

TEATRO LIRICO D'EUROPA
MADAMA BUTTERFLY
By Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
based on John Luther Long's story and David Belasco's play
TEATRO LIRICO D'EUROPA

Artistic Director/Stage Director
Conductor
Sets/Costumes
Lights
Super Titles

Giorgio Lalov
Krassimir Topolov
Giorgio Lalov
Giorgio Bajukliev
Maestro Internationale

DISTRIBUTION

CIO-CIO-SAN
Soprano

Olga Chernisheva
Elena Razgylaeva
Melliangee Perez

B. F. PINKERTON, LIEUTENANT, U.S. Navy

Rafael Davila
Orlin Goranov

SHARPLESS
American Consul at Nagasaki

William Powers
Plamen DIMITROV

SUZUKI
Maid to Cio-Cio-San

Vlara Zhelezova

GORO
A marriage broker

Gueorgui Dinev

THE BONZE
Buddhist priest and the uncle of Cio-Sio-San

Vladimir Hristov

SORROW
Child of Cio-Sio-San and Pinkerton

LOCAL CHILD TBA

PRINCE YAMADORI
Suitor of Cio-Co-San

Hristo Sarafov

KATE PINKERTON
American wife of Pinkerton

Veselina Ponorska

Chorus of relatives and companion of Cio-Cio-San, servants

Artists Bios

ELENA RAZGYLAEVA (Cio-Cio-San)

The young Russian soprano is a principal soloist of Opera Rostov-na Dom, Russia, where she performs leading soprano roles in the lyric and spinto fach. Ms. Razgylaeva has also performed many principal soprano roles with other opera houses in central Europe, Eastern Europe and the United Kingdom. She made her U.S. debut in winter 2006 with Teatro Lirico D'Europa as Mimi in LA BOHÈME to outstanding critical acclaim and returned to the United States in following seasons as Mimi in LA BOHÈME, Michaëla in CARMEN, Cio-cio-san in MADAMA BUTTERFLY, Liu in TURANDOT, Nedda in I PAGLIACCI and Donna Elvira in DON GIOVANNI, all to outstanding critical acclaim.

OLGA CHERNISHEVA: (Cio-Cio-San)

Career highlights have included Maria in MAZEPPA, Prilepa in PIQUE DAME, Brigitta in IOLANTA, Anne Trulove in THE RAKE'S PROGRESS, Mlle. Jouvenot in ADRIANA LECOUVREUR, and Ninetta in Prokofiev's THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES with the Bolshoi Opera; Mimi in LA BOHÈME with the Kazan' Opera Theater, Gold Coast Opera, and Teatro Lirico; Micaela in CARMEN with the Stanislavsky Opera Theater and Teatro Lirico; Musetta in LA BOHÈME with the Bolshoi Opera, Sweden's Malmo Opera Theater, and San Francisco Opera Center's Merola Opera Program; Tatiana in EUGENE ONEGIN and Persephone in the European premiere of Joel Feigin's opera MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS with the Moscow Conservatory Opera Studio; the title role in TOSCA with Opera Illinois; Liù in TURANDOT with Opera Hong Kong; the title role in MADAMA BUTTERFLY with Gold Coast Opera and Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre; the title role in MANON LESCAUT with West Bay Opera; LE DONNE DI GIACOMO PUCCINI with Opera Santa Barbara; and First Soprano in the Russian premiere of McNally's MASTER CLASS, produced as an independent theater project. Concert highlights have included the title role in Rachmaninoff's FRANCESCA DA RIMINI with Dicapo Opera Theatre; Bach's MASS IN B-MINOR at the Nizhny Novgorod Concert Hall, at the Grand Hall of the Moscow State Conservatory, and with Russia's Saratov Opera Theater; Bach's EASTER ORATORIO at Moscow's Cathedral Catholic Church; Mahler's FOURTH SYMPHONY at the Grand Hall of the Moscow State Conservatory; and CARMINA BURANA at the Grand Hall of Moscow's Gnessin College.

