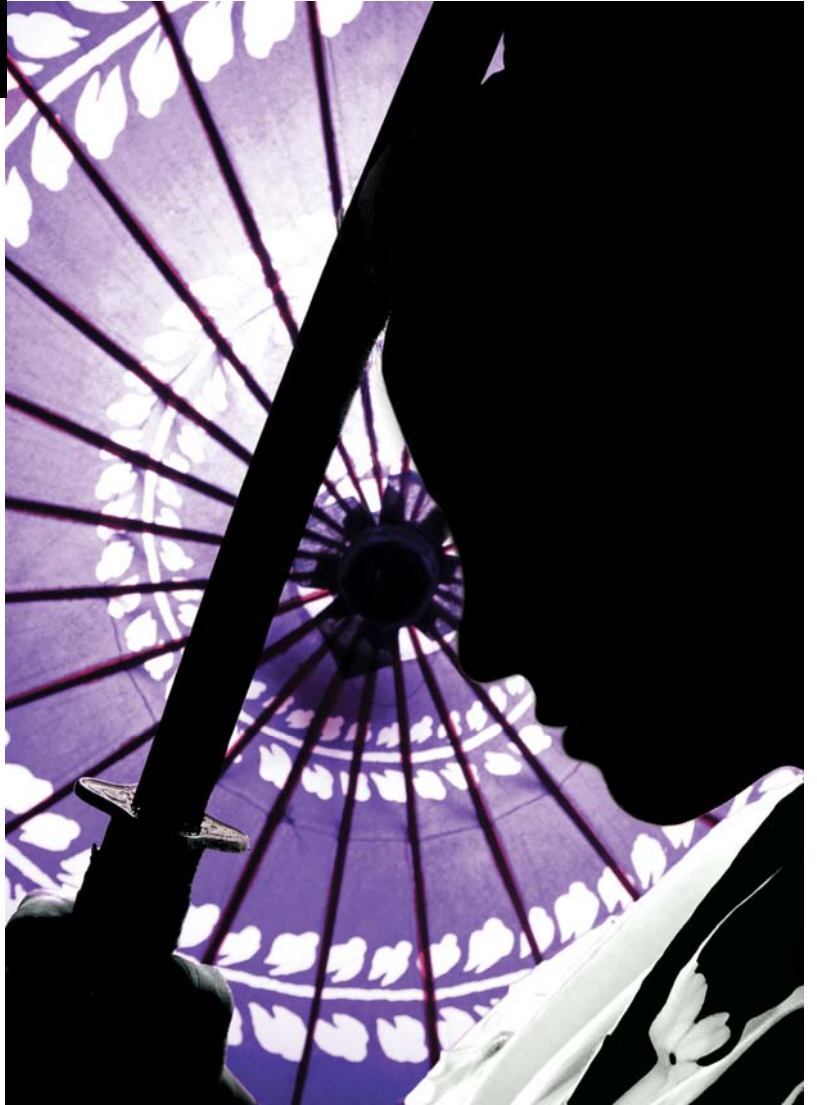


• • • MADAMA BUTTERFLY • • •

by Giacomo Puccini

Puccini was fascinated by Japanese culture; it seemed quite exotic to the Europeans of 1900. After seeing David Belasco's play, *Madame Butterfly* which was allegedly based on a true story, Puccini decided to make it an opera. He always preferred to create musical stories about real people, or at least people who might have been real. When *Butterfly* premiered in 1904, it was a contemporary tale – comparable to today's "ripped from the headlines" TV movies. The opera follows the rise and fall of the marriage between a vulnerable Japanese geisha, Cio-Cio-San (pronounced *cho cho sawn*), and her disengaged American husband, Naval officer Lt. Pinkerton. The dynamics of love, betrayal and honor unfold to reveal a tragically romantic story.



THE CHARACTERS:

Cio-Cio-San (Madama Butterfly) – a teenage geisha. She comes from a noble family that is currently poor and in disgrace with the emperor. Her father was forced to commit ritual *seppuku* (see *East Collides with West* on page 10) and Cio-Cio-San must work for a living.

Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton – a U. S. naval lieutenant stationed in Japan

Suzuki – Cio-Cio-San's servant and companion

Mr. Sharpless – the American consul, a diplomat stationed in Japan

Goro – a Japanese marriage broker – he arranges the marriage between Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton

The Bonze – a Buddhist priest and Cio-Cio-San's uncle

Prince Yamadori – a Japanese prince who wishes to marry Cio-Cio-San after Pinkerton has left her

Kate Pinkerton – Pinkerton's American wife

Dolore (Sorrow) – Cio-Cio-San's child – the Pinkertons want to adopt him

*"...my Butterfly remains what it is:
the most deeply felt and imaginative
opera I have conceived."*

— Puccini

CAST

Butterfly: Yunah Lee
Pinkerton: Chad Shelton
Suzuki: Mika Shigamatsu
Sharpless: Grant Youngblood



Conductor: Matthew Halls
Director: Catherine Malfitano

A return of the popular 2005 production.
Performed in Italian with English supertitles.

PERFORMANCE DATES:

June 26
July 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 24, 27, 30
August 1, 7

Opera Notes - Free pre-performance preview in
Williams Stables at 1:50 and 7:15 pm.

Nina Odescalchi Kelly Family Matinee: July 27

MEET GIACOMO PUCCINI

COMPOSER OF *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*

BY S. KAY HOKE

Giacomo Puccini was born on December 22, 1858, in Lucca, Italy to a musical family. For three generations the men had been composers and organists, and he was expected to follow the family tradition. As a child, he studied organ with his uncle, who would kick his shins if he made a mistake. (It is said that as an adult Puccini still jerked his leg unconsciously whenever he heard wrong notes.) He played the organ in local churches starting at age 14, though his real passion was for the opera. At 17 he began composing organ pieces which, to the surprise of listeners, were often laced with melodies from *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore*—popular operas of the day by Giuseppe Verdi. In 1876, another of Verdi's operas, *Aida*, was performed in nearby Pisa. Puccini had no money for either a ticket or train fare, so he and two friends walked 19 kilometers to the theater and gained entrance by claiming to have an important letter for the manager. *Aida* “opened a musical window” for the young Puccini; he decided to compose operas as a profession. In 1880, he began studies at the Milan Conservatory.

Puccini wrote his first opera, *Le Villi*, for a competition in 1882. He did not even garner an honorable mention in the contest but his opera was brought to the attention of the publisher Giulio Ricordi, with whom he would have a lifelong association. Ricordi arranged for the successful premiere of *Le Villi* and commissioned another opera, *Edgar*. The new opera was not a success even after a number of revisions, and with the exception of one aria, is rarely heard today. While working on *Edgar*, Puccini met Elvira Gemignani, the wife of one of his friends. They soon grew very close, and eventually Elvira left her husband and small child to live with Puccini. Elvira's husband would not grant her a divorce. Only after his death in 1904 were she and Puccini able to marry.



Manon Lescaut, Puccini's first and greatest international operatic success in 1893, inspired George Bernard Shaw to proclaim the composer “the heir of Verdi.” By this time, too, he was prosperous enough to purchase a house at Torre del Lago where he would live and write until 1921. The next opera, *La bohème*, considered by many to be his artistic masterwork, was followed by the tremendously successful *Tosca* in 1900.

In the summer of 1900, when Puccini was in London to attend a performance of *Tosca*, he saw a one-act play by David Belasco. This adaptation of a short story by Philadelphia attorney John Luther Long was entitled *Madame Butterfly*. Though he understood little of the English dialogue, Puccini was so struck by the heroine's character that he decided he wanted to adapt the story for an opera. The work's premiere at La Scala in 1904 was a fiasco, due in part to flaws in the opera and in part to an operatic clique hired by Puccini's rivals and planted in the audience. Their catcalls and rude comments stirred the whole audience to join in laughing at the performance. Following this disaster Puccini made significant revisions and three months later the opera played in Brescia to clamorous applause.

Puccini went on to write *La Fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*) in 1910, also based on a play by Belasco, *Il Trittico* (*The Triptych*), and *La Rondine*. In 1923, while working on what was to be his last opera, *Turandot*, he began complaining of pains in his throat. The following year he was diagnosed with cancer and died within months, on November 29, 1924. All Italy mourned his death and hailed him as the greatest Italian composer since Verdi. Puccini was buried at his home in Torre del Lago.

