ACCESS OPERA
EDUCATOR GUIDE

GIACOMO PUCCINI

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

The Metropolitan Opera

THE WORK

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

Based on the play by David Belasco

First performed February 17, 1904, at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy

PRODUCTION

Anthony Minghella
Production

Carolyn Choa
Director/Choreographer

Michael Levine
Set Designer

Han Feng
Costume Designer

Peter Mumford
Lighting Designer

Blind Summit Theatre
Puppetry

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Madama Butterfly Educator Guide
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Many of Puccini's operas feature realistically drawn women characters that meet a tragic end, but none of these stories is more poignant than that of Cio-Cio-San, the title heroine of *Madama Butterfly*. This tale of a young Japanese geisha and her marriage to an American naval officer in the early 20th century explores themes of tradition, devotion, honor, and justice. Cio-Cio-San's journey takes her from innocence and happy anticipation to failing hope and resolved acceptance of the tragic destiny her personal code of honor demands. But she is no mere victim. Her optimism amid even the darkest of circumstances makes her a heroine in every sense of the word. It is Cio-Cio-San's mixture of sweetness, anguish, vulnerability, and courage that elicits some of Puccini's most emotionally expansive and heartbreakingly tender music.

The Met's production, first seen on Opening Night of the 2006–07 season, was directed by acclaimed filmmaker Anthony Minghella, who pointed out the complete focus on Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*. "It's almost a monodrama," he noted at the time of the premiere. "Everyone exists only in relation to her." Minghella described what he saw as the director's responsibility in bringing this particular opera to the stage: "I'd have to be crazy to do anything other than tell the story. To impose some kind of directorial conceit or tricks on a work that has such great integrity and that has been so beloved for so long would have been a foolish act of presumption." Minghella's staging embraces several practices from the traditional Japanese theater, most notably the use of a Bunraku-style puppet for the silent role of Cio-Cio-San's young son.

This guide approaches *Madama Butterfly* through the dilemmas and ambiguities of cross-cultural encounter—a phenomenon depicted in the opera and enacted in Puccini's musical representation of both East Asian and American cultures. The information on the following pages is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of attending a final dress rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera.

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world. Founded in 1883, the Met first opened in a lavish opera house at Broadway and 39th Street that, while beautiful, had significant practical limitations. Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the stage facilities of the original theater could not meet the Met's technical needs. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September 1966, was a technical marvel of its day, and has remained an architectural landmark ever since.

Each season, the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York, welcoming more than 800,000 attendees. In addition to presenting the indispensable masterpieces of history's great composers, performed by the world's finest singers and directed by visionaries from throughout the theatrical world, the Met is committed to ensuring that opera remains a living art form by commissioning and staging vital new works that tell modern stories and engage with the issues of today. The Met is also a leader in new media distribution initiatives, harnessing state-of-the-art technology to bring performances from the Met's iconic stage to millions of people worldwide.

This guide includes a variety of materials on Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in Madama Butterfly

A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition

Closer Looks: Brief articles highlighting important aspects of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

Guided Listening: A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses

Ten Essential Musical Terms: Musical terminology that will help students analyze and describe Puccini's work

Student Critique: A performance activity highlighting specific aspects of this production and topics for a wrap-up discussion following students' attendance

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Madama Butterfly* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera or the performing arts. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and will encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression. In particular, this guide offers in-depth introductions to:

- The way the librettist and composer portray the main characters and their cultural backgrounds
- The relationship of the opera to historical events in world history
- Puccini's musical representation of Asian and American cultures
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

Summary

Cio-Cio-San, a young Japanese geisha, is engaged to marry the American naval lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton. She knows that the match will anger her family, but she loves Pinkerton and looks forward to a happy future with him. Pinkerton, however, views his marriage to Cio-Cio-San as a passing fancy: Someday, he tells his friend, the American consul Sharpless, he will enjoy a "real" marriage to an American woman. Soon, Pinkerton's ship returns to America, and he leaves Cio-Cio-San behind in Japan.

Three years pass. Cio-Cio-San has heard nothing from Pinkerton. Her friends counsel her to forget the American and find a Japanese husband; Cio-Cio-San replies that an oath of marriage cannot be broken. Then, one day, Pinkerton's ship is spotted in the harbor. Cio-Cio-San is overjoyed. But when Pinkerton finally climbs the hill that leads to Cio-Cio-San's little house, he brings with him a strange woman—and the loyal Cio-Cio-San finds herself facing a terrible choice.

The Source: The Play *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco

David Belasco, the American producer and playwright, brought John Luther Long's story to the stage in 1900.

David Belasco was a Broadway impresario and playwright whose innovations in theater technology, including the use of spotlights and variations in colored lighting, were groundbreaking for the age. His 1900 stage play *Madame Butterfly* was based on an 1898 short story by the American writer and lawyer John Luther Long, which itself was modeled after the 1887 novel *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti. Drawing on his experience as a French naval officer, Loti structured *Madame Chrysanthème* as a semi-autobiographical work detailing his service in Nagasaki and dalliance with a local "temporary wife." Loti's works are typically set in exotic locales in the Middle East and Asia and frequently explore the conflict between romantic distractions and duty. Since it is structured as a first-person account, *Madame Chrystanthème* is largely told from the perspective of its narrator and gives little thought to the experience and consciousness of its titular character.

Long's short story similarly features a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy who marries a young geisha and then abandons her, and it is in his version of the tale that the names Cho-Cho-San (rendered in Puccini's opera as Cio-Cio-San) and Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton first appear. Long also adds two significant plot details not found in Loti's novel: first, Pinkerton's return to Nagasaki after several years away; and second, the birth of Cho-Cho-San's child, whom Pinkerton and his new American wife hope to raise themselves. Long's "Madam Butterfly," finally, introduces the tragic element of ritual suicide, but in his story the geisha's attempt is unsuccessful.