MELLIANGEE PEREZ: (Cio-Cio-San)

Ms. Perez graduated summa cum laude with a degree in Voice Performance, from the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, where she studied with the famous Puerto Rican bass-baritone Justino Diaz. Perez won the Puerto Rico District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions while still in college. In 2005 and 2008, she finished as a semifinalist at the International Singing Contest in Barcelona, Spain. In addition, she has taken master classes with highly acknowledged singing teachers and coaches such as Mme. Renata Scotto, Anna Moffo, Jennifer Larmore, Benton Hess, Sherill Milnes, Joan Dornemann, Diana Soviero, Charles Riecker, Ruth Falcon, Teresa Berganza and Frank Corsaro.

Ms. Perez's experiences as a soloist include many concerts, galas and recitals in Puerto Rico, the United States, México, Spain, Italy, The Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Venezuela. She has performed operatic roles such as Donna Elvira in DON GIOVANNI, the Countess in LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, Lauretta in GIANNI SCHICCHI and Euridice in ORFEO ED EURIDICE. She has also performed in zarzuelas, and she is an active concert singer. In 2008, Ms. Perez received a UNESCO Award as "Soprano of the Year." On the 2009-2010 Teatro Lirico D'Europa tour, she will perform the roles of the Countess in LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, Donna Elvira in DON GIOVANNI, Mimi in LA BOHÈME and Micaela in CARMEN to outstanding critical acclaim and will perform the roles of Cio-Cio-San in MADAMA BUTTERFLY and Liù in TURANDOT for Teatro Lirico during the 2010-11 season.

ORLIN GORANOV: (B.F. Pinkerton)

A two-time Golden Orpheus first-place winner of the International festival in Bulgaria, Mr. Goranov is a laureate of several international opera festivals, including the Dresden Festival in Germany (1981) BRATISLAVA LYRE International Slovakia Vocal Festival (1982) and the Intertalent festival in Prague (1983). He has been a principal soloist of the State Opera House in Plovdiv, Bulgaria since 1999, and is a regular participant of both the Christmas and New Year's Berliner Symphoniker concerts since 1991. Mr. Goranov has made numerous recordings for both the Bulgarian National Radio and Bulgarian National Television. He made his debut with Teatro Lirico on its fall 2006 U.S. tour as B.F. Pinkerton in Puccini's MADAMA BUTTERFLY and Rodolfo in Puccini's LA BOHÈME.

RAFAEL DAVILA: (B.F. Pinkerton)

In 2003 Rafael Davila made his Italian debut at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples as Riccardo in Verdi's UN BALLO IN MASCHERA. The next year he made his debut with the New Zealand Opera where he appeared as Don Jose in CARMEN and Alfredo in LA TRAVIATA. That same year he made his debut with the Sarasota Opera in Florida where he sang the title role in WERTHER, becoming the company's favorite tenor and returning for eight consecutive seasons to perform the roles of Canio in PAGLIACCI, Turiddu in CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA, Cavaradossi in TOSCA and Verdi's Foresto in ATTILA the Duke of Mantua in RIGOLETTO, and Carlo VII in Giovanna D'Arco and next year as Oronte in I LOMBARDI continuing the Verdi cycle for which Sarasota Opera is world renowned. In the 2009-2010 season, he made his debut with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Cavaradossi in Puccini's TOSCA, and for Palm Beach Opera as Don Jose in CARMEN. Mr. Davila has also toured with Teatro Lirico D'Europa singing the roles of Don Jose in CARMEN and Alfredo in LA TRAVIATA. For Opera de Puerto Rico Mr. Davila has sung the roles of Pinkerton in Puccini's MADAMA BUTTERFLY, Edgardo in LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR, Alfredo in LA TRAVIATA, and Rinuccio in GIANNI SCHICCHI. For the

Fundacion de Zarzuela y Opereta de Puerto Rico he sang Alfredo in Strauss' DIE FLEDERMAUS, Camille in THE MERRY WIDOW as well as Leonardo in the Cuban zarzuela CECILIA VALDÉS, and Javier in LUISA FERNANDA.

