll come back to me again?
And with his heart so heavy,
to conceal all his sorrow,
sadly smiling he answered:
(with much charm, trying to imitate Pinkerton)
'O Butterfly,
my dearest little darling,
I'll return in the springtime,
the warm and sunny season
when the flowers are in blossom and robins
nesting.'
(Calm and convinced, she stretches out on the floor.)
He'll return.

Suzuki
We'll hope.

Butterfly *(insisting)*
Say it with me: he'll return.

Suzuki *(to please her, she repeats mournfully)*
He'll return.

(She bursts into tears.)

Butterfly *(surprised)*
Weeping? But why?
Have you no faith, Suzuki?
(She continues, full of faith, smiling. She acts the scene as though it were actually happening.)
Hear me.

[22] One fine day we'll notice
a thread of smoke arising from the sea
on the far horizon,
and then the ship appearing;

soon the trim white vessel
glides into the harbour, thunders forth her
cannon.
See now he is coming!
I do not go to meet him. Not I! I stay
upon the brow of the hillside and wait there...
and wait
for a long time, but never weary
of the long waiting.
And from the crowded city see him coming,
from far away approaching,
a man is climbing the hillside.
Can you guess who it is?
And when he's reached the summit,
can you guess what he'll say?
He will call: 'Butterfly' there from the distance.
I, without answering, keep myself
quietly concealed,
a bit to tease him and a bit so as not to die
at our first meeting; and then a little troubled
he will call, he will call:
'My dearest Butterfly –
my little orange blossom!'
The names he used to call me when he lived
here.
(to Suzuki)
It will all come to pass, of that I'm certain.
Banish your idle fears, he will
return I promise, I know.
*(Butterfly and Suzuki embrace with emotion.
Butterfly dismisses her and she goes out of the door
on the left: Butterfly looks after her sadly.)*

COMPACT DISC TWO

Goro and Sharpless appear in the garden: Goro looks into the room, sees Butterfly through a window and says to Sharpless, who is following him:)

Goro
[1] Come, let's enter.

(Goro and Sharpless cross the garden.)

Sharpless *(He knocks cautiously at the door on the right.)*
Please excuse me
(He sees Butterfly, who hearing someone come in, has risen.)
Madam Butterfly.

Butterfly *(She corrects him, without turning round.)*
No, Mrs Pinkerton,
if you please.
(She turns and recognises the Consul.)
Why, here is the Consul!

(Suzuki enters eagerly and prepares a small table with smoking equipment, some cushions and a stool.)

Sharpless *(surprised)*
So you remember?

Butterfly *(doing the honours of the house)*
You are welcome,
in this fine American household.

Sharpless
Thank you.

Butterfly *(She invites the Consul to sit near the table: Sharpless drops awkwardly on to a cushion: Butterfly sits down on the other side and smiles slyly behind her fan on seeing the Consul's discomfort: then, with great charm, she asks him:)*
All your honourable ancestors,
are they well then?

Sharpless *(thanking her with a smile)*
I hope so.

Butterfly *(She signs to Suzuki to prepare the pipe.)*
You smoke?

Sharpless
Thank you.
(Anxious to explain the object of his visit, he produces a letter from his pocket.)
I've here...

Butterfly *(interrupting him)*
Your Honour, I see the sky
is cloudless.

(After having taken a draw at the pipe which Suzuki has prepared, she offers it to the Consul.)

Sharpless *(refusing)*
Thank you...
(again trying to rescue the thread of his talk)
I've here...

Butterfly (*She places the pipe on the table and says, very pressingly:*)

You prefer
most likely to smoke American...
(*offering him one*)
...cigarettes?

Sharpless (*rather annoyed, taking one*)
Thank you.
(*He tries to resume his talk.*)
I have to show you...

Butterfly (*She hands Sharpless a lighted taper.*)
A light?

Sharpless (*He lights the cigarette but puts it down at once and, showing her the letter, sits on the stool.*)
I've a letter
from Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton...

Butterfly (*very eagerly*)
What, really?
Is he well?

Sharpless
It seems so.

Butterfly (*jumping up joyfully*)
Then I'm the happiest
lady in Japan. Would you answer me
a question?

(*Suzuki is busy getting tea ready.*)

Sharpless
Gladly.

Butterfly (*sits down again*)
At what time
of the year in America
do robins nest?

Sharpless (*amazed*)
Are you serious?

Butterfly
Yes,
sooner or later than here?

Sharpless
Tell me why.

(*Goro, who is sauntering round the garden, comes up on to the terrace and listens, unseen, to Butterfly.*)

Butterfly
My husband gave his promise
he would return in the joyous season
When little robins rebuild their nests.
Here they have nested three times already,
but I thought that over there
maybe they do so less often.

(*Goro appears and bursts out laughing.*)

Butterfly
Who's laughing?
(*seeing Goro*)
Oh, it is Goro.
(*softly to Sharpless*)
That wretched fellow.

Goro (*bowing obsequiously*)
I was...

Butterfly (*to Goro, who bows again and goes to help Suzuki*)
Silence.

(*to Sharpless*)
Why, he dared...
(*changing her mind*)
No, first I'd like to hear
the answer to my question.

Sharpless (*confused*)
I am sorry, I can't help you,
I've never studied ornithology.

Butterfly (*trying to understand*)
Orni...

Sharpless
...thology.

Butterfly
So then you cannot
tell me?

Sharpless
No.
(*trying to return to his point*)
We were saying...