Belasco's one-act play—the most immediate source for the libretto of Puccini's opera—dispenses with Pinkerton and Cho-Cho-San's initial meeting, instead beginning after the naval officer has already departed Japan. In so doing, Belasco focuses more squarely on the plight of the eponymous geisha as she awaits Pinkerton's return. This shift enables Belasco to conceive new dramatic elements that made their way into the opera—namely, Cho-Cho-San's night vigil and ultimate suicide.

Synopsis

ACT I: *Japan, early 20th century.* Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of the U.S. Navy inspects a house overlooking Nagasaki harbor that he is leasing from Goro, a marriage broker. The house comes with three servants and a geisha wife named Cio-Cio-San, known as Madame Butterfly. The lease runs for 999 years, subject to monthly renewal. The American consul Sharpless arrives breathless from climbing the hill. Pinkerton describes his philosophy of the fearless Yankee roaming the world in search of experience and pleasure. He is not sure whether his feelings for the young girl are love or a whim, but he intends to go through with the marriage ceremony. Sharpless warns him that the girl may view the marriage differently, but Pinkerton brushes off such concerns and says that someday he will take a "real," American wife. He offers the consul whiskey and proposes a toast. Cio-Cio-San is heard climbing the hill with her friends for the ceremony. In

Sharpless, Pinkerton, and Cio-Cio-San with her relatives
MARTY SOHL/MET OPERA

casual conversation after the formal introduction, she admits her age, 15, and explains that her family was once prominent but lost its position, and she has had to earn her living as a geisha. Her relatives arrive and gossip about the marriage. Cio-Cio-San shows Pinkerton her very few possessions and quietly tells him she has been to the Christian mission and will embrace her husband's religion. The Imperial Commissioner reads the marriage agreement, and the relatives congratulate the couple. Suddenly, a threatening voice is heard from afar—it is the Bonze, a priest and Cio-Cio-San's uncle. He curses the girl for going to the Christian mission and rejecting her ancestral religion. Pinkerton orders the guests to leave, and as they go, the Bonze and the

shocked relatives denounce Cio-Cio-San. Pinkerton tries to console her with sweet words. She is helped by Suzuki into her wedding kimono, and she joins Pinkerton in the house.

ACT II: Three years have passed, and Cio-Cio-San awaits her husband's return. Suzuki prays to the gods for help, but Cio-Cio-San berates her for believing in "lazy" Japanese gods rather than in Pinkerton's promise to return one day. Sharpless appears with a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it to Cio-Cio-San, Goro arrives with the latest potential husband for her, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. Cio-Cio-San politely serves the guests tea but insists she is not available for marriage, insisting that her American husband has not deserted her. She dismisses

Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton after their wedding
KAREN ALMOND/MET OPERA

Goro and Yamadori. Sharpless attempts to read Pinkerton's letter, but Cio-Cio-San keeps interrupting him with questions. He then asks her what she would do if Pinkerton never came back. With dark foreboding, she responds that she could do one of two things: go back to her life as a geisha, or better yet, die. Sharpless suggests that perhaps Cio-Cio-San should reconsider Yamadori's offer. "And this?" asks the outraged Cio-Cio-San, revealing to the consul her small son. Sharpless is too upset to tell her more of the letter's contents. He leaves, promising to tell Pinkerton of the child. A cannon shot is heard in the harbor announcing the arrival of a ship. Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki take a telescope to the terrace and read the name of Pinkerton's ship. Overjoyed, Cio-Cio-San joins Suzuki in strewing the house with flower petals from the garden. Night falls, and Cio-Cio-San, Suzuki, and the child settle into a vigil, watching over the harbor.

Suzuki looks on as Cio-Cio-San meets Pinkerton's American wife, Kate
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

ACT III: Dawn breaks, and Suzuki insists that Cio-Cio-San get some sleep. Cio-Cio-San carries the child into another room. Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and Kate, Pinkerton's new wife. Suzuki realizes who the American woman is and agrees to help break the news to Cio-Cio-San. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and runs from the scene, pausing to remember his days in the little house. Cio-Cio-San rushes in hoping to find Pinkerton—only to find Kate instead. Grasping the situation, she agrees to give up the child but insists Pinkerton return for him. Dismissing everyone, Cio-Cio-San takes out the dagger with which her father committed suicide, choosing to die with honor rather than live in shame. She is interrupted momentarily when the child comes in, but she says goodbye to him and blindfolds him. She stabs herself as Pinkerton cries out her name.

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Cio-Cio-San (known as Madama Butterfly) A 15-year-old geisha in Nagasaki	cho-cho-SAHN	soprano	Young and idealistic, Cio-Cio-San views her marriage contract as a permanent, sacred union.
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton A lieutenant in the U.S. Navy stationed in Nagasaki	as in English	tenor	Dashing but callous, Pinkerton travels the world looking for pleasure—with no regard for how his actions affect others.
Suzuki Cio-Cio-San's maid	soo-DZOO-kee	mezzo-soprano	A faithful and empathetic servant, Suzuki remains with Cio-Cio-San throughout her changes in fortune.
Sharpless U.S. consul at Nagasaki	as in English	baritone	Sharpless provides a necessary voice of sympathy and restraint.
Goro A marriage broker	GOH-roh	tenor	Goro flatters his clients while treating Cio-Cio-San with derision.
Kate Pinkerton Pinkerton's American wife	as in English	mezzo-soprano	Kind if condescending, Kate sympathizes with Cio-Cio-San's predicament and asks for her forgiveness.
Prince Yamadori Cio-Cio-San's suitor	yah-mah-DOH-ree	baritone	A wealthy prince, Yamadori is introduced to Cio-Cio-San by the marriage broker Goro after Pinkerton leaves Japan.
The Bonze Cio-Cio-San's uncle	as in English	bass	A Buddhist monk and family patriarch, the Bonze denounces Cio-Cio-San for abandoning her ancestral religion.
Sorrow Cio-Cio-San's son	as in English	silent	In this production, the silent role of Sorrow is represented by a Bunraku-style puppet.