East Collides with West

Japanese Butterfly vs. American Sailor

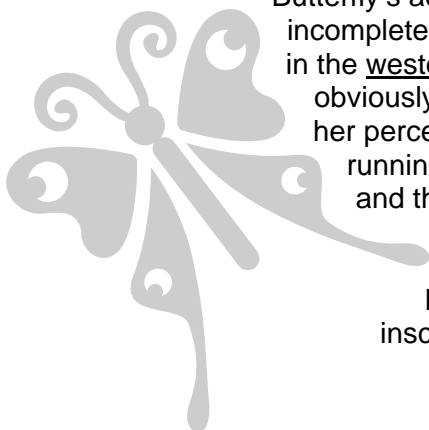
Giacomo Puccini was not only a brilliant composer, but a showman as well. His creation of *Madama Butterfly* coincided with the utter fascination of Europeans and Americans with the trappings of Japanese culture, thus assuring a huge hit (notwithstanding the unexpected flop of its La Scala opening in 1904).

Puccini himself had been fascinated by a one-act play in London in 1900 (Belasco's *Madame Butterfly*) which delved a bit deeper into real Japanese culture than Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado* or several other now-forgotten operettas and light plays had done. Puccini decided to take that story even more profoundly into reality by further developing the character of Cio-Cio San. In Belasco's play, Butterfly speaks broken pidgin English, making her seem childish and unschooled, but Puccini's Butterfly is completely articulate and other aspects of her character are finely drawn: her eagerness to leave the despised life of a Geisha, even renouncing her religion and losing the regard of her family; her deep sense of honor and duty; and her complete vulnerability.

Sharpless, the American Consul, has some understanding of Japanese culture and its foundations, and warns Pinkerton not to do damage to Butterfly's tender spirit. But Pinkerton, the American sailor, is only aware of the possible benefits afforded to him as a result of this "foreign" culture. A temporary wife with no legal strings attached and a similar rental agreement for a house and servants are the appealing factors to him. Puccini and his librettists humanized him slightly by giving him glorious music and having him profess an actual fondness for his "little butterfly" and show some remorse at the end, knowing he has ruined her life; but he ultimately represents the typical western belief (in 1904) that his country's culture is superior and supersedes that of the land in which he is a visitor.

By the end of the 19th century, the Samurai tradition, or Bushido, was deeply entrenched in Japanese culture. Bushido is the code of honor developed by the Samurai warrior class over hundreds of years, based on both Zen and Confucian ideals. While fostering the ideals of benevolence, duty (to family and to one's warlord) and martial skill, this moral code also generated the tradition of *seppuku*, or ritual suicide. If one were unable to fulfill his duty to his lord or family, the lord could demand *seppuku*, or one could choose it as an honorable death. We are given to understand in the opera that Butterfly's father was sent a dagger from the Mikado, his lord, with the message to "do your duty." Although this is historically unlikely since *seppuku* had been officially banned in Japan for 200 years and the Samurai class itself had been abolished in 1871, yet it has dramatic impact. And the fact is that acts of *seppuku* were documented up until 1970 and suicide is still considered to be an honorable death by many Japanese.

Butterfly's actions are based partly on her family's Samurai tradition, and partly on her incomplete understanding of western culture. She assumes that Pinkerton is marrying her in the western tradition – till death do us part - and acts accordingly, even after he has obviously deserted her. In this way she shows her sense of duty; she must be faithful to her perceived western marriage even though her husband has left her and her money is running out. She angrily refuses to consider the possibility of Japanese-style divorce and the offer of a Japanese marriage. When she discovers Pinkerton's faithlessness, she believes her only honorable recourse is *seppuku*, removing herself so that Pinkerton and his American wife can live their lives and raise Pinkerton's son – with honor. As she unsheathes the dagger, she reads its inscription: "Die with honor when one can no longer live with honor."



Character Spotlight:

MADAMA BUTTERFLY'S LIEUTENANT PINKERTON

Chad Shelton

The *Opera Insider* caught up with Chad Shelton, who returns this season as Lieutenant Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*.

You have performed many roles, such as Pinkerton, more than once for different opera companies. What is it like to do the same role in different productions? How do you prepare for a repeat role?