Butterfly (*interrupting him, following her thoughts*)
Ah, yes, (Goro.)
as soon as Mister Pinkerton had left me, then
Goro
tried to force me,

with arguments and presents,
to remarry another of his suitors.
Now he offers me riches
if I will wed an idiot...

Goro (*He intervenes, turning to Sharpless and trying to justify himself.*)
The wealthy Yamadori.
She's as poor as can be now and all her relatives
have cast her out entirely.

(*Beyond the terrace Prince Yamadori is seen, followed by two servants carrying flowers.*)

Butterfly (*She sees Yamadori and points him out to Sharpless, with a smile.*)
Here he is. Now listen.
(*Yamadori enters with great pomp from the door on the right, followed by his two servants: Goro and Suzuki run up to him eagerly and go on their hands and knees before him. Then Suzuki takes the flowers and places them in various vases. Yamadori greets the Consul, then bows most graciously to Butterfly. The two Japanese servants, having deposited the flowers, retire to the back, bowing deeply. Goro, servile and officious, places a stool for Yamadori between Sharpless and Butterfly and is very much in evidence during the conversation. Butterfly, Sharpless and Yamadori sit down.*)

[2] Yamadori, and has your
unrequited love not yet released you?
Do you still intend to die
if I should withhold my kisses?

Yamadori (*to Sharpless*)

There is nothing quite so cruel
as the pangs of hopeless love.

Butterfly (*with graceful raillery*)

You have had so many wives that
you should know the feeling well.

Yamadori

Every one of them I married,
and divorce has set me free.

Butterfly

Think you kindly!

Yamadori (*eagerly*)

And yet to you
I would swear eternal faith.

Sharpless (*Sighing, he replaces the letter in his pocket.*)

(I am very much afraid my message
will not be delivered!)

Goro (*indicating Yamadori to Sharpless, with emphasis*)

Houses, servants, treasures, at Omara
a palace for a princess.

Butterfly (*seriously*)

But my hand's already given.

Goro and Yamadori (*to Sharpless*)

She still thinks that she is married.

Butterfly (*rising from the cushion*)

I don't think it, for I know it...

Goro

But the law says:

Butterfly (*interrupting*)

What's that to me?

Goro (*continuing*)

...that the wife who is deserted
has the right to seek divorce.

Butterfly

That may be Japanese law...

But not in my country.

Goro

Which one?

Butterfly

The United States.

Sharpless (*to himself*)

(Poor little creature!)

Butterfly (*very nervous, getting more and more excited*)

I know, of course, to open the door
and to turn out your wife at any moment,
here, is called divorce.

But in America that is not the case.

(*to Sharpless*)

Consul?

Sharpless (*embarrassed*)

Why, yes... and yet...

Butterfly (*She interrupts him, turning to*

Yamadori and Goro in triumph.)

There a good magistrate,

solemn and wise,

says to the husband:

'You wish to free yourself?

Let us hear why.'

'I'm sick and tired of
marital boredom!'

Then the good judge says:

(*comically*)

'Ah, wicked scoundrel,

send him to prison!'

(*To put an end to the subject she orders Suzuki:*)

Suzuki, tea.

Yamadori (*whispering to Sharpless*)

You hear her?

Sharpless

She's so blinded that she will never
understand.

Goro (*whispering to Sharpless and Yamadori*)

Pinkerton's ship has already
been sighted.

Yamadori (*in despair*)

And when they meet again...

Sharpless (*whispers to both*)

He does not want to see her. That is precisely why
I came to prepare her...

(*Seeing that Butterfly, followed by Suzuki, is
approaching him to offer him tea, Sharpless cuts
short his sentence.*)

Butterfly (*offering Sharpless tea*)

Will Your Honour allow me...

(*She opens her fan and, behind it, points to the
other two, laughing.*)

Such troublesome people.

(*She offers tea to Yamadori who refuses and rises to
go.*)

Yamadori (*sighing*)

Farewell, then. With heavy heart sighing I leave

you,

but still I hope...

Butterfly

So be it.

Yamadori (*He is going out but returns into the
room, near Butterfly.*)

If you would only...

Butterfly

The pity is: I will not...

(*Yamadori, after having bowed to Sharpless, leaves
sighing, and gets into a litter. The two servants
follow him. Butterfly laughs again behind her fan
and signs to Suzuki to remove the tea. Suzuki
obeys, then retires to the back of the room. Goro
eagerly follows Yamadori.*)

Sharpless (*He assumes a grave and serious look;
with great respect, however, and some emotion, he
invites Butterfly to be seated and once more draws
the letter from his pocket.*)

³ Now, at last! Sit here by me,
and if you like, I'll read
read this letter through for you.

(showing her the letter)

Butterfly

Show me.

(She takes the letter, kisses it and places it on her heart.)

On my lips, on my heart:

(She gives the letter back to Sharpless and says prettily:)

you're the best man that ever existed! Begin, I beg you.

Sharpless *(reading)*

'Dear Friend, I write to ask you to find my Butterfly.'

Butterfly *(unable to contain herself and interrupting him joyfully)*

Does he really say that?

Sharpless *(seriously)*

Yes, he really says it.

But if you interrupt me...

Butterfly *(calming down again to listen)*

I'll be quiet and listen.

Sharpless

'Since those happy days together three years have now gone by since.'

Butterfly *(interrupting the reading)*

Then he, too, has been counting!

Sharpless *(resumes)*

'And maybe Butterfly remembers me no more.'

Butterfly *(surprised, turning to Suzuki)*

I not remember?

Suzuki, tell him quickly.