He has also sung the role of Calaf in TURANDOT for Connecticut Grand Opera as well as for Opera Di Capo in New York for which he returned the next year and sang the Duke of Mantua in RIGOLETTO. Mr. Davila has also appeared with L'Opéra du Montréal, National Lyric Opera of New York, San Antonio Opera, Opera Tampa, Austin Lyric Opera, Fort Worth Opera and Opera Roanoke. Mr. Davila sang the Mozart's roles of Tamino in DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE and Belmonte in DIE ENTFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERIAL, in Salzburg, Steyr, and Attersee in Austria.

WILLIAM POWERS (Sharpless)

Since making his New York City Opera debut in 1972, Chicagoan William Powers has performed over 100 operatic roles with the major opera companies in the United States, Europe, and South America. While the stylistic range of his portrayals spans the gamut from Renaissance (Monteverdi's ORFEO for San Francisco) to Contemporary (Pasatieri's SEAGULL for Washington, D.C.), Mr. Powers has earned an enviable reputation as a "heavy," due in large part to the dark, penetrating color of his voice; thus, the portrayal of rogues and villains has dominated his career. His teachers and mentors, George London and Norman Treigle, have also contributed to the dramatic intensity of his delivery, for which Mr. Powers has become well known.

Mr. Powers created many new roles through world premiers or important revivals, most recently singing the villain Meyer Wolfsheim for the premier of Harbison's THE GREAT GATSBY at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Other new creations have included Penderecki's PARADISE LOST for Chicago's Lyric Opera, Herrmann's WUTHERING HEIGHTS for Portland, Copeland's HOLY BLOOD AND CRESCENT MOON for Cleveland and Petrassi's SESTINA D'AUTUNNO for Italy's Spoleto Festival. Of re-creations, Mr. Powers offered the role of Celio for the 50th anniversary production of Prokofiev's THE LOVE OF THREE ORANGES for Chicago, Donizetti's rarely heard BETLY for Strasbourg and the French version of Donizetti's LA FAVORITE for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Opéra Comique in Paris. His creations also include the Italian version of THE LADY MACBETH OF THE MTZENSK DISTRICT for Spoleto and the American premiere of Handel's PORO, RE DI INDIE for The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Handel Festival.

Mr. Powers' voice has been widely recorded and heard in hundreds of broadcasts. In 2000, he released a solo CD on the Centaur label, entitled Rogues and Villains. In 2009, he followed with yet another collection of wicked evildoers and miscreants, called The Worst of William Powers, containing dozens of arias from many under-handed characters, including Rossini's Babilio, Dr. Bartolo, Mustafa and Don Magnifico, Verdi's Iago from OTELLO, Beethoven's Pizarro, Ponchielli's Alvisi and Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov. The various devils Mr. Powers has reincarnated include Gounod's Mephistopheles, Meyerbeer's Bertram and Boito's Mefisto. Villains the celebrated bass has portrayed include Four Villains of Offenbach's LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN, Floyd's Reverend Blich, Wagner's Alberich, Mozart's Leporello, Puccini's Gianni Schicchi, Gruenberg's Jones, and the ultimate rascal of them all, Verdi's Falstaff.

Mr. Powers has not ignored symphonic repertoire, performing in Beethoven's NINTH and MISSA SOLEMNIS, the requiems of Verdi, Mozart, Dvořák, Brahms and Fauré and MESSIAH, as well as many oratorios of Handel. These standards are joined by contemporary works of William Schuman and Ned Rorem, in conjunction with the symphonies of Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Los Angeles and Dallas, as well as the symphonies of Paris, Cologne, Strasbourg, Trieste, Prague, Bratislava, Hague, Amsterdam and Vienna.