Actually, this is my first time to sing Pinkerton IN ITALIAN! I've only sung it twice, so I feel almost as if this were a debut role for me. The language obviously changes the way I sing it. Plus, I'm so excited that I will get to work with Catherine Malfitano. I've worked with her as a singer a couple of times, but this is a really great opportunity for us singers to see her create in a new vehicle (as a *director*). I can't wait to pick her brain, not only about Pinkerton, but some other characters too.

You performed the role of Laurie in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* for Central City Opera, a role you had created with Houston Grand Opera which was recorded for commercial release on the Ondine label and later telecast on PBS. What do you think of having your voice and characterization memorialized in this way?

I am very lucky to have been the only tenor in the Houston Grand Opera Studio, when this project was first performed. They basically had to give it to me. I remember when it was broadcast on PBS, I was in NYC, and Danny Belcher (baritone) and I went to Gayletha's (*Nichols, head of the Opera Studio at the time*) apartment to watch. We were very excited and enjoyed the evening. Now, looking back, almost 10 years later, I feel like I was a child then. I was so excited when Central City

decided to produce the piece; it was my first time back to Central as a "guest" artist; what a summer!

You have performed in standard operas like *Madama Butterfly* and *La Traviata* but you have also performed in modern operas such as Philip Glass' *Appomattox*, Adamo's *Little Women* and Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What is different in your approach to the role, music and performance of new operas versus the traditional standard repertoire?

I think standard roles are harder to perform – mostly because of the recording industry. Everyone that comes to see/hear *Madama Butterfly*, will probably have been listening to their favorite recording for a few weeks ahead, refreshing their memory of the piece and to live up to those standards is difficult. For me, there is not a difference in how I "sing" the different types of music.

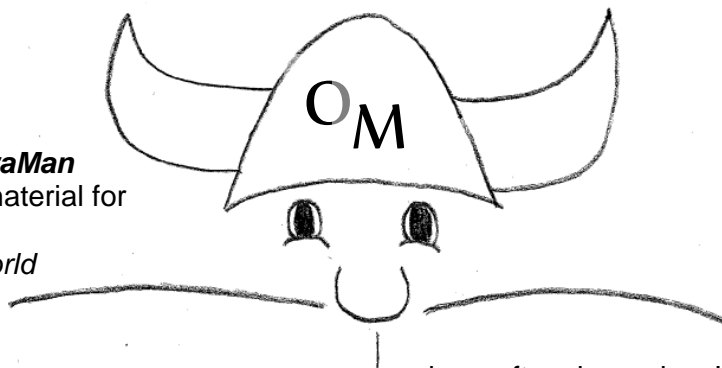
Your three older brothers work in construction; how did you end up in opera? Do your brothers attend your opera performances and what is their reaction to your performances?

HA!! My brothers have all seen me perform a couple of times. They seem to enjoy it, but I honestly doubt they would ever become "patrons" of the Arts! When I first started to sing for a living, they really didn't have a clue as to what I did. They have come to understand how hard it is to work as a singer, especially now, in this economy. They do appreciate it more, for sure!

You are married and have a son; how do you balance your busy schedule as an opera singer and your personal life off the stage?

I'm very fortunate to be married to Ana Maria Martinez, one of the best sopranos in the world. So, she understands all the demands of our jobs. She's very supportive and is always happy to hear about new jobs and opportunities. Our Son, Lucas, is 3. Soon he'll be starting school and that is when the difficulties will arise. I must admit, thanks to SKYPE, I get to see Lucas a lot more often than singing fathers did in the past.

This issue of **Dear OperaMan** focuses on the source material for *Madama Butterfly* and *Orpheus in the Underworld*



Dear OperaMan,
How did Puccini – an Italian composer – come to write an opera about an English play about a Japanese geisha? Was there a real Madama Butterfly?- Inquiringmind from Denver, CO

Dear Inquiringmind,
Giacomo Puccini can be considered the last master composer of the Italian opera tradition, coming on the heels of Giuseppe Verdi. Puccini reveled in the themes of simple ordinary people entangled in emotion and passion. He identified himself with *verismo* or Realism and was a constant seeker of librettos dealing with elevated passions and extreme emotions, and many of them included beautiful and strong women. In 1900 he discovered the Belasco-Long play *Madame Butterfly* when the play was performed in London. Even though he did not fully understand English, Puccini was enthralled by the dramatic story and the dilemma of the female heroine. Puccini begged Belasco for the rights to turn the play into an opera and 4 years later it premiered at La Scala in Milan.