(She repeats, as though scandalised, the words of the letter.)

'Remembers him no more!'

(Suzuki goes out with the tea through the door on the left.)

Sharpless *(to himself)*

(Have patience!)

(continuing to read)

'If she cares for me

still and expects me...'

Butterfly *(She takes the letter from him and exclaims very tenderly:)*

Oh, what wonderful tidings!

(kissing the letter)

You blessed letter!

Sharpless *(He takes the letter back and boldly resumes reading though his voice is trembling with emotion.)*

'I place myself in your hands, so act discreetly, and with all due caution please prepare her...'

Butterfly *(anxious, but joyful)*

He's coming:

Sharpless

'for the shock that...'

Butterfly *(rises, jumping for joy and clapping her hands)*

Tell me.

Quickly, Quickly!

Sharpless *(Taking a deep breath, he puts the letter away again; to himself:)*

(How can I?

How on earth can I tell her?

(angrily)

Oh, damn that fellow Pinkerton!)

(He rises, then look straight into Butterfly's eyes, very gravely.)

Now tell me,

Madam Butterfly, what would you do

if I should tell you he'll return no more?

Butterfly *(Motionless, as though she had received a death-blow, she bows her head and replies with childlike submissiveness, almost stammering.)*

⁴ Just two things I could do:

Go back... and entertain

the people with my songs...

Or else, better, to die.

Sharpless *(Sharpless is deeply moved and walks up and down excitedly; then he turns to Butterfly, takes her hands in his and says to her with fatherly tenderness.)*

Though I feel for you and hate

to see you suffer these illusions,

I must urge you to accept

The hand of wealthy Yamadori.

Butterfly *(withdrawing her hands)*

You, good sir, you tell me this?...

Sharpless *(embarrassed)*

Oh, my God, what shall I do?

Butterfly *(She claps her hands and Suzuki hastens in.)*

Here, Suzuki, quickly, quickly.

Show His Honour to the door.

Sharpless

You dismiss me?

(Butterfly, repenting, runs to Sharpless sobbing and hold him back.)

Butterfly

I beseech you,

let my words be quite forgotten.

(She dismisses Suzuki who goes into the garden.)

Sharpless *(making excuses)*

I was brutal, I am sorry.

Butterfly *(mournfully, laying her hand on her heart)*

Oh, you've wounded me so deeply,

oh, so deeply, very deeply!

(Butterfly totters, Sharpless is about to support her, but she rallies quickly.)

Nothing, nothing!

I felt ready to die... but see, it passes,

swift as shadows that flit across the ocean.

Ah, I am forgotten.

(She runs into the room on the left and returns triumphantly carrying her baby on her left shoulder. She shows him to Sharpless, full of pride.)

[5] This child! This child, then!
Surely a son can't be forgotten?

(She puts the child down on the ground but keeps him close to her.)

Sharpless *(deeply touched)*
Is he his?

Butterfly *(pointing to each feature)*
No Japanese
boy was ever born with eyes as blue as these are.
Such lips too? And can't you see his
hair is golden?

Sharpless *(more and more moved)*
It's so obvious.
Has Pinkerton been told?

Butterfly *(passionately)*
No. I bore him when he had
left me to go back to his country.
(caressing the child)
But you will write and tell him there awaits him
a son who has no equal!
And would you tell me, than, that he won't hurry
over land, over sea?
(She puts the baby down on the cushion, kissing him tenderly.)

[6] Do you know, my darling,
(pointing to Sharpless)
what this gentleman suggested?

That your mother should take
you on her shoulder, and through the city in rain
and tempest she should go,
seeking to earn enough for food and clothing,
And beg before the kindly people
with trembling hand reach out to them,
'Oh, hear me, oh, hear me!
Please listen to the song
of this unhappy mother.
In pity help me and my starving son.'
Or shall it be that Butterfly
once more shall have to dance for you,
as once in days gone by?
(holding up the child and fondling it)
Must the geisha sing once more?
The joyous song of my youth would be broken
with my tears and bitter sobs.
(She crouches down beside the child and continues in caressing and tearful tones.)
Ah, no, not that again...
That cursed doorway I shall never enter!
Never! Never! I'd rather die!
For death were better far than such dishonour.
(laying her cheek against the baby's cheek)
Ah! Never!

(She presses the child to her heart then, crouching down on the ground, hugs him passionately.)

Sharpless *(unable to restrain his tears)*
(Poor Butterfly!)
(conquering his emotion)

[7] I must be going.

(Butterfly rises to her feet and with a charming gesture, gives Sharpless her hand; he shakes it cordially with both of his.)
Will you forgive me?

Butterfly *(to the child)*
Now you give him your hand.

Sharpless *(He takes the child in his arms.)*
What pretty golden hair!
(kissing him)
Tell me, what do they call you?

Butterfly
Now, tell him:
Sir, my name now is Sorrow. But yet
write and say to my father: on the day
of his return
Joy I shall be called.

Sharpless
Your father shall be told of you, I promise.

(He puts down the child, bows to Butterfly and goes out quickly by door on the right.)

Goro
[8] Ah! Ah!

Suzuki *(from outside, shouting)*
Viper! Rascal! Wretched scoundrel!

(Suzuki enters, dragging in Goro roughly, who tries in vain to escape. He cries out loudly.)

Butterfly
What's this?

Suzuki

He crawls around here,
evil reptile; from morn to evening
and tells the scandal
all through the town
that no one knows
who is the baby's father.

(She releases Goro.)