Recent performances have included the Chicago premiere of DER KAISER VON ATLANTIS, and THE TALES OF HOFFMANN (in the controversial Ratner version) for the Chicago Opera Theater. Mr. Powers performed WERTHER of Massenet for the Klangbogen Festival of Vienna, as well as the Basque National Opera of Bilbao, DEAD MAN WALKING for Cincinnati, THE DAMNATION OF FAUST for Chicago's Grant Park Festival and the Pablo Casal's Festival of San Juan. He sang in the Opera Gala for the Festival of the Aegean in Athens and Styros, FAUST for Trieste, THE BARBER OF SEVILLE for Charlotte and Buenos Aires, THE MAGIC FLUTE for Bozeman, Maryland, FIDELIO for Cedar Rapids and the national tour of Teatro Lirico d'Europa's production of Puccini's TOSCA and RIGOLETTO for Baltimore Opera Theatre.

PLAMEN DIMITROV (Sharpless)

Bulgarian baritone, Plamen Dimitrov, has performed various roles with Teatro Lirico on tour in the United States during the last five seasons, including Schaunard in LA BOHÈME, Morales in CARMEN and PING in TURANDOT, Sharpless in MADAMA BUTTERFLY, Giorgio Germont in LA TRAVIATA, The title role in RIGOLETTO and Escamillo in CARMEN. He also performs as a principal soloist in Bulgaria with Sofia National Opera and Opera Varna and has been a guest artist in

other Eastern and Western European opera companies. Mr. Dimitrov studied at the National Academy of Music in Sofia, Bulgaria and is a laureate of several academic competitions. For five years, he worked in the Musical Theater-Sofia in the part of Charlie in CHARLIE'S AUNT and Cascada in DIE LUSTIGE WITWE.

VLADIMIR HRISTOV (The Bonze)

Bulgarian bass Vladimir Hristov graduated from the National Academy of Music in Sofia. He has been a soloist with Teatro Lirico D'Europa on its U.S. tours since winter 2003. Mr. Hristov is also a soloist with Sofia National Opera and is a frequent guest soloist with other regional opera companies throughout Bulgaria and Eastern Europe.

VIARA ZHELEZOVA (Suzuki)

Mezzo-Soprano

The young Bulgarian Mezzo Soprano graduated from the National Conservatory of Music in 1985 and joined the roster of the Bulgarian National Opera, where she has performed leading mezzo-soprano roles alongside such singers as Ghena Dimitrova, Nicolai Giuselev, Anna Tomova Sintova and others. She has appeared as a guest artist with opera companies throughout Eastern Europe and has been a principal soloist with Teatro Lirico D'Europa since 1992.

HRISTO SARAFOV: (Yamadori)

Mr. Sarafov has been active on the stage for his entire adult life as a soloist in operetta, opera and as an actor. The talented baritone graduated from the National Academy of Music in Sofia and was immediately engaged by the Sofia National Opera for the role of Bartolo in Rossini's IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA. He has performed numerous roles for Teatro Lirico D'Europa on tour in Europe and the United States since 1990.

VESELINA PONORSKA: (Kate Pinkerton)

The Bulgarian soprano who performs with opera companies throughout Bulgaria has performed various soprano roles with Teatro Lirico D'Europa on tour in Europe and the United States for the last 15 years and is a valued member of the repertory company.

GUEORGUI DINEV (Goro)

The Bulgarian actor has worked professionally in his native country for more than 20 years, onstage as an actor, in film, and as a soloist in opera and operetta performances. He has performed secondary roles with Teatro Lirico D'Europa on tour in the United States since the winter 2000 in almost every single production

Child actor TBD (Sorrow)

KRASSIMIR TOPOLOV (Conductor)

The young Bulgarian maestro was educated in Vienna, Austria. In addition to conducting hundreds of performances for Teatro Lirico D'Europa on tour in central Europe and the United States since 1995, he is a guest conductor with opera companies in Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries.

GIORGIO LALOV (Artistic Director/Stage Director/Set, costumes)

Gueorgui (Giorgio) Lalov was born in Telesh, Bulgaria in June 1958. His father, "Lalo," a doctor, and his mother, Stoiyanka, an elementary school teacher and Bulgarian folk singer, were educated patrons of the arts. When Lalo Lalov died, Giorgio was only nine years old, but because he was an excellent student, he had the good fortune to be accepted at an elite boarding school in the capital city of Bulgaria, where all the lessons were taught in French. When he graduated from high school in 1976, he was fluent in French and English. That fall he entered the Bulgarian National Academy of Music and went on tour throughout Italy with a choir from the university. While in Milan, he auditioned for the famous International School for Young Opera Singers at La Scala, was accepted and went on to make his operatic debut at La Scala at the age of 25.