The Creation of *Madama Butterfly*

1858 Giacomo Puccini is born on December 22 in Lucca, Tuscany, to a family of church musicians.

1874 Puccini begins training in music at the local music institute, studying with his uncle, Fortunato Magi. He soon begins learning the scores of Verdi's operas.

1880 Puccini's exemplary musical gifts earn him entry to the Milan Conservatory, the most prestigious musical academy in Italy. In addition to his formal studies, he comes into contact with the bohemian and anti-conformist group of artists known as the Scapigliati (literally "the disheveled ones"). There, he meets many of the leading writers and intellectuals of the day.

1883 Puccini composes his first opera, *Le Villi*, which is first performed in a private recital at the home of a member of the Scapigliati. Among those present are the composer Pietro Mascagni, who plays double bass in the orchestra, and Arrigo Boito, who was working with Verdi on the libretto for *Otello*. Impressed with Puccini's talent, the music publisher Giulio Ricordi enters an exclusive contract with the composer and provides him with a monthly stipend to concentrate on composition. For the rest of Puccini's life, Ricordi acts as mentor and friend to the composer.

1887 The French naval officer and travel writer Pierre Loti publishes *Madame Chrysanthème*, a semi-autobiographical account of his brief relationship with a geisha while stationed in Nagasaki. Loti's work colors the popular Western understanding of Japan for years to come.

1893 Puccini achieves his first major success with the premiere of *Manon Lescaut* on February 1 at the Teatro Regio in Turin.

1897 American writer John Luther Long publishes the short story *Madame Butterfly*, which is adapted from *Madame Chrysanthème*, in the periodical *Century Magazine*.

1900 Puccini visits London for the Covent Garden premiere of *Tosca* on July 12. While there, he attends a performance at the Duke of York's theater of the play *Madame Butterfly*, written by the American impresario David Belasco and based on Long's story. Immediately upon returning home to Milan, Puccini asks his publisher to obtain the rights to Belasco's play.

1901 Puccini officially acquires the rights to *Madame Butterfly* from Belasco in September and begins developing a scenario with his frequent collaborators Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica.

1903 Puccini's work on *Madama Butterfly* is interrupted when he is seriously injured in a car accident. (A lifelong technology enthusiast, he was among the first Italians to own a car.) The long duration of his convalescence with a broken leg is due, as he would learn later, to an undiagnosed case of diabetes.

1904 *Madama Butterfly* premieres at La Scala in Milan on February 17. Despite a starry cast, the performance is a disaster, with critics accusing Puccini of plagiarism. He immediately withdraws the score. After a series of revisions, *Madama Butterfly* finds great success elsewhere in Italy and abroad, although it is never again seen at La Scala during Puccini's lifetime.

1906 Puccini's fourth revision of *Madama Butterfly* is performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris on December 28. This is the version commonly performed today.

1924 While in Brussels for treatment of throat cancer, Puccini dies on November 29. His funeral at Milan's cathedral is attended by fellow musicians, dignitaries, and ambassadors from around the globe.

Operatic Conspiracies

The premiere of *Madama Butterfly* at Milan's La Scala in 1904 was a disaster that has become notorious in theater history. Although audiences a century ago tended to be more vocally demonstrative than today's operagoers, the pandemonium during the opera's first performance was overwhelming even by historical standards. According to contemporary reports, there were animal and bird calls from the audience during the dawn scene, laughter when Butterfly presented her child to Sharpless, and shouts of "She is pregnant!" when a draft caught and billowed the lead singer's costume—all in addition to the typical whistles, hisses, and boos. The professional critics were no less hostile, with several reviewers repeating the claim that Puccini had plagiarized himself by reusing melodies from *La Bohème* in the new opera.

Costume designs from the 1904 Milan production

ARCHIVIO STORICO RICORDI © RICORDI & C. S.R.L. MILAN

Puccini was convinced that this extremely negative reaction had been orchestrated by someone. A likely candidate for such a villain may have been Edoardo Sonzogno, owner of the music publishing firm that was the main competitor of Ricordi, which represented Puccini. Sonzogno had previously acted as impresario of La Scala, and his rivalry with Ricordi was so great that during his tenure, he forbade any operas published by Ricordi from appearing on the stage. His management of the opera house was disastrous and resulted in massive deficits, and after he was removed from office it was his turn to find few opportunities to put his operas on stage. When the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* was delayed due to the injuries Puccini suffered in an automobile accident and his subsequent slow recovery, Sonzogno managed to put forward one of the operas from his own roster to fill the resulting void: the now-forgotten *Siberia* by Umberto Giordano. Sonzogno, who was known for his unscrupulous business tactics, would have been keen to ensure that the success of his opera was not eclipsed by Puccini's new work, which immediately followed it on stage. It would not have been the first or the last time that a discreet bribe before a premiere produced a disruptive claque that carried the rest of the public along with it.

After the disaster of the opening night and *Madama Butterfly* was withdrawn from the stage, an article appeared in the newspaper *Il Secolo*. It reflected,

> "A second performance would have provoked a scandal among the Milanese, who do not relish being made fun of. The opera … shows that Maestro Puccini was in a hurry. Importuned as he was to bring out the work this season, sick as he was, he failed to find original inspiration and had recourse to melodies from his previous operas and even helped himself to melodies by other composers. His opera is dead."