Goro *(protesting in frightened tones)*
I only told her
that back in America
(approaching the child and pointing to him)
whenever a baby
is born in these conditions,
(Butterfly instinctively stands in front of the child as though to protect him.)
he'll be despised throughout his life
and treated as an outcast!
(Butterfly, with a wild cry, runs to the shrine and takes down the dagger which hangs there.)

Butterfly
Ah! You're lying, lying!
(Butterfly seizes Goro, who falls down; she threatens to kill him. Goro utters loud, desperate and prolonged howls.)
Say it again and I'll kill you!

Suzuki *(thrusting herself between them)*
No!

(Horried at such a scene, she takes the baby and carries him into the room on the left.)

Butterfly (*Seized with disgust, she pushes Goro away with her foot.*)

Get out!

(*Goro makes his escape. Butterfly remains motionless as though petrified. By degrees she rouses herself and goes to put the away the dagger, her thoughts flying to her child.*)

You'll see, love of my heart,
my grief and yet my comfort,
my own little love.

Ah! You will see
that your avenger soon, soon will be here,
and far, far away from here he'll take us.
He'll take us both so far.

(*a cannon-shot*)

Suzuki (*coming in breathlessly*)
The cannon from the harbour!
(*They run towards the terrace.*)

[9] Look, it's a man-of-war!

Butterfly (*breathless with excitement*)

White... white... the American flag with its
stars and stripes! Now it's putting
into port to anchor!

(*She takes a telescope from the table and runs on to the terrace to look out. Trembling with excitement, she directs the telescope towards the harbour and says to Suzuki:*)

Hold my hand steady
so that I can see
the name, the name. The name? There it is:
ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

(*She gives the telescope to Suzuki and comes down from the terrace in the greatest state of excitement.*)

They all were liars!

Liars, liars! But I

knew it always, yes, I who love him!

(*to Suzuki*)

Now do you see the folly
of doubting? He's coming! He's coming!

Just at the moment
you were all saying: weep and forget him.

My love wins the day!
See, my love and my faith have won completely.
He's here, he loves me!

(*She picks him up and carries him out to the terrace under the branches of a cherry tree in bloom; to Suzuki:*)

[10] Shake the cherry tree till every blossom
white as snow, flutters down.

Oh, how I long for the
sweet-scented flowers
to touch my forehead.

Suzuki (*soothing her*)

Ah, Cio-Cio-San,
be calm, I pray, this weeping...

Butterfly

No. Laughing, laughing! When will
we expect him up here?
How long, then? An hour?

Suzuki

Too soon.

Butterfly (*thoughtfully*)

Two hours more likely.

(*walking up and down the room*)

Flowers, flowers, yes, everywhere
as close as stars are in the heavens.

(*She motions to Suzuki to go into the garden.*)

Bring some flowers.

Suzuki (*from the terrace*)

Every flower?...

Butterfly (*gaily to Suzuki*)

Every flower. Peaches, violets, jessamine,
every branch of cherry blossom, every flowering
tree.

Suzuki

Desolate as in winter the garden will appear.

Butterfly

Let all the balmy breath of spring breathe her
sweetness here.

Suzuki (*She appears on the terrace with a bunch of flowers which she holds out to Butterfly.*)

Come, take the flowers.

Butterfly (*taking the flowers*)

That's not enough yet.

(*Butterfly distributes the flowers about the room, while Suzuki goes down into the garden again.*)

Suzuki (*from the garden*)

How often in the garden you've stood and wept
and waited,
gazing and gazing at the deserted world beyond.

Butterfly

No more need to wait now, since the kind sea
has brought him.
I've given tears to the earth and flowers are my
reward.

Suzuki (*She appears on the terrace, laden with flowers.*)

Not a flower left.

Butterfly (*taking the flowers*)

Not a flower left?
Come and help me.

(*They scatter the flowers everywhere.*)

Suzuki

Scatter roses on
the threshold.

Butterfly and Suzuki

Balmy breath of spring shall
breathe her sweetness here.
Let us sow fair April here.

Suzuki

Lilies, roses scatter.

Butterfly

Come scatter flowers all over.
Now round his chair
make a garland,
This convolvulus entwining.

Butterfly and Suzuki

Lilies and roses let us scatter,
let us sow fair April here.

*(scattering flowers while they sway their bodies
lightly to and fro to the rhythm in a dance measure)*
In handfuls let us scatter
Violets and mimosa
and sprays of sweetest roses,
Petals of every flower!

*(Suzuki places two lamps near the dressing-table
over which Butterfly is bending.)*

Butterfly *(to Suzuki)*

Suzuki, come and help.
No, first bring me my baby.
*(Suzuki goes into the room on the left and brings
out the baby whom she seats next to Butterfly, while
the latter looks at herself in a small hand-mirror
and says sadly:)*
How changed he'll find me!...
Drawn weary mouth from far too much sighing,
and eyes that are so tired
and so sad from the crying.
(to Suzuki)
Put on each cheek
a little touch of carmine...
And also for my baby,
*(She takes a paint-brush and puts a dab of rouge
on the baby's cheek.)*
So that the watching may not make your face
heavy and pallid with shadows.

Suzuki *(urging Butterfly to keep quiet)*

Yes, but keep still, till I've finished arranging
your hair.

Butterfly *(obeying)*

This will surprise them.
And the Bonze.
All of them truly glad of my downfall.
And Yamadori
with his airs and graces!
My scorn
and derision,
my jeers and contempt
for the wretches!

Suzuki *(She has finished Butterfly's toilet.)*
I've finished.