After living in Italy for a short time, Mr. Lalov became fluent in Italian. In 1986, while on tour with an opera company in France, he met Yves Josse, a former ballet dancer who was booking opera and ballet tours. They became business partners. Mr. Lalov had many resources: He spoke several languages, was able to organize the creation of sets and costumes in Bulgaria and put together an excellent orchestra and chorus. He also knew many fine opera singers in Bulgaria, central Europe, and the United States. By 1988, Messrs. Josse and Lalov were collaborating on what was to become the most successful opera touring company in Europe. At the time of Mr. Josse's death in 1995, Teatro Lirico presented over 250 performances a season throughout Europe.

In 1990, Mr. Lalov established the Sofia Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Winter 2000 marked Teatro's first major American tour. The reviews from the 10 consecutive tours Teatro Lirico D'Europa has completed thus far in the United States speak for the high quality and consistency of the company. The fact that the company is able to tour with many different productions is an indication of Mr. Lalov's hard work, excellent organizational skills and unfailing dedication to the art of opera. In spring 2009, the impresario became the artistic director of Baltimore Opera Theatre.

Synopsis of the Opera

ACT I.

Japan, early twentieth century. On a flowering terrace above Nagasaki harbor, U.S. Navy Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton inspects the house he has leased from a marriage broker, Goro, who has just procured him three servants and a geisha wife, Cio-Cio-San, known as Madama Butterfly. To the American consul, Sharpless, who arrives breathless from climbing the hill, Pinkerton describes the carefree philosophy of a sailor roaming the world in search of pleasure. At the moment, he is enchanted with the fragile Cio-Cio-San, but his 999-year marriage contract contains a monthly renewal option. When Sharpless warns that the girl may not take her vows so lightly, Pinkerton brushes aside such scruples, saying he will one day marry a "real" American wife. Cio-Cio-San is heard in the distance joyously singing of her wedding. Entering surrounded by friends, she tells Pinkerton how, when her family fell on hard times, she had to earn her living as a geisha. Her relatives bustle in, noisily expressing their opinions on the marriage. In a quiet moment, Cio-Cio-San shows her bridegroom her few earthly treasures and tells him of her intention to embrace his Christian faith. The Imperial Commissioner performs the wedding ceremony, and the guests toast the couple. The celebration is interrupted by Cio-Cio-San's uncle, a Buddhist priest, who bursts in cursing the girl for having renounced her ancestors' religion. Pinkerton angrily sends the guests away. Alone with Cio-Cio-San in the moonlit garden, he dries her tears, and she joins him in singing of their love.

ACT II.

Years later, Cio-Cio-San still waits for her husband's return. As Suzuki prays to her gods for aid, her mistress stands by the doorway with her eyes fixed on the harbor. When the maid shows her how little money is left, Cio-Cio-San urges her to have faith: one fine day Pinkerton's ship will appear on the horizon. Sharpless brings a letter from the lieutenant, but before he can read it to Cio-Cio-San, Goro comes with a suitor, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. The girl dismisses both marriage broker and prince, insisting her American husband has not deserted her. When they are alone, Sharpless again starts to read the letter and suggests Pinkerton may not return. Cio-Cio-San proudly carries forth her child, Sorrow, saying that as soon as Pinkerton knows he has a son he surely will come back; if he does not, she would rather die than return to her former life. Moved by her devotion, Sharpless leaves, without having revealed the full contents of the letter. Cio-Cio-San, on the point of despair, hears a cannon report; seizing a spyglass, she discovers Pinkerton's ship entering the harbor. Now delirious with joy, she orders Suzuki to help her fill the house with flowers. As night falls, Cio-Cio-San, Suzuki and the child begin their vigil.

ACT III.

