

MADAME BUTTERFLY



Interactive Resource Guide
Access Opera Final Dress Rehearsal
April 23, 2025 | 7 PM



OPERA
SAN ANTONIO

AUSTIN OPERA

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Welcome to the Interactive Resource Guide for Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*!

We are delighted to present this exploration of one of opera's most cherished masterpieces. Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* tells the poignant story of a young Japanese woman's unwavering love and the heartbreaking consequences of betrayed trust. With Puccini's lush score and riveting themes, this opera continues to captivate audiences worldwide.

As this is a collaborative production between Austin Opera and OPERA San Antonio, both companies are thrilled to share this TEKS-aligned resource to enrich your experience. Inside this guide, you and your students will find:

- Exclusive insights from cast and creative team members
- Music lessons diving into Puccini's artistry
- Historical context and cultural discussions
- Engaging activities, including an origami craft

And much more!

This guide is designed to deepen your understanding and appreciation of the opera, whether you are a newcomer or a lifelong fan. Prepare to be inspired before attending a performance at The Tobin Center in San Antonio or the Long Center in Austin.

Thank you for joining us on this musical journey. We look forward to seeing you at the opera!

Warm regards,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Andréa Ochoa' and the signature on the right is 'Madeline Elizondo'.

Andréa Ochoa & Madeline Elizondo

About the Companies

Austin Opera, voted “Opera Company of the Year” for 2020 in a national BroadwayWorld.com poll, engages 35,000 community members annually through three mainstage productions, as well as a diverse slate of community and educational programming.

Serving Central Texas since 1986, Austin Opera inspires audiences with its trademark blend of innovation and artistic excellence. With the leadership of General Director & CEO Annie Burridge and the Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director Timothy Myers, Austin Opera presents a curated season of grand opera productions at the Long Center, the crown jewel of Austin performing arts venues. Combining the finest American

and international stars with the outstanding local talent of our Orchestra and Chorus, Austin Opera’s productions include accessible takes on classic operas as well as challenging new works that reinforce the continuing relevance of opera.

Austin Opera is also a force in hundreds of classrooms across Central Texas, nurturing the next generation of opera audiences through its award-winning education programs. We work directly with educators, community leaders, students, and parents to make opera relevant, educational, and entertaining for students of all ages, offering much of our [educational content online for free](#).

[TO READ OUR MISSION AND INCLUSION STATEMENTS, CLICK HERE.](#)

Founded in 2010, **OPERA San Antonio** has become a vibrant cornerstone of the city’s cultural scene. Under the leadership of E. Loren Meeker as General & Artistic Director and Francesco Milioto as Music Director since 2020, the company brings two world-class opera productions to life each season at The Tobin Center. These performances which showcase operatic masterpieces and contemporary operas, unite acclaimed international and national artists, celebrated local voices, and The Orchestra San Antonio, creating unforgettable experiences that resonate with audiences of all ages.

OPERA San Antonio’s mission is to produce opera of uncompromising artistic quality and to enrich our community through educational outreach and social engagement. Programs include *Explore Opera for Kids!* in partnership with the Opera Guild of San Antonio and the San Antonio Public Library system; *Behind the Scenes*, which provides students with access to discussions with the creative team and

invitations to attend productions free of charge at The Tobin Center; *OPERA in Schools*, a program offering 20-50 minute interactive presentations for K-12 students; and a summer Young Artist Program in collaboration with the Classical Music Institute offering training for artists at all levels. The company is dedicated to preserving and sharing opera as a relevant, inspirational, and accessible art form for residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds. The civic premise of OPERA San Antonio is that the community needs, and the citizens deserve, access to the major performing arts.