But where did Belasco discover the story and was there a real Madame Butterfly? In 1543, two Portuguese men sailed off course and landed on an island in Japan. The lord of the island offered his daughter to them in exchange for their technical assistance in copying their swords with which he was impressed. This first trip by European travelers to the exotic and thrilling land of Japan set in place trading posts in East Asia and continued the practice of Japanese girls being purchased, or acquired by European traders for a temporary time, only to be sent back to their families later. However, in 1639, the Shogun of Japan closed the country to all outsiders and it remained closed for over 200 years. After Commodore Matthew Perry reopened relations with Japan in 1854, all of Europe became fascinated by the unfamiliar Japanese culture. In 1885, the French author Pierre Loti documented his marriage to a young Japanese girl of “The Garden of the Flowers” named “Madame Chrysantheme” whom he left on the

shore after six weeks. In 1898, John Luther Long published a short story, “Madame Butterfly,” supposedly recounting a particular marriage event in Japan as told to him by his missionary sister. His sister’s story would be amplified by Long and the playwright Belasco, becoming the play Puccini saw in London. Whether or not the story is factual is still debated, but the events taking place in Japan in 1543 and again in the 1880s, would suggest the possibility of a real story about Cio-Cio-San or Madama Butterfly.

Dear OperaMan,
The story of Orpheus in the Underworld is not what I studied in my Greek mythology class; what are the similarities and differences between the myth and the opera?– musicgirl from Denver, CO

Dear musicgirl,
The Greek mythology supporting Offenbach’s operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld* centers on Orpheus, the beloved son of the god Apollo. Orpheus was given a golden lyre and taught to play by Apollo and to make verses for singing by his mother, the muse Calliope. Orpheus would become the greatest musician, charming all living things, even birds, beasts and trees. After traveling with the great adventurers Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, Orpheus fell in love with a beautiful woman named Eurydice. On the day of their wedding, Eurydice was walking in a field and was bitten by a poisonous snake and suddenly died. Orpheus, heartbroken, decided to go to Hades to plead for his wife even though no living mortals were allowed to enter the underworld. Orpheus stood at the gate of Hades playing his lyre and inspired the ferryman to give him a ride across the river Styx. Orpheus continued to play his music about his lost wife, thus calming the dead spirits, the three-headed dog guarding Hades, and even the black stallions of Pluto’s chariot. Once before Pluto, the King of Hades, Orpheus pleaded his case and Pluto agreed to let Orpheus have his wife back, but only if he could resist looking back at her