It is worth mentioning that the owner of *Il Secolo* was none other than Edoardo Sonzogno.

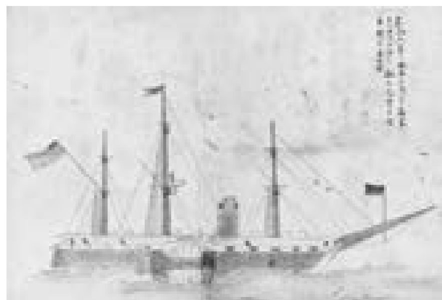
A Brief History of Japan

The Japanese archipelago has been inhabited since the Paleolithic Age, and by the 8th century CE it had become a powerful and unified state ruled by an emperor. At the end of the 12th century, a less centralized form of government emerged, with a warrior class of samurai, led by military commanders called the *shogun*, effectively governing the nation. In this era, Japan was a feudal society, with peasants working the land in return for protection by the samurai.

The office of the shogun was subject to competition and coups, and rather than being strictly hereditary, the shogunate passed through a variety of powerful families. Beginning in the 1630s, the shogunate led by the Tokugawa family enacted a series of foreign policy measures that effectively closed Japan's borders, preventing immigration and emigration, strictly limiting foreign trade to a small number of designated locations, and prohibiting Christianity. This policy was known as *sakoku*, or "closed country," and its effects on Japan were significant. On the one hand, the Tokugawa shogunate was able to concentrate on domestic issues and ushered in a 300-year era of peace; on the other, their foreign policy prolonged the existence of the feudal system and isolated the country from the industrial developments of the rest of the world.

The policy of sakoku ended only after intense pressure from the West, which was very keen to engage Japan in foreign trade. In 1853, the U.S. Navy, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, infiltrated Tokyo harbor with four warships. Under the implied threat of military action, Perry requested that Japan initiate relations with America. Faced with warships of a kind they had never seen, the Japanese had no alternative but to sign the Kanagawa Treaty, which immediately opened two ports to U.S. trade and ended the country's centuries-long isolation.

In 1868, not long after the Kanagawa Treaty, the age of the shogunate also came to an end when a group of political reformers succeeded in re-establishing a centralized, imperial government. This restoration of power to the emperor is known as the Meiji Restoration, named after Emperor Meiji, who ruled until 1912. During the 45 years of the Meiji era, Japan experienced rapid industrialization, vastly increasing its wealth and power, and successfully avoided falling under the expansionist aspirations of the Western powers. The fictional events of *Madama Butterfly* take place during the Meiji era, when Japan was only just adapting to the presence of foreigners and Christian missions, international trade, and the notion of emigration. All of these issues are at play in the opera.



One of Commodore Matthew Perry's "black ships," 1853

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

All Dolled Up

For most Western audiences, puppet theater is identified either with provocative comedy, à la *Crank Yankers* or Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, or with educational entertainment for children, such as *The Muppets* or *Sesame Street*. But the puppets featured in director Anthony Minghella's production of *Madama Butterfly* were inspired by Japanese Bunraku theater, a serious and sophisticated art form established in the late 17th century in the city of Osaka. The art of puppet plays accompanied by musical narration has a long history in Japan, appearing as early as the 11th century. Like the stylized theatrical genre of kabuki, which dates from close to the same time and shares many of the same stories, Bunraku was from its inception an entertainment created for ordinary people, unlike other dramatic forms of the time that were performed exclusively for the nobility and samurai classes.

Bunraku puppeteers go through lengthy apprenticeships to master the form, which may account for the gradual waning of its popularity in the 19th century. But there are still a number of practitioners today in Japan, and interest has revived in recent years, including in the West. Mark Down and Nick Barnes, the founders of Blind Summit Theatre, take inspiration from this tradition for their puppet-theater presentations. For Minghella's production, they created Bunraku-style puppets to represent Cio-Cio-San's child, her servants, and, in a dream sequence, Cio-Cio-San herself. Generally one-half to two-thirds life size, a Bunraku puppet has no strings and is operated by three puppeteers, dressed in black and discreetly visible to the audience, each responsible for a different body part.

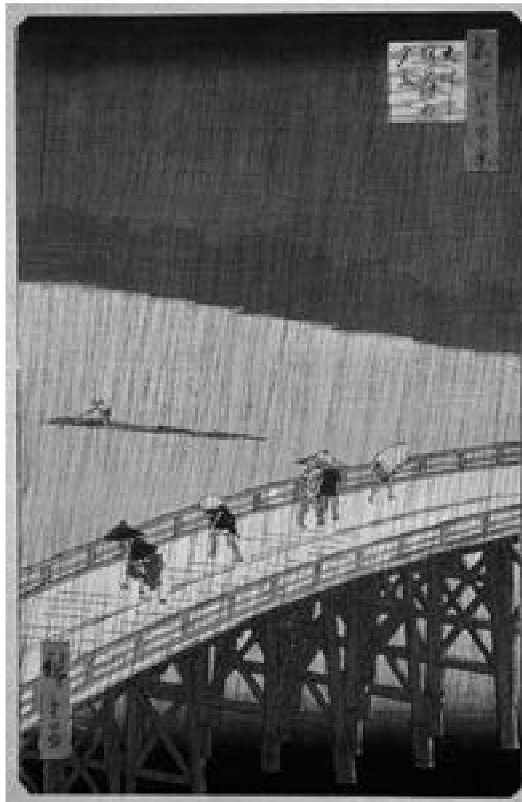
One particularly striking example of this production's use of Bunraku-style puppetry is Cio-Cio-San's night vigil during the Act III intermezzo. In this scene, Cio-Cio-San awaits Pinkerton's arrival after glimpsing his ship in Nagasaki harbor. In Minghella's staging, her silent vigil is accompanied by an extended ballet incorporating Bunraku-style puppets as she fantasizes about a romantic reunion with Pinkerton after three years apart.