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary Season, OPERA San Antonio explores themes of love divided by cultures as viewed through both contemporary and historical lenses. The season began with *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, a collaboration with Mariachi Campanas de America, which told the story of a Mexican-American family spanning three generations. The season concludes with Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. Both productions are linked by the symbol of the butterfly,

PLEASE VISIT THE OPERA SAN ANTONIO [WEBSITE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Disclaimer/Suicide prevention note

Madama Butterfly contains scenes that some viewers may find disturbing, including the depiction of a suicide. If you or anyone you know is suffering from thoughts of depression or suicide, call or text 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Teens can call or text 1-800-989-6884 for free, confidential, 24-hour help.

Austin Opera and OPERA San Antonio have rated this opera PG-13, and recommend the production for ages 12+.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Whether it's your first time at the opera, or you've been more times than you can count, these tips and tricks for your visit will help you feel comfortable and help the evening run smoothly.

Final Dress Rehearsal

Because this is a final dress rehearsal, there will still be elements of the production that are in process. There may be stopping to fix mistakes, or singers "marking," which means singing lightly to save their voices. There will also be a tech table in the middle of the audience where the production team, including the director, costume, lighting, and set designers, are working hard to make sure all of the finishing details are in place.

Be quiet and courteous

Be quiet and courteous to the actors on stage. Since a night at the opera is a live theater experience, things work a little differently than they would at a movie theater or school assembly. Since there are singers on stage actively working, our audience needs to be as respectful as possible.

Applaud after arias

Let the singers know that you love the work they're doing.

You can say "bravo" for men, "brava" for women, and "bravi" for a group!

How will I know what is going on?

No need to worry if you don't know the language of the opera. There will be a highly visible screen with "supertitles" that provide a complete translation of the words being sung. The experience of watching an opera has been truly transformed by making it possible for everyone to follow the story.

Dress like yourself

Whether you wear that dress or suit you've been saving for a special occasion, or you're more comfortable going out in jeans or basketball shorts, dress like yourself at the opera!

And finally... **Have fun!**



TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills

§117.32. Music, Grade 6, Adopted 2013.

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Foundations: music literacy. The student describes and analyzes music and musical sound. The student is expected to:

(B) “describe tonal and rhythmic musical elements using standard terminology such as instrumentation, voicing, intervals, solfège, or absolute note names;”

(2) Foundations: music literacy. The student reads and writes music notation using an established system for rhythm and melody. The student is expected to:

(B) “notate meter, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics using standard symbols in a handwritten or computer-generated format;”

(3) Creative expression. The student performs a varied repertoire of developmentally appropriate music in informal or formal settings. The student is expected to:

(A) “sing or play instruments independently and in groups;”

(C) “perform music in various meters, keys, and modes;”

(5) Historical and cultural relevance. The student examines music in relation to history and cultures. The student is expected to:

(B) “describe written and aurally presented music representative of diverse cultures;”

Fine Arts – Music Studies (§117.317)

(c)(4)(C): “evaluate the use of music to evoke ideas and emotions, including the use of association of musical styles and genres with different social, political, and economic groups.”

(c)(5)(A): “compare and contrast music by genre, style, culture, and historical period.”

(c)(5)(C): “identify and explore the relationships between music and societal movements and issues, including the relationship between music and events in history.”

Social Studies – World History Studies (§113.43)

(c)(26)(A): “identify significant examples of art and architecture that demonstrate an artistic ideal or visual principle from selected cultures.”

(c)(26)(C): “explain the relationships that exist between societies and their architecture, art, music, and literature.”

English Language Arts and Reading – English IV (§110.39)

(c)(5)(A): “analyze how themes are developed through characterization and plot, including how characters’ motivations and behaviors influence events.”

(c)(6)(C): “evaluate how the author’s use of language informs and shapes the perception of readers.”

(c)(7)(B): “analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different media and determine how the techniques differ.”



What is Opera?

For many of us, the word opera conjures up pictures of women singing in Viking helmets or—let’s be real—the over-the-top drama of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd cartoons. Well, to be honest, those cartoons aren’t that far off. Operas are supposed to be dramatic! But what is opera, actually?