Butterfly

Bring me now my wedding garment.
*(Suzuki goes to a small chest and looks for the
white robe and the obi, while Butterfly pulls the
child towards her.)*
Bring it to me quickly.
*(While Butterfly dons her garment, Suzuki dresses
the baby in the other one, wrapping him up almost
entirely in the light and ample draperies.)*
I want him to see me
as on my wedding day.
In my hair we will put a
scarlet poppy...
*(Suzuki places the flower in Butterfly's hair.
The latter is pleased with the effect.)*
Like this.
*(With child-like grace she signs to Suzuki to close
the shoji. Night falls.)*
In the *shoji* we'll make three little holes

so we can look out,
and we'll be still and quiet as
little mice, while we watch and wait.

*The night grows darker. Suzuki closes the shoji at
the back. Butterfly leads the baby to the shoji. She
makes three holes in the shoji: one high up for
herself, one lower down for Suzuki and a third
lower still for the child whom she seats on a
cushion, signing to him to look through his hole.
Suzuki, having brought over the two lamps near
the shoji, crouches down and also gazes out.
Butterfly stands in front of the highest hole and
gazes through it, remaining rigid and motionless as
a statue: the baby, who is between his mother and
Suzuki, peeps out curiously.*

11 Humming Chorus

*It is night and the rays of the moon light up the
shoji from behind. The baby falls asleep, sinking
down on his cushion. Suzuki, still in her crouching
position, falls asleep too; Butterfly alone remains
rigid and motionless.*

Part 2

12 Prelude

13 Daybreak over Nagasaki

*A weary night of watching passes. The clanging of
chains and anchors and the distant voices of sailors
rise from the harbour at the foot of the hill. When
the curtain rises, it is already dawn; Butterfly, still*

*motionless, is gazing out into the distance. At
length she rouses herself and touches Suzuki on the
shoulder. The latter wakes with a start and rises,
whilst Butterfly turns towards the baby and takes
him up with tender care.*

Suzuki *(awaking with a start)*

14 It's morning.
*(She goes towards Butterfly and touches her gently
on the shoulder.)*
Cio-Cio-San!

Butterfly

He'll come. I know, he'll come.

*(Butterfly sees the child has fallen asleep and takes
him in her arms, turning to go up to the room
above.)*

Suzuki

I beg you, go and rest, for you are weary,
and I will call you when he arrives.

Butterfly *(going up the staircase)*

Sweet, you are sleeping,
Cradled on my heart;
safe in God's keeping,
while I must weep apart.
Around your head
the moonbeams dart:
sleep, my beloved!

Suzuki *(watching her go upstairs and saying with
great pity:)*
Poor little Butterfly!

Butterfly (*stopping, to Suzuki:*)

He'll come – he'll come – you'll see.

(She enters the room above. Suzuki puts down the lamps which she has extinguished and kneels before the image of the Buddha, as Butterfly's voice becomes quieter and quieter. Then she rises and goes to open the shoji. There is a soft knocking at the door.)

Suzuki

¹⁵ Who is it?...

(More knocking. She goes to open the door and cries out in great surprise:)

Oh!...

Pinkerton (*motioning Suzuki to be silent*)

Quiet! Quiet!

Sharpless (*on the threshold, also motioning her to be silent*)

Sh!... Quiet... quiet.

(Pinkerton and Sharpless enter cautiously on tiptoe.)

Pinkerton (*anxiously to Suzuki*)

Don't wake her!

Suzuki

She was so very weary! She stood and waited patiently through the night with the baby.

Pinkerton

How did she know?

Suzuki

There hasn't been a ship which has put into this port whose flags and colours
Butterfly has not eagerly seen and examined.

Sharpless (*to Pinkerton*)

What did I tell you?...

Suzuki (*going*)

I'll call her...

Pinkerton (*stopping her*)

No, not yet...

Suzuki (*pointing to the masses of flowers all about the room*)

Look around you. Last night she insisted that all be covered with flowers.

Sharpless (*touched*)

What did I tell you?...

Pinkerton (*troubled*)

Oh God!

Suzuki (*She hears a noise in the garden and goes to look outside the shoji. She exclaims in surprise.*)

Who's that outside there

in the garden?

A lady!...

Pinkerton (*He goes to Suzuki and leads her back again, urging her to speak in a whisper.*)

Quiet!

Suzuki (*excitedly*)

Who is it? Who is it?

Sharpless (*to Pinkerton*)

Get it over and tell her.

Suzuki (*in consternation*)

Who is it? Who is it?

Pinkerton (*embarrassed*)

She came with me.

Suzuki

Who is it? Who is it?

Sharpless (*with restraint but deliberately*)

She's his wife!

Suzuki (*Stunned, she raises her arms to heaven, then fall on her knees with her face to the ground.*)
Hallowed the souls of our fathers! All her world is plunged in gloom!

Sharpless (*He soothes Suzuki and raises her from the ground.*)

We came here so early in the morning.
We hoped you'd be alone here, Suzuki, because we need you to give us your guidance.
We need your help.

Suzuki (*in despair*)

How can I?

(Sharpless takes Suzuki aside and tries to persuade her into consenting, whilst Pinkerton, getting more and more agitated, wanders about the room, noting every detail.)

Sharpless (*to Suzuki*)

¹⁶ I know for such misfortune there is no consolation.

But the child's future welfare must always be protected.

This gentle lady, who dare not enter, will give the child a mother's care.

Suzuki

Ah what sorrow!