Asao Tamejōrō I operating a Bunraku puppet by Katsukawa Shunei (ca. 1790)

COURTESY THE LYON COLLECTION, KANSAS CITY

When Japan Was in Vogue

One of many wide-ranging effects of the opening of Japan to foreign trade in 1853 was the surge of interest on the part of Western artists in the decorative arts, aesthetics, costumes, and crafts of Japan. The London Exposition of 1862 and the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867 showcased Japan's arts to Europeans for the first time, but even before this, many visual artists



Van Gogh's *Bridge in the Rain*, at left, and the work that inspired it, Utagawa Hiroshige's print of the same title

were already collectors of Japanese fans, kimonos, bronzes, and examples of the rich Japanese tradition of woodblock prints known as *ukiyo-e*. Artists such as Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Mary Cassatt, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Vincent van Gogh, among many others, began incorporating Japanese motifs and props into their own artworks, and many developed a visual style influenced by Japanese art in its use of asymmetrical composition, lack of perspective, bold colors, and clarity of line. As a stylistic movement, this interest in Japan and its arts is usually referenced using the French term "Japonisme" because of its prevalence among French artists.

Japonisme influenced the most important French writers of the day, such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Marcel Proust, and popular interest in Japan also helped make the works of Pierre Loti wildly successful—including the novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), one of the sources for *Madama Butterfly*. In music, examples of Japonisme can be found in the opera *La Princesse Jaune* (1872) by Camille Saint-Saëns and in operettas like Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885) and *The Geisha* (1896) and *San Toy* (1899) by Sydney Jones.

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

Teachers can access recordings for these Guided Listening Activities at metopera.org/aobutterflymusic.

"Dovunque al mondo"

Lieutenant Pinkerton, an American naval officer, is about to marry the young geisha Cio-Cio-San. He marvels at the strange customs of the Japanese, whose marriage contracts are supposed to last 999 years but may be canceled at any time. Here he explains to Sharpless, the American consul, his approach to life: He travels around the world, enjoys whatever pleasures he can find, and never worries about the consequences.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- The inclusion of a well-known melody to highlight Pinkerton's country of origin
- The use of two main melodies to structure the duet
- The division of the duet into three parts: In the first, Pinkerton explains his mode of living; in the second, he briefly considers how things might go wrong; and in the third, he declares that, no matter what happens, things always work out for him in the end.

(00:00) A brief excerpt from "The Star-Spangled Banner" introduces the Americans Pinkerton and Sharpless. At (00:10), however, the melody suddenly changes. It becomes sad and dark, suggesting that trouble lies ahead. Puccini often used special musical effects to highlight his characters' foreign origins; in early 20th-century Italy, America was almost as exotic as Japan!

(00:15) The aria's first important melody (henceforth called melody A) is played by the orchestra.

(00:20) The aria's second important melody (melody B) is sung by Pinkerton. Melodies A and B repeat at (00:37) and (00:42), respectively.

(00:57) The repeating melodies are briefly interrupted by Pinkerton offering Sharpless "milk punch or whiskey." Milk punch is a cocktail made with milk and either brandy or bourbon. Both drinks were considered to be characteristically American, and thus are further illustration of Pinkerton's nationality.

(01:02) Melodies A and B appear again, but at (01:16), Pinkerton's melody (B) changes abruptly as he describes the potential pitfalls of his lifestyle. It is important to note, however, that Pinkerton seems only to worry about how he might hurt himself—not about how he might hurt the people he meets.

(01:32) The orchestra plays melody A, but Pinkerton does not sing melody B as we might expect. Instead, he forges ahead with a different melody, perhaps indicating that neither tradition nor responsibility will keep him from doing what he likes.

(01:44) Sharpless sings melody A twice, observing that Pinkerton's philosophy is "easy," since it requires no commitment to anyone. What remains unsaid, yet is nevertheless evident, is Sharpless's concern that Pinkerton will hurt Butterfly. Meanwhile, melody A is repeated three times by the orchestra, each time at a slightly higher pitch than the last. In compositional terms, this type of passage (i.e., when a single melody appears repeatedly at different pitch levels) is called a "sequence."

(02:16) As the third portion of the aria begins, Pinkerton returns to melody B. No matter what worries he expressed in the second part of the aria, he is confident in his enduring success.

(02:33) Pinkerton explains his understanding of the Japenese marriage contract. At (02:46), as Pinkerton declares that he "can cancel at any time," melody A is heard. Recall that melody A is the tune with which Sharpless has repeatedly warned Pinkerton that his winner-take-all approach to life can have dire consequences.

(03:03) "The Star-Spangled Banner" appears one last time as Pinkerton and Sharpless make a toast to their home country.

"Vogliatemi bene"

As the sun sets on the evening of Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton's wedding, the two characters express their hopes for their future together. Alas, the profound tragedy of Butterfly's story is already apparent. Butterfly, who has had to sacrifice both her family and her faith to marry Pinkerton, wants to be loved forever. For Pinkerton, however, Cio-Cio-San is a beautiful trinket to be possessed, admired, and thrown away at whim.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- The dramatic trajectory of the duet, from shy and frightened at the beginning to opulent and soaring at the end
- The use of orchestral instruments with unique timbres, specifically the harp, bells, and what Puccini called the "Japanese tam-tam"
- How Puccini uses music to illustrate stage directions he includes in the score

(00:00) A solo violin plays a yearning melody as the strings play a gently throbbing accompaniment in the background. If you try to tap your foot or nod your head in time with the melody, you will notice that the repeated notes of the accompaniment occur on the "off beat" (i.e., between taps of your foot). As a result, the passage feels nervous and shy. Perhaps the repeated notes in the orchestra are like the quick beats of a nervous heart.