The word “opera” comes from the Latin word for “work,” and that’s what it is—all of the arts (music, singing, acting, movement, and design) combined to give you larger-than-life characters and dramatic situations in fantastic locations. (It’s like TikTok but live!)

Opera as we know it today began in 16th Century Italy, when musicians, scholars, and philosophers got together to try to re-create the “pure” drama of Ancient Greece. For them, this meant blurring the lines between singing and speaking, and using instruments to help singers communicate deeper meanings than acting

alone could. They thought this unified approach would speak more directly to audiences. What do you think?

When you think of *Madama Butterfly*, you might picture lavish kimonos, sweeping melodies, and heartbreak so intense it practically reaches out and grabs you. And honestly? You wouldn’t be wrong. Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* is opera at its most emotional—big feelings, big music, and a story that sticks with you long after the final note. With some of the most beautiful (and tear-jerking) music ever written, *Madama Butterfly* pulls you into a world of love, hope, and heartbreak. It’s the kind of opera that leaves you sitting in stunned silence at the end, wondering how music can make you feel *this* much.

By Dr. Charles Carson
2024-2025 Scholar-In-Residence

Who works at the opera?

It takes more than singers to put on an opera. Although you may see only the performers in the spotlight, many people behind the scenes make what you see possible.

Backstage

The **Stage Director** tells singers how to move on stage so that the audience can understand what is being sung, even if it is in a different language.

The **Technical Director** coordinates lighting, set, and costumes, supervises the building and mounting of scenery onstage, and oversees the work of all crews during rehearsals and performances.

The **Stage Manager** handles administrative duties related to a production, assists the director during rehearsals, and is responsible for all backstage activity once the show opens. They tell the singers when to walk onto the stage and keep everyone safe.

The **Scenic Designer** is responsible for the visual appearance and function of all scenic elements in an opera to help bring the story to life on stage. They plan or design the set and supervise its construction.

The **Lighting Designer** plans or designs the color, intensity, and frequency of the light onstage.

The **Wig and Make-Up Designer** creates and oversees hairstyles, wigs & make-up.

The **Costume Designer** plans how each singer is dressed and makes sure that all the costumes will help the singers accurately portray their characters in the opera's setting.

The **Properties (Props) Manager** is in charge of finding objects for the singers to use while on stage that will correctly reflect the time period of the opera and give the actions on stage a more realistic feel.

The **Choreographer** invents dances and movements and teaches them to dancers and/or cast members.

The **Crew or Stagehands** assist in the construction, installation, and changes of the set, costumes, lights, and props. Stagehands change the scenery.

On Stage

Cast: All singers and actors who appear onstage.

Actors: Performers who have dialogue but do not sing.

Principal: A singer who performs a large role in the opera.

Comprimario: A singer who specializes in the small character roles of opera, from the Italian meaning "next to the first".

Supernumeraries (or Supers): Actors who participate in the action but do not speak or sing.

Dancers: These performers train for years and perform choreographed routines onstage. From flamenco to ballet, dance plays a supporting role in countless operas.

Chorus: A group of singers with more than one person singing each part, like a choir. The chorists in opera represent certain groups required by the story such as soldiers, priests, peasants, or townspeople. Certain operas include the use of a children's chorus.

In the Pit

The **Conductor** or **Maestro** shows the orchestra when to play and the singers when to sing. The conductor controls how fast or slow the music goes.

The **Orchestra** is made up of a group of musicians who play instruments. They typically stay with the conductor in the **orchestra pit** during operas, as opposed to onstage for concerts. What is the orchestra pit? It is a partially covered area right in front of the stage. You'll generally only be able to see the back of the conductor's head in the pit if you are an audience member. A composer typically uses woodwinds, brass, percussion, and string instruments in various combinations in the orchestra to help express a variety of emotions and environments. **Woodwinds** include piccolos, flutes, and reed instruments such as the oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, all requiring a very focused stream of air. **Brass** instruments produce sound through the buzzing or vibration of the player's lips resonating within a tubular chamber. They include horns, trumpets, and trombones. **Percussion** is a broad term describing any instrument that is struck, scraped, or rubbed by hand. Timpani, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, xylophone, glockenspiel, and chimes are just an example of a few utilized by composers. **Strings** include any instrument that produces sound from vibrating strings such as violins, violas, cellos, double bass, and harp.