As dawn breaks, Suzuki insists that Cio-Cio-San rest. Humming a lullaby to her child, she carries him to another room. Before long, Sharpless enters with Pinkerton, followed by Kate, his new wife. When Suzuki realizes who the American woman is, she collapses in despair but agrees to aid in breaking the news to her mistress. Pinkerton, seized with remorse, bids an anguished farewell to the scene of his former happiness, then rushes away. When Cio-Cio-San comes forth expecting to find him, she finds Kate instead. Guessing the truth, the shattered Cio-Cio-San agrees to give up her child if his father will return for him. Then, sending even Suzuki away, she takes out the dagger with which her father committed suicide and bows before a statue of Buddha, choosing to die with honor rather than live in disgrace. As she raises the blade, Suzuki pushes the child into the room. Sobbing farewell, Cio-Cio-San sends him into the garden to play, then stabs herself. As she dies, Pinkerton is heard calling her name.

The Origins of Madame Butterfly

By Javier Fuentes

The romantic period was a revolutionary cultural movement that broke away with many aesthetic expectations giving artists the power to freely express their emotions, imagination and individualism during most of the nineteenth century. The world of the inner mind sparked artists' interest in fantasy and brought the unconscious, the irrational, the world of dreams, the past, the far away and the long-ago to their creations. The French Revolution had given rise to nationalism and together with the romantic ideals of individuality it became an important political movement that in music used folk songs, dances, legends and each country's history to express a musical national language. But since the imagination has no boundaries, this fascination

with national identity instilled artistic minds with ideas of foreign lands. That attraction for things and places remote, picturesque and mysterious became a trend in their art known as exoticism.

People were leisurely traveling all over the world and sharing the experience of their explorations with the rest of the western world. The emergence of photography was showcased together with the greatest innovations of the 19th century in the first World's Fair, The Great Exhibition of 1851. The rise of the "Second British Empire" (1783 – 1815) began an exploration of the Pacific and this added to the exoticism and sensualism of the Victorian era. In 1854 Commodore Perry finalized his treaty with Japan and that became one of the last foreign places to be opened to the western culture.

"Japanisme" became a new fashion trend in the late 19th and early 20th century with Japanese gardens and interior design being much in vogue. A sense of romance and intrigue had become part of the common ideas about foreign countries and certain Japanese customs like mixed-bathing and Geisha-houses picked the erotic minds of western men with sensual fantasies of conquering Japanese girls.

In France Julien Viaud (1850 – 1923), better known as Pierre Loti, wrote the novel MADAME CHRYSANTHÈME in 1887. Loti had actually been in Japan engaged as a naval officer and understood the culture better than most writers of the time trying to portray Japanese culture in literature. The plot inspired André Messager (1853 – 1929) to write a *comédie lyrique* in 1893 that was successful for some time. Later in the 20th century curiosity led Sir Frederick Ashton (1904 – 1988) to choreograph a ballet based on this story in 1955 with music by Alan Rawsthorne (1905 – 1971).

Irvin and Jennie Correll were missionaries of the American Methodist Mission and in 1892 their mission took them to Nagasaki in Japan. Though Jennie was always very discreet about it, in 1895 she learned from a shopkeeper of some events that had happened more than twenty years before. One of three Scottish brothers, believed to be Alex Glover, had an affair with an entertainer called Kaga Maki who used Cho-San (Miss Butterfly) as a stage name in a local teahouse. The affair was considered a temporary marriage in those days for which the "bride" was usually paid 100 yen or 20 Mexican dollars, and the "husband" had the right to end the marriage at any time he desired. On December 8, 1870 the couple had a baby boy who was named Shinsaburo. The man abandoned both the woman and the child and left Japan. His brother Thomas and his wife Awajiya Tsuru claimed the boy and adopted him. Shinsaburo was renamed Tomisaburo, but was called Tom for short: Tom Glover. Kaga Maki married a Japanese man whom she later divorced and died in Nagasaki in 1906. Much later Jennie learned of Kaga Maki's death and about Tom Glover, but history has it that Tom finished his education at universities in Japan and the United States and went back to Nagasaki where he married a British merchant's daughter named Nakano Waka. During World War II Nakano Waka died and during the hard years after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and the subsequent surrender of Japan in 1945, Tom Glover committed suicide.