Do you ask me to go and tell a mother...

Sharpless (*persisting*)

Go now and call her, oh go and speak with that gentle lady and bring her here... and then if Butterfly should see her, no matter. For with her own eyes she will learn the cruel truth we dare not tell her.

(Sharpless pushes her into the garden, where she joins Mrs Pinkerton.)

Pinkerton

Oh! The bitter fragrance of these flowers, it is poison to my heart. And nothing has changed here., Where once we loved... But a deathly chill haunts the air. *(He sees his own portrait and picks it up.)* And here my picture!

(He puts it down.)

Three years have passed away and every day,
every hour, alas, she counted.

(Agitated by these reminiscences, he turns to Sharpless.)

I cannot bear to stay here.
Sharpless, I'll wait for you outside.

Sharpless

Is it not as I told you?

Pinkerton

Give her this money, just to support her...
Remorse and anguish choke me.

Sharpless

I warned you, remember?
When in your hand she laid hers:
'Be careful! For she believes you.'
Alas, how right I was.
Deaf to all treaties,
deaf to doubt, humiliation,
blindly trusting to your promise,
her heart will break.

Pinkerton

Yes, in one sudden moment
I see my heartless action,
and feel that I shall never
free myself from remorse,
no, never more, no!

Sharpless

Now go, she'd better hear
the cruel truth alone.

Pinkerton *(sweetly, with remorse)*

[17] Farewell, oh happy home!
Farewell, home of love!
Haunted for ever I shall be
by all she suffered through me.
Farewell, home where she waited and loved.
I cannot bear to stay!
Like a coward I must leave!

Sharpless

By now this faithful heart will already have
guessed.
I warned you, and now you see how right
I was, my boy.
Yes, go and let her learn the cruel truth.

(He leaves hurriedly while Kate Pinkerton and Suzuki enter from the garden.)

Kate *(gently, to Suzuki)*

[18] Then will you tell her?

Suzuki *(replying with her head bowed, and still very tense)*
I promise.

Kate

And will you please persuade her
she can trust me?

Suzuki

I promise.

Kate

As if he were my own son.

Suzuki

I believe you but I must be quite alone beside
her...
In this cruel hour alone. She will weep tears of
anguish.

Butterfly *(calling from the room above)*

[19] Suzuki, where are you?
(She appears at the head of the staircase.)
Suzuki!...

Suzuki *(signing to the others to keep quiet)*

I'm here... I was praying and going back to
watch...
(Butterfly begins to come downstairs. Suzuki rushes towards the staircase to prevent her.)
No... Do not come down...

Butterfly *(She comes down quickly, freeing herself from Suzuki who tries in vain to hold her back. She she paces the room in great but joyful excitement.)*

He's here... where is he hiding?
(She catches sight of Sharpless.)
Here's the Consul... and where is?... where is?...
(Having searched everywhere, in every corner, in the little alcove and behind the screen, she is frightened and looks around in alarm.)
Not here!
(She sees Kate in the garden and stares fixedly at Sharpless.)
Who are you?
Why have you come here?... No one answers?...
(Suzuki weeps.)

Why are you weeping?

(Sharpless approaches her to speak: she is afraid of understanding and shrinks back like a frightened child.)

No, no, tell me nothing... nothing... I might fall
dead at your feet at the words I hear.
(with affectionate and childlike kindness to Suzuki)

[20] You, Suzuki, you're always
so faithful, no need for tears.
Only answer my question.
Say 'yes' or 'no' quite softly... He lives?

Suzuki

Yes.

Butterfly *(transfixed as though she had received a mortal blow)*

But he'll come
no more. They have told you!...
(angered at Suzuki's silence)

[21] Viper! I want you to answer.

Suzuki

No more.

Butterfly *(coldly)*

But he reached here yesterday?

Suzuki

Yes.

Butterfly *(She has understood and looks at Kate as though fascinated.)*

Who is this lady?
She makes me so frightened, she makes me so
frightened?

Sharpless

Through not fault of her own
she is the cause of your trouble.
Please forgive her.

Butterfly

Ah! She's his wife!
(*in a calm voice*)
All is over for me!
All is finished! Ah!

Sharpless

Have courage.

Butterfly

Would you leave me with nothing?
My little baby!

Sharpless

Only so he might have a brighter future.

Butterfly

Unhappy mother, to abandon my own son!
(*She remains motionless.*)
So be it.
To him I owe my duty.

Kate (*coaxingly*)

Ah, can you not forgive me, Butterfly?

Butterfly (*solemnly*)

Under the great sky above there is no
happier lady than you are.
(*passionately*)
May you remain so,
never be saddened through me.

Kate (*going towards Sharpless*)

Poor little lady!

Sharpless (*deeply moved*)

Oh, the pity of it all!

Kate (*whispering to Sharpless*)

And can he have his son?

Butterfly (*who has heard, says solemnly*)

His son I promise to give him
if he will come and fetch him.
Climb this hillside in half an hour from now.

Suzuki (*placing her hand on Butterfly's heart*)

^[22] Your little fluttering heart is beating
like a frightened bird in a cage.

Butterfly (*Butterfly gradually recovers; seeing that it is broad daylight, she disengages herself from Suzuki and says to her:*)

Too much light shines outside
and too much laughing spring.
Close them.

(*Suzuki goes to shut the screens so that the room is almost in total darkness. She returns to Butterfly.*)

Where is my baby?

Suzuki

Playing... Shall I call him?

Butterfly

Leave him where he is
and go and stay with him.