(00:13) The violin pauses briefly as Cio-Cio-San begins to sing. Puccini's score includes many specific instructions for stage actions; here, he suggests that Pinkerton is sitting on a bench in a garden as Cio-Cio-San timidly approaches. How might the music reflect these actions?

(00:35) At (00:35), (00:39), and (00:43), the harp plucks three chords. Puccini uses the harp strategically to add a dash of sparkle at special moments.

(01:01) Butterfly sings the same melody the violin played at the beginning.

(01:30) Now Butterfly and the whole orchestra sing and play the violin's melody. It is the most confident moment of this scene so far, and it occurs just as Butterfly promises to love Pinkerton with "a love as wide as the sky and as deep as the sea."

(01:43) Pinkerton responds, singing the now-familiar melody that Butterfly and the violin have already performed several times.

(02:11) Cio-Cio-San has heard a horrible rumor: In America, collectors stick pins in butterflies and attach them to a board. Listen to how the music changes to express her fear and revulsion.

(02:29) A harsh, heavy melody is heard in the background. This melody will return periodically throughout the opera, always accompanying moments that point to Butterfly's tragic end.

(02:36) Pinkerton tells Butterfly that she should be unconcerned by the rumor she has heard. Puccini specifies that Pinkerton smiles while he explains that the practice developed "so that butterflies don't fly away." Does the music sound reassuring? The irony of this line is that it will eventually be Pinkerton who flies away, while Butterfly dutifully waits for him.

(02:56) "You are mine!" Pinkerton triumphantly announces. "Yes," Butterfly replies, "for life!" She plans to be married to Pinkerton forever. As we already know, however, he has no intention of staying with her.

(03:11) The rhythm changes. Now, the music is in "compound meter," which means that each beat is divided into three (rather than the duple division of "simple meter," which we heard before; you can easily count "one-two-three, one-two-three" as you listen to the strings). The result is music that feels lush and full of motion.

(04:16) As Butterfly sings about the night full of stars, the harp glitters in the background. Puccini specifies that at this point fireflies should appear among the trees surrounding Butterfly and Pinkerton. Listen carefully, and you will hear that Butterfly sings the same melody four times, each time at a slightly higher pitch than the last.

(06:08) A giant crescendo slowly leads to a climax marked by the crash of a cymbal (06:23). During the diminuendo that follows, the collage of sounds in the orchestra includes harp, bells, and the Japanese tam-tam (a low gong).

"Un bel dì"

Three years have passed since Pinkerton left, and Butterfly waits patiently for his return. Suzuki questions Pinkerton's faithfulness, but Butterfly is sure he has not forgotten her. In this aria—one of the most famous works ever written for soprano—Butterfly describes to Suzuki what will happen when Pinkerton finally comes home.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- The skillful combination of narrative voices: sometimes Butterfly speaks directly to Suzuki, sometimes she describes Pinkerton's arrival as though she is telling a story, and sometimes she lapses into daydreams about what she will do and say when she sees finally sees him again
- Puccini's use of "text painting," a compositional technique in which the music mimics what the words describe (think of the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill Went Up the Hill," in which the climb "up the hill" is illustrated by a rising melody, while Jill's subsequent "tumble" is sung to a falling melody)

(00:00) "One day we will see a plume of smoke on the horizon," Butterfly tells Suzuki. This is how she will know that Pinkerton has returned. Her high melody, and the solo violin that accompanies it, are reminiscent of a fine veil of smoke floating on the breeze.

(00:33) The aria's first long phrase comes to an end. The conclusion of a musical phrase is called a "cadence"; you can identify a cadence because the music seems to rest for a moment. In this case, the cadence occurs when Butterfly declares that Pinkerton's ship "will appear." After three long years of restless waiting, Pinkerton's return will finally allow Butterfly to rest as well.

(00:38) A new melody appears as Butterfly describes Pinkerton's ship entering the harbor, indicating that the return of the ship will initiate a new period in her life.

(01:19) As the phrase comes to an end, we might expect a cadence like that at (00:33). But the point of closure never arrives. Instead, as Butterfly declares that she will wait for Pinkerton on the nearby hilltop rather than rushing to meet him, the music seems to wait as well.

(01:58) On the word *"s'avvia"* ("he will approach"), Cio-Cio-San's melody begins to rise decisively. This is another example of text painting, with the music mimicking Pinkerton's march up the hill.

(02:10) *"Chi sarà? Che dirà?"* Butterfly asks: "Who will it be? What will he say?" We are hearing Butterfly's thoughts as she imagines watching Pinkerton approach. Each rhetorical question is its own short phrase, making the music feel abrupt and anxious. When Butterfly then declares, in answer to her own question, "He will call out 'Butterfly!'," the music returns to the long, lush melodies that have characterized the aria thus far.

(02:54) Butterfly imagines the joyful future she and Pinkerton will have. At this moment, she returns to the arias opening melody. By using music we have already heard, is Puccini suggesting that Butterfly's dreams of happiness are now only a thing of the past?

(03:26) Addressing Suzuki directly, Cio-Cio-San declares, "All this will happen, I promise!" The music gets more decisive and the orchestra gets louder.