In 1897 Jennie Correll took a leave and stayed at her brother's place in Philadelphia where she shared Kaga Maki's story with her brother. John Luther Long (1861 – 1927) was a lawyer, but had aspirations to become a writer and seeing the potential of the story his sister had told him he began work on a short story. MADAME BUTTERFLY was published in the 1898 January edition of the CENTURY ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE and soon caught the eye of the American playwright David Belasco (1853 – 1931). Collaboration was made between Belasco and Long to turn the story into a play. Loti's MADAME CHRYSANTHÈME was used as a source of information to substantiate the story with cultural details and on March 5, 1900 the one act play debuted in New York at the Herald Square Theatre. The play was revised into a three-act version and brought to London by Belasco. This second version was staged at the Duke of York's Theatre only seven weeks after the premiere of the first version in New York and this time it was seen on the opening night by Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924) who was in London for the premiere of his Tosca in Covent Garden. Puccini couldn't fully understand the dialogue because of the language, but was so moved by the story that he rushed backstage to meet Belasco and state his desire to write an opera based on the play.

Puccini wrote five versions of MADAME BUTTERFLY with a libretto by Luigi Illica (1857 – 1919) and Giuseppe Giacosa (1847 – 1906). But the first version had a failed premiere at la Scala in 1904. Pietro Mascagni (1863 – 1945) had given Italian audiences in Rome a powerful image of Japan with his opera IRIS in 1898 and though history has given us no proof, it's believed that the premiere of MADAME BUTTERFLY was deliberately subverted by either the Sonzogno publisher, who was a rival of Ricordi, or by supporters of Mascagni who believed Puccini was trying to imitate Mascagni's success with IRIS. Unfortunately Illica's libretto for IRIS was dramatically weak because of its heavy use of symbolism and history was hard on it making it rarely performed nowadays.

Images, sounds and recreations of nature are found in almost all romantic creations and Butterfly is no exception. We get a glimpse of Butterfly in deep thought waiting for her lover all through the night; and the music makes a portrayal of the night, the rising Sun and the morning with its colors and sounds. Trying to portray nature as closely as possible, Puccini used sounds that resembled real birds and those in the audience who wanted to ruin the performance, found in that moment their chance to do so by answering the bird sounds with cats, dogs, cows and goat sounds. Composer and librettists immediately withdrew the opera from la Scala.

For a second version in Brescia (also in 1904) Puccini and his collaborators made many revisions and cuts to the score and libretto. A third version was made for the Metropolitan Opera in 1906 and revisions for a fourth version were made for performance in Paris in 1907. The Paris edition was revised for a fifth and final version that was published as the “standard version” of the opera. But in modern times curiosity has brought the original 1904 version to the stage and the recording studio as more people become intrigued by Puccini’s original vision of Cio-Cio-San.

The big screen brought MADAME BUTTERFLY several times to 20th century audiences. In 1932 Belasco’s play was filmed with Sylvia Sydney and Cary Grant. In 1955 a co-production between Italy and Japan brought the opera to the cinema. And in 1995 another film of the opera was directed by Frédéric Mitterand with Ying Huang and Richard Troxell as the leads.

The allure of Butterfly also inspired Claude-Michel Schönberg (born in 1944) and Alain Boublil (born in 1941) to write the musical MISS SAIGON. In 1988 a play was written by David Henry Hwang (born in 1957) entitled M. BUTTERFLY and in 1987 director Adrian Lyne made the movie FATAL ATTRACTION in which a woman with borderline personality disorder is obsessed with a married man and Puccini’s opera and even commits suicide while listening to the opera on an alternate ending.