Suzuki (*weeping*)

I'll stay with you.

Butterfly

Go, go, do as I tell you.

(*She makes the weeping Suzuki rise and pushes her through the door on the left. She lights the lamp in front of the Buddha and remains in front of the image, motionless, lost in sorrowful thoughts. Suzuki's sobs are still heard; they die away gradually. Butterfly goes to the shrine and lifts the white veil from it. She throws this across the screen, then takes the dagger which, enclosed in a waxen case, is leaning against the wall near the image of Buddha. She piously kisses the blade, holding it in both hands by the point and the handle. She softly reads the words inscribed on it.*)

^[23] 'Death with honour
is better than life with dishonour.'

(*She points the knife sideways at her throat. The door on the left opens, showing Suzuki's arm pushing the child towards his mother: he runs in with outstretched hands. Butterfly lets the dagger fall, darts towards the child and hugs and kisses him almost to suffocation.*)

You? You? My dearest darling,

My dearest, dearest treasure.

Fairest flower of beauty.

(*Taking the child's head in her hands she draws it to her.*)

You must never know it:

For you, it's for you

I'm dying, poor Butterfly,

so you can go away

beyond the ocean,

never to know the torment when you are older
that your mother forsook you!

My son, sent from Heaven,

From Paradise descended.

Ah, remember, remember
how your mother has loved
you and let the memory linger,
So farewell!

Beloved angel!

Farewell, my sweet little love!

Go, play, play.

(*Butterfly takes the child, seats him on a stool with his face turned to the left, gives him the American flag and a doll and urges him to play with them while she gently bandages his eyes. Then she seizes the dagger and, with her eyes still fixed on the child, goes behind the screen. The knife is heard falling to the ground and the large white veil disappears behind the screen. Butterfly emerges; tottering, she gropes her way towards the child. The large white veil is round her neck; smiling feebly she grasps the child with her hand and drags herself up to him. She has just enough strength left to embrace him, then falls to the ground beside him. At this moment Pinkerton's voice is heard outside calling repeatedly:*)

'Butterfly! Butterfly!'

then the door on the right opens violently. Pinkerton and Sharpless rush into the room and up to Butterfly who, with a feeble gesture points to the child and then dies. Pinkerton is on his knees whilst Sharpless takes the child and kisses him, sobbing.

The curtain falls swiftly.



Cheryl Barker

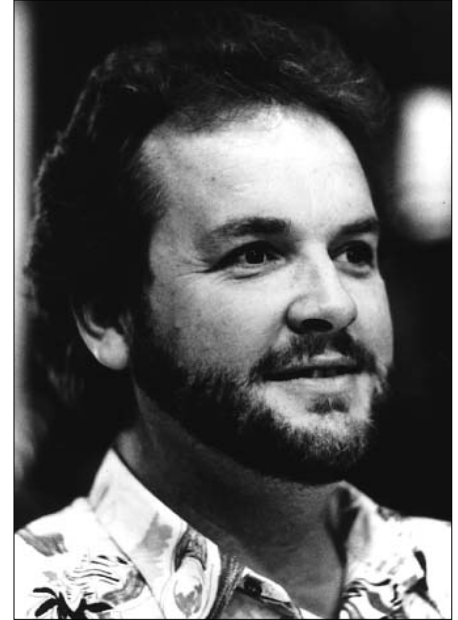


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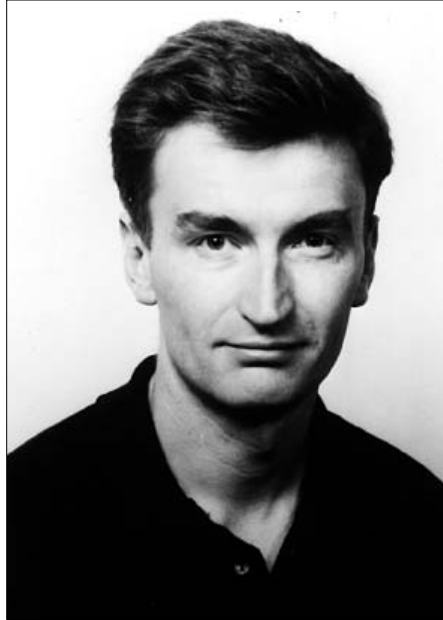


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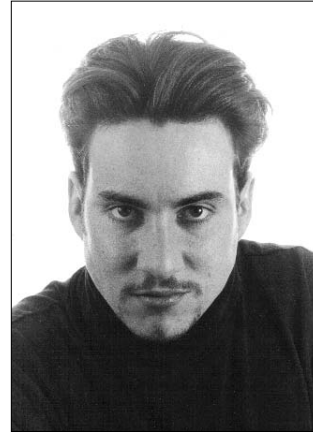


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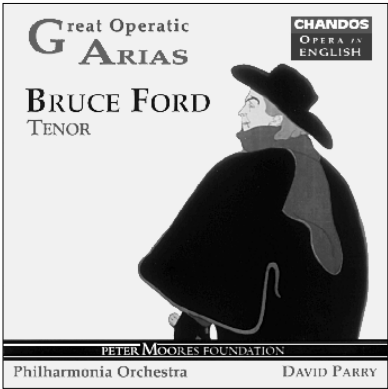


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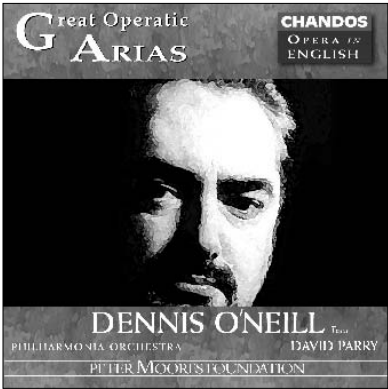