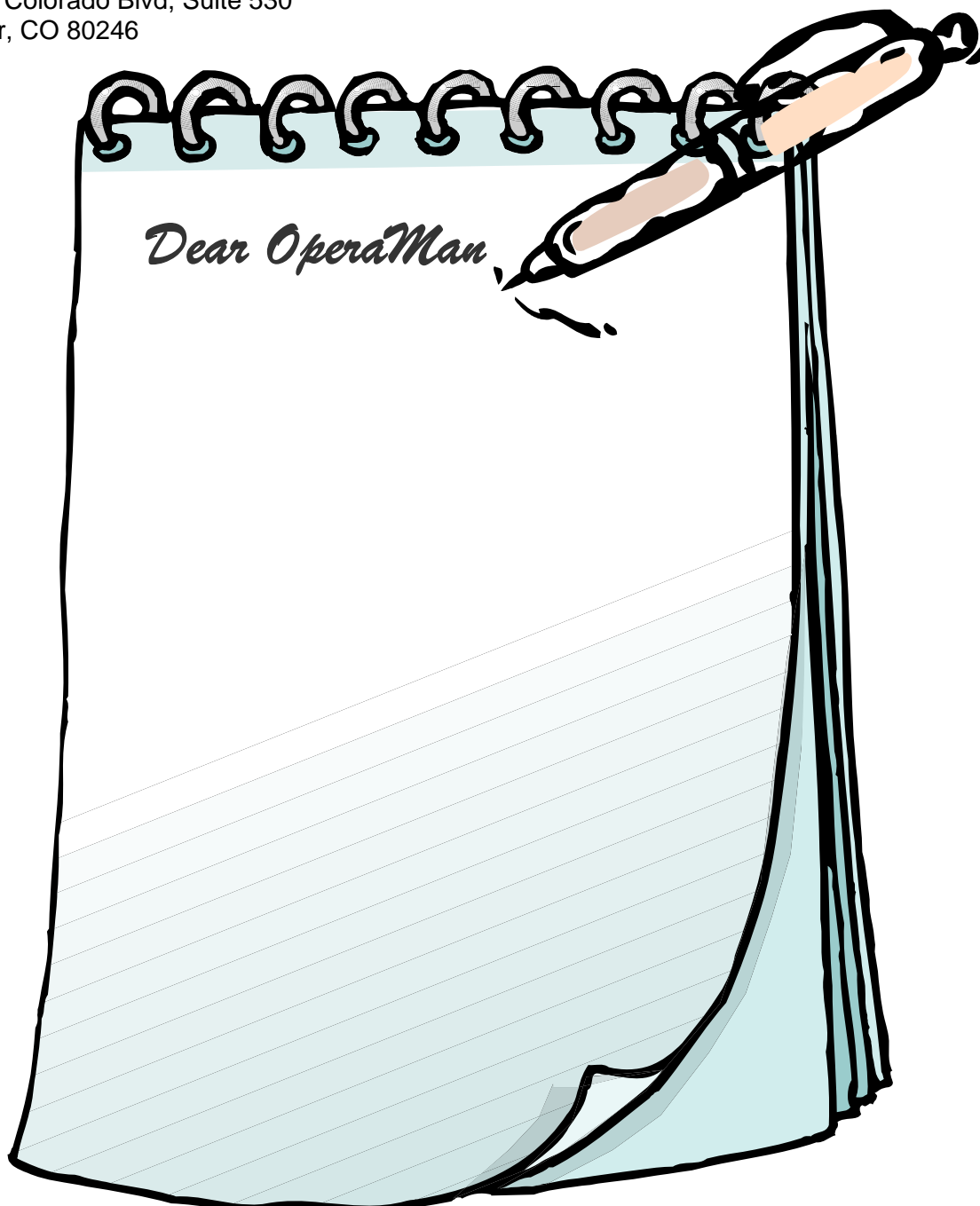
until they reached the land of the living, the Overworld. As Orpheus and Eurydice approached the opening to the Overworld, he turned and looked at his wife but as soon as he did, she began to fade. They would remain separated until his death when he would join her in the Underworld.

The similarities between the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and *Orpheus in the Underworld* include the names of the characters, Eurydice being bitten by a snake, Orpheus' descent to Hades to get

Eurydice back from Pluto, and Orpheus looking back at her as they try to go back to the Overworld. However, these are the only points of the myth that make up the loose structure for Offenbach's operetta. Instead of a tragic, heartfelt story of two lovers, it is a satirical, often funny story of a love-triangle between mortals and gods. While Offenbach's operetta may not be the story you heard in your Greek mythology class, you will be entertained throughout, especially by the joyous 'Can-can' at the end.

Do you have a question for OperaMan? Send him a letter!

Dear OperaMan
400 S. Colorado Blvd, Suite 530
Denver, CO 80246



Take advantage of the many

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

during the Summer Festival!

Opera Notes – Free previews before every performance at 1:50 p.m. or 7:15 p.m. in Williams Stables

Opera à la Carte – Staged scenes from beloved operas performed by members of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Artists Training Program. Select dates at 1:15 p.m. in Williams Stables, prior to matinees. Tickets \$12 (\$8 for season subscribers)

NEW!

Signor Deluso – Based on Moliere’s play *Sganarelle*, the comic opera *Signor Deluso* by Thomas Pasatieri follows two couples who suspect their true loves are having affairs. Directed by Central City Opera Artistic Director Emeritus, John Moriarty. Select dates at 1:15 p.m. Tickets \$12 (\$8 for subscribers)

The Face on the Barroom Floor – This 30-minute cabaret opera retells the legend of the famous painting on the Teller House Bar floor. Select dates at 1:15 p.m. Tickets \$12 (\$8 for subscribers)

Salon Recitals – An intimate performance by a young artist in the Teller House Salon. Select Saturdays and Sundays at 12:30 in the Teller House. Tickets \$20

The Nina Odescalchi Kelly Family Matinees – Opera lovers of all ages will enjoy these full-length productions with “what-to-listen-for” introductions and post-performance autograph sessions.