MADAME BUTTERFLY has survived the test of time through an entire century being the most performed opera in the United States and one of the top five in the rest of the world. Audiences seem never to get tired of her and opera companies could not survive without her. Her secret might be her power to have people identify with her feelings. The entire opera is set from her point of view and the audience can do nothing but sit and watch her suffer knowing what is really happening and not being able to help or advise her. It’s a real person’s life with everyday problems and hopes of a better life and true love. The drama is accompanied by one of the most gorgeous musical scores ever composed with authentic national themes such as THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER (American national anthem), the KIMIGAYO (Japanese national anthem) and other original Japanese themes like the MIYASAMA, more familiar in Gilbert and Sullivan’s THE MIKADO, that give even more authenticity to the story. This is an enduring and audacious woman of whom we’ll hear of for many years. And we’re happy we will.

About Teatro Lirico D’Europa

Teatro Lirico D’Europa was created in 1988 by the late Yves Josse, a former ballet divo and brilliant French arts promoter, and Giorgio Lalov, a young Bulgarian opera singer who made his debut at Teatro alla Scala, Milan, at the age of 25 while participating in Scala’s famous international training program for young singers. The collaboration between Josse and Lalov was a huge success in a very short time, resulting in tours with over 250 performances a season throughout France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Sicily, and Portugal including performances for Opera Dijon, performances at Salle Pleyel in Paris, Okinawa Performing Arts Center, Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Theatre Carre in Amsterdam, Congresshaus in Zurich, Theatre Trinite in Lisbon, Teatro Atlantida in Barcelona, Salida de La Compania in Madrid, Teatro Cervantes, Madrid, Teatro Bueno Vallejo, Madrid, Teatro Lope de Vega in Seville, Le Cirque Royale in Brussels and L’Atrium Theatre on the Island of Martinique. Lalov created the sets and costumes for the productions and organized the chorus and orchestra in Bulgaria. He drew soloists for the productions from a huge reservoir of operatic talent in Bulgaria, central Europe and the USA. Josse booked the performances for the company from his office in Paris. From the very beginning, the company established itself as highly competent in delivering traditional, full-scale productions featuring a large orchestra and chorus, and professional opera singers who performed at the top national theatres in their native countries. The unusual chemistry of the company proved to be very popular with European audiences. Teatro Lirico D’Europa had completed over 2000 performances worldwide at the time of Josse’s passing in 1995.

1995 marked a new beginning for Teatro Lirico D’Europa with the birth of Lalov’s American son. Lalov shifted his focus from touring in Europe, to touring in the USA Teatro Lirico D’Europa had developed a firm history of success with a huge portfolio of hundreds of rave reviews for full scale opera productions that had been presented all over Europe at 180 different venues including Italian summer festivals such as Festival Busetto, Festival San Giovanni Valdarno, and open air festivals in Spello, Montecatini Terme, Siena, Chianciano Terme, Cortona, Padova and Aimini. The company also had a fine collection of outstanding, professionally mastered live CD recordings. Lalov’s wife, Jenny Kelly, organized the materials and began to

make offers to theaters in the US. By winter 2000, she had booked the first major American tour for the company. The response to the debut tour from both press and theater management was very positive indeed. The popular company has completed 11 consecutive USA tours with over 600 performances at 107 different venues including performances for 9 American regional opera companies who have presented Teatro Lirico's production on their seasons of opera numerous times. The February 2002 issue of OPERA NEWS presented a 4-page article on Teatro Lirico D'Europa written by former BOSTON GLOBE opera critic Richard Dyer that stated:

"In the past couple of years the company has presented TURANDOT, AIDA and NABUCCO in Boston. The physical productions and Lalov's stagings were reassuringly traditional. Lalov's stagings tell the story clearly. The solo and ensemble singing in all three operas was lusty, whole hearted-full throated and honest. Something personal and passionate that is often missing from evenings of opera." OPERA NEWS - Richard Dyer – Feb. 2002

Teatro Lirico D'Europa embarks on its 12th consecutive season of US tours in Fall 2010 - Winter/Spring 2011 with 70 performances of 4 different full-scale operas: Puccini's TOSCA, Puccini's MADAMA BUTETRFLY, Puccini's TURANDOT and Donizetti's LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR. The company will resume it's European touring during season 2011-12 after its American tours.