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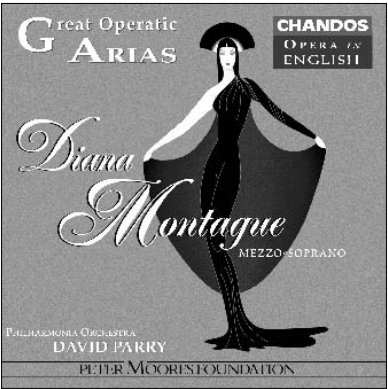
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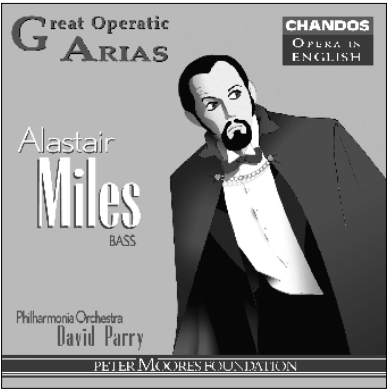
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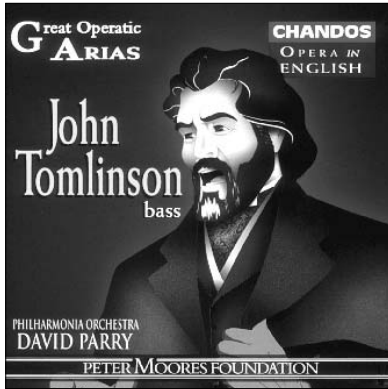
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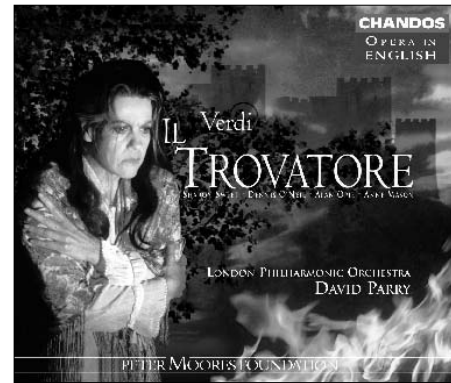


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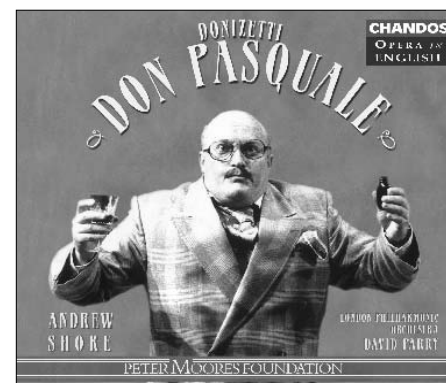


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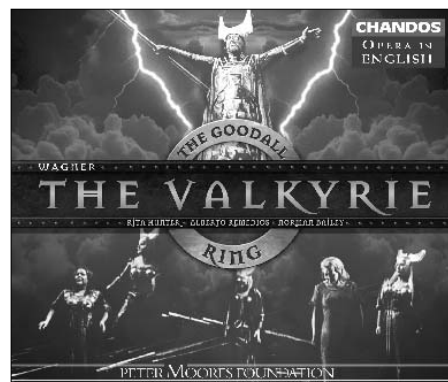


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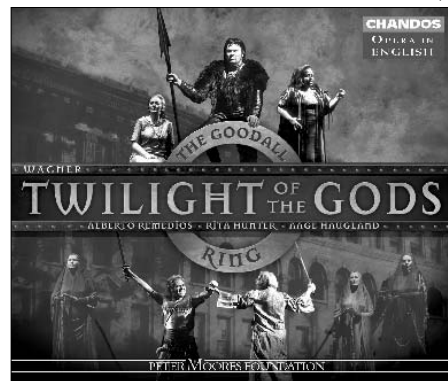
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Staging director: Charles Kilpatrick
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Recording producer Brian Couzens
Sound engineer Ralph Couzens
Assistant engineer Christopher Brooke
Editor Jonathan Cooper

Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

Recording venue Blackheath Halls, London; 13–17 December 2000
Front cover Photo of Cheryl Barker as Madam Butterfly by Bill Rafferty

Back cover Photo of Yves Abel

Design Cass Cassidy

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Booklet editor Kara Reed

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Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HQ, England

Printed in the EU

Puccini: MADAM BUTTERFLY

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CHANDOS DIGITAL 2-disc set **CHAN 3070(2)**

MADAM BUTTERFLY

Opera in two acts (final, Paris version)

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after the book by John Luther Long
and the play by David Belasco

English version based on that of R.H. Elkin

Cio-Cio-San (Madam Butterfly).....**Cheryl Barker** *soprano*
Suzuki, her maid**Jean Rigby** *mezzo-soprano*
B.F. Pinkerton, Lieutenant in the United States Navy.....**Paul Charles Clarke** *tenor*
Sharpless, United States consul at Nagasaki**Gregory Yurisich** *baritone*
Goro, a marriage broker.....**Stuart Kale** *tenor*
Prince Yamadori**D'Arcy Bleiker** *baritone*
The Bonze**Clive Bayley** *bass*
The Imperial Commissioner.....**Roland Wood** *bass*
Kate Pinkerton.....**Ann Taylor** *mezzo-soprano*

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