(03:44) Butterfly hits the highest note of the entire aria on the words "I will wait for him!" She then falls silent, as the orchestra repeats her big melody one final time. Ask your students: what do you think Butterfly is feeling at this point? When you go to the opera, watch the singer carefully—performing an operatic role is as much about acting as it is about singing!

Humming Chorus

Sharpless has tried repeatedly to warn Cio-Cio-San that Pinkerton will never return, but she cannot believe it. As if in answer to her prayers, she sees a ship in the harbor. It is the *Abraham Lincoln*, Pinkerton's vessel. Convinced that her beloved Pinkerton will soon be climbing the hill to her home, Butterfly sits with Suzuki and Sorrow to await his arrival. The humming chorus accompanies her silent vigil.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- The sonic contrast between the plucked strings and the legato line of the humming voices
- How the different melodies in the chorus inspire different images or emotions

(00:00) The silent vigil begins with the strings plucking a soft melody. The technique of plucking stringed instruments, as opposed to playing with a bow, is called "pizzicato" (from an Italian verb meaning "to pluck" or "to pinch"). Perhaps Puccini used pizzicato to approximate the sound of the koto, a Japanese plucked string instrument.

(00:08) The humming voices join the orchestra.

(00:34) As a new melody begins, Puccini adds a single bowed violin to the mix. This additional timbre increases the complexity of the sound. It also harkens back to the yearning violin solos of *"Vogliatemi bene"* and *"Un bel dì,"* times when Butterfly believed her marriage would last forever.

(01:01) The first melody returns.

(01:29) A new melody briefly takes over. Ask your students if this melody inspires different emotions than the previous melodies. Why?

(01:56) The melody of (00:34) returns, yet this strong, vibrant statement of the theme will soon sink into a long diminuendo.

(02:20) A small fragment of the melody is repeated over and over, a wistful reminiscence of the past.

(02:39) A new melody brings the chorus to a close. Such a section is called a "coda," from the Italian word for "tail."

(02:56) The chorus ends on a glorious, shimmering final chord.

Aria
A self-contained piece for solo voice, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Arias form a major part of larger works such as operas and oratorios.

Exoticism
The inclusion or imitation of foreign musical styles in Western music. Composers have long drawn on the exotic sounds of other cultures to enrich their own works. In the 18th and 19th centuries, musicians were inspired by influences as varied as Turkish janissary bands and Spanish dance rhythms. In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini's use of pentatonic scales and Japanese and Chinese folk songs represents a type of exoticism.

Folk Music and Folk Song
Music derived from an oral tradition, usually in a simple style and understood to represent the history or "essence" of a nation or cultural group. The term implies a separation between this kind of music and the "higher" form of art music developed by trained composers. Interest in folk songs grew steadily throughout the 19th century, parallel and related to the growth of cultural and political nationalism. Folk songs formed a rich resource for many 19th-century composers as they sought to broaden the classical idiom and evoke rustic settings, traditional cultures, and the distant past.

Fugue
A musical form based on a brief theme, or "subject," and its imitation throughout multiple voices of a composition. The term derives from two Latin words meaning "to flee" and "to chase," reflecting the way that fugal subjects (i.e., repeated musical ideas) figuratively chase one another. The art of fugal composition reached its pinnacle in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach in the 18th century, but fugues can be found in the works of many later composers, both in orchestral music and in opera. The fugal theme from *Madama Butterfly*'s prelude recurs throughout the opera, evoking the hustle and bustle of Cio-Cio-San's wedding day.

Gong
A percussion instrument, usually flat and round in shape, made out of resonating metal such as bronze or brass. Typically hung from a frame and played with a mallet, gongs have a very specific timbre. Puccini uses two different kinds of gongs in *Madama Butterfly* to evoke the sounds of the Far East: tuned gongs, which create a pitch when they are hit, and the tam-tam, which creates an unpitched crashing sound.

Musical Quotation
As in the corresponding concept in speech or literature, a composer's use of a brief passage of pre-existent musical material. The principle is similar to the contemporary notion of sampling, where sounds are taken from a recorded medium and inserted into a new musical work. Musical quotation most frequently entails the borrowing of the melodic line of its source, although it can include borrowed harmony as well. Often, a composer's use of musical quotation increases the web of meanings of a given passage, as it inspires the listener to make associations with the source's text, composer, culture, or musical tradition. An example from *Madama Butterfly* is Puccini's quotation of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Pentatonic Scale
A scale made up of five pitches (from the Greek *pente*, five). The most common pentatonic scale includes the pitches C-D-E-G-A, although other combinations of intervals are possible, including some that have a more "minor" inflection to Western ears. The black keys of the piano keyboard form another pentatonic scale. Pentatonic scales have been used in music from many cultures around the world and throughout history, from China, Japan, and Java to European folk music and American popular music, especially the African American spiritual and jazz. In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini uses pentatonic melodies and harmonies to represent Cio-Cio-San and her Japanese heritage.

Through-Composed
A style of seamless musical composition without obvious repetitions or breaks. The concept may be applied to works as a whole, as in entire operas, or to individual pieces. It is understood in contrast to the various types of strophic song, all of which include some variety of internal repetition (such as the da capo aria and rondeau form). Through-composed songs, even when they are based on strophic texts, include new music for each stanza. The technique of through-composition allows a composer greater invention and flexibility, as the music may change to reflect the dramatic situation and develop organically, rather than being restricted by repetition or other formal limitations.

Verismo
A movement in Italian theater and opera in the late 19th century that embraced realism and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: the poor, the lower class, the outcast, and the criminal. Characters in verismo operas are often driven to defy reason, morality, and occasionally the law. In order to reflect these emotional extremes, composers developed a musical style that communicates raw and unfiltered passions. Before its exploration on the operatic stage, the verismo aesthetic developed in the realm of literature.