Madama Butterfly – Tuesday, July 27 at 2:30 p.m.

Orpheus in the Underworld – Tuesday, August 3 at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets \$15 for children ages 6-18, \$20 for adults

Take a Child to the Opera – Enhance your Family Matinee experience! Enjoy lunch with opera singers and activities surrounding each Family Matinee. Price includes ticket and picnic lunch. Sponsored by the Central City Opera House Association Guild. Tickets \$32 for children ages 6-18, \$37 for accompanying adults

Summer Performing Arts Intensive – July 10-24

In collaboration with Central City Opera, the Colorado Springs Conservatory offers a two-week intensive for students ages 14-19 that includes immersion studies in drama, opera and musical theater. Students ages 14-19 are in residence for 10 days in Colorado Springs and then move to Central City where they will attend Festival productions, participate in coachings and classes, and perform their own scenes program for a public audience in Williams Stables. For further information, call the Central City Opera Education & Community Programs Department at 303.331.7026 or Colorado Springs Conservatory at 719.577.4556.

Public performances July 23rd & 24th at 8:15 p.m.

Tickets \$5.



Students of the 2009 Performing Arts Intensive. Photo by Erin Joy Swank

For tickets to these events visit
www.centralcityopera.org
or call the Central City Opera
Box Office at 303.292.6700

RESOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

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Loti, Pierre. Madame Chrysantheme. Project Gutenberg, 2009. 5 May. 2010.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3995/3995-h/3995-h.htm>

Van Rij, Jan. Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, and the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San. Berkley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.

ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

<http://www.hipark.austin.isd.tenet.edu/mythology/orpheus.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Offenbach

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orpheus_in_the_Underworld

THREE DECEMBERS

<http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc72.html>

<http://www.fanfaire.com/Heggie/interview.htm>

MISCELLANY

Music & Math - <http://cnx.org/content/m10945/latest/>

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BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Check out the Central City Opera Education and Community Programs available during the REST of the year!

Mozart & Company, for **elementary** students, introduces the basics of opera – song, story, costumes and props – in arias and short vignettes. Study guide provided in advance.



Opera Alive! for **3rd through 12th grades**, provides extended artist residencies for students to engage in performing and creating musical stories.



The Great Opera Mix-Up, also for **elementary** students, invites student participation in a mini-opera to provide a deeper acquaintance with story and character. Study guide provided in advance.



Music!Words!Opera!, a 5-day workshop for **K-12 teachers** intending to enroll their schools in *Opera Alive!*, prepares teachers for incorporating opera music and stories into curriculum. Free to teachers. Graduate or Continuing Education Credits available.



How the West Was Sung, for **upper elementary and middle school** students, establishes the historical contexts for opera as popular entertainment in the days before iPod and DVD and brings Colorado historical characters to life. Study guide provided in advance.



Performing Arts Intensive, a two-week summer program in collaboration with the Colorado Springs Conservatory. The Conservatory provides two weeks of instruction and preparation of opera and theatrical scenes for students **ages 14-19**. The group comes to Central City for an intensive four-day experience including attendance at festival operas, workshops and master classes taught by Festival artists and staff, tours and a culminating performance of the students' scenes program in Williams Stables.



En Mis Palabras (In My Own Words), for **middle and high school** students. A bilingual Spanish and English opera follows a 15-year-old girl trying to balance the conflicting influences of her Mexican family cultural traditions and her peer community. Bilingual study guides provided in advance.



Opera on the Go, for **all ages** features arias and scenes from operas and musical theater staged with costumes, props, and musical accompaniment.



Family Matinees, for children **ages 6 to 18** and their companion adults, are special performances of Festival repertoire operas (performed by participants in the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Artist Training Program) with tickets at significantly discounted prices.



Opera in the Rockies, touring program, presents community performances and in-school programs in communities throughout the Rocky Mountain region.



Concerts for family audiences – **Smooth OPERA**tor and **Love Notes** are available for booking by area concert venues and recreation districts.



Visit www.centralcityopera.org/education for more information. To schedule an event or program contact the Education and Community Programs office: 303-331-7026 or education@centralcityopera.org