Whole-Tone Scale
A six-note scale (seven including the upper octave) consisting exclusively of whole steps (or "tones"). There are only two possible whole tone scales: C-D-E-F♯-G♯-A♯ (or B♭, spelled enharmonically); and C♯-D♯-E♯ (or F)-G-A-B. Whole-tone scales and chords are harmonically unstable as they lack the pitches used in chord resolutions typical of the tonal era. In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini often uses whole-tone inflections to lend his music an otherworldly or exotic feeling.

Encouraging Student Response in Attending the Final Dress Rehearsal

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d
Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. This performance activity will help students analyze different aspects of the experience, engage critically with the performance, and express their views in a respectful and supported environment.

The enclosed performance activity is called "Opera Review: *Madama Butterfly*." The reproducible handout for this activity, available at the back of this guide, will invite students to think of themselves as opera critics, taking notes on what they see and hear during the performance and critiquing each scene on a five-star scale. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. When they return to class, students can use their "Opera Review" sheets as they review and discuss their experience.

DISCUSSION

Start the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did students like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently?

Students may feel the need to discuss the opera's shocking ending and to voice their emotional responses to viewing Cio-Cio-San's suicide. Over the course of the opera, viewers are drawn more and more closely into Cio-Cio-San's world, as her hopes gradually narrow and her future disappears. Her sweet optimism and grace under tragedy render her tragic end all the more affecting, a fact acknowledged by director Anthony Minghella, who said of his approach to bringing the opera to the stage that, "It's no good unless it breaks your heart."

It may be helpful for students to consider the various causes, both personal and cultural, that contributed to Cio-Cio-San's suicide, and how her circumstances might have been improved by different kinds of help and support. Some of the questions your students might want to consider are:

- What would Cio-Cio-San's life have been like if she had not been disowned by her family? How might they have helped her?
- Would it have been different or better if Pinkerton had not waited three years to return to Nagasaki?
- Is there anything that Sharpless could have done to help Cio-Cio-San?

- Was giving up her son to Pinkerton and his American wife the right decision? Do you think his life in America will be better than his life with a loving mother?
- Could Suzuki have done anything differently to help Cio-Cio-San?
- Do you think that Cio-Cio-San's young age played a role in her response both to Pinkerton and to her reaction at losing him?

As a culminating activity, students can apply their observations about Cio-Cio-San and her plight in an interactive game incorporating modern-day resources. Divide the class into pairs of students and have them imagine that Cio-Cio-San is telephoning a crisis hotline. (Students may imagine that Cio-Cio-San is calling just prior to the final moments of the opera, or alternatively pick an earlier moment from the opera when she is facing a crucial decision.) One student will play the role of Cio-Cio-San, explaining her desires and emotions, and the other student will work with Cio-Cio-San, attempting to talk her down from her crisis and bring about a more positive outcome. After interacting in this vein for several minutes, students should switch roles. By discussing Cio-Cio-San's plight and its causes, students can engage with *Madama Butterfly* and the issues it raises, practice flexible, critical thinking, sharpen their skills of persuasion and logical argument, and practice empathy and positive emotional modeling.

IN PRINT

Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly. New York: Schirmer, 1963.
The complete opera libretto, in both English and Italian. Available at the Metropolitan Opera Shop at metoperashop.org.

Budden, Julian. *Puccini: His Life and Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
Budden's biography includes lengthy chapters on each of Puccini's major operas. It is the most scholarly work on this list, but the writing is accessible and engaging, and Budden's book is well worth the effort for those who wish to delve more deeply into the composer's life and music.

Weaver, William. *Puccini: The Man and His Music*. New York: E. P. Dutton, in association with the Metropolitan Opera Guild, 1977.
An entertaining and insightful overview of Puccini's life and work, richly illustrated with numerous photographs and other relevant images.

ONLINE

Puppetry in *Madama Butterfly*, 12 November 2019, The Metropolitan Opera, youtube.com/watch?v=Lnks9m59-RE.
Met puppeteers explain how they breathe life into the puppet that acts as Cio-Cio-San's child in Anthony Minghella's production.

Madama Butterfly Illustrated Synopsis, The Metropolitan Opera, metopera.org/butterfly-illustrated.
A short, graphic novel–style synopsis of the opera for young readers.

"The Beginner's Guide to Puccini," English National Opera, eno.org/discover-opera/operas/the-beginners-guide-to-puccini/
An accessible overview of Puccini's life and work with musical examples from his operas.

Madama Butterfly

Performance date:

Reviewed by:

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Madama Butterfly*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what would you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about the opera and this performance at the Met!

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Opening dance MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Goro shows Pinkerton the house and introduces his new servants. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Pinkerton and Sharpless discuss the life of a sailor. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San arrives, accompanied by her friends, to marry Pinkerton. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San shows Pinkerton her box of keepsakes. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The Imperial Commissioner marries Pinkerton and Cio-Cio-San. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Cio-Cio-San's uncle, the Bonze, disowns her. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Alone at last, the new couple spends their first night together. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San tries to convince Suzuki that Pinkerton will return. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Goro encourages Cio-Cio-San to marry a new suitor, Yamadori. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Sharpless reads Pinkerton's letter to Cio-Cio-San. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San introduces her son to Sharpless. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Having spotted his ship in harbor, Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki prepare for Pinkerton's return. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San keeps vigil through the night. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San fantasizes about her reunion with Pinkerton. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Pinkerton and his American wife meet Cio-Cio-San’s son. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Cio-Cio-San makes a deal with Mrs. Pinkerton. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Holding her father’s knife, Cio-Cio-San bids farewell to her son. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