In the House

The **Audience** (that's you!) also has an important role to play. It would not be a real performance without you! Sometimes as an audience member, you have to be creative too. A setting might be suggested by a few panels or a background requiring you to engage your imagination. You can become a part of the communal experience, living and breathing with the cast and musicians as they create art onstage.

About Puccini



Puccini was one of those people that always acted up in class. He sang wrong notes on purpose and added notes to his music. He was expelled several times!

Puccini's full name was Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini. Try saying that five times fast!

Giacomo Puccini (born December 22, 1856–died November 29, 1925) was an Italian composer and one of the greatest proponents of verismo, or realism, in opera. Where operas of the past focused on grand stories of mythology, gods, and royalty, Puccini focused his works on the beauty and heartbreak of common life. His work is best described by a quote from his opera *Il Tabarro*, “He who has lived for love, has died for love.” His most famous operas—*La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Turandot*, and *Madama Butterfly*—remain among the most frequently performed today, celebrated for their timeless appeal, raw emotional depth, lush musicality, and universal themes.

Born into a family that had served as musical directors for the Cathedral of San Martino for over 200 years, Puccini's dedication to music seemed almost predestined. Orphaned at the age of five, Puccini was supported by the Cathedral, which reserved a position for him to serve as an organist when he reached adulthood. Upon seeing a production of Verdi's opera, *Aida*, in 1876, he quickly discovered that his true passion was opera. Though many of his initial works failed to garner much recognition, his premier opera *Le Villi* caught the attention of the public at large for its dramatic power.

In 1892, Puccini published his adaptation of the French novel *Manon Lescaut*. This began a long relationship with librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. The three men would proceed to collaborate on Puccini's most successful works: *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. These operas exemplify Puccini's style, featuring deeply emotional storytelling, lush orchestration, and heroines whose devotion and suffering often lead to tragic ends.

Often, Puccini's operas got TERRIBLE reviews and were banned from being performed in some places at first. Puccini ignored it and kept working. Good thing he did!



About *Madama Butterfly*

Madama Butterfly is an opera in three acts composed by Giacomo Puccini and written by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. The work premiered in 1904 and is still one of the most frequently performed operas in the world. The tragic tale follows the love story of a young Japanese girl named Cio-Cio-San and an American naval officer, Lt. B. F. Pinkerton. When his deployment ends, he returns to the U.S. without Cio-Cio-San and abandons her with dire consequences. The heart-wrenching story is further strengthened by Puccini's mastery of storytelling through music.

Puccini first encountered the story of *Madama Butterfly* as a one-act play, *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan*, produced in London in 1900. Written by David Belasco and adapted from John Luther Long's 1898 short story (which itself was inspired by the French novel *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti), the play captivated Puccini despite his inability to understand a word of English. Deeply moved by its emotional depth, he immediately requested his publisher secure the adaptation rights. Though *Madama Butterfly* is set in Nagasaki, Japan, Puccini himself never visited the country. In their dedication to authenticity, however, librettist Luigi Illica traveled to Nagasaki to immerse himself in Japanese culture.

Meanwhile, Puccini studied Japanese music with the wife of the Japanese ambassador to Italy, who provided him with sheet music and renditions of traditional Japanese folk songs. The initial reception to *Madama Butterfly* was dismal. Audiences mocked the Japanese setting and criticized similarities to Puccini's earlier works. Undeterred, Puccini revised the opera five times, with the final version published in 1907. This "Standard Version" is the one most commonly performed today.

If you listen closely,
you can hear the
American National
Anthem weaved
throughout
Madama Butterfly.

Real butterflies
don't get married,
but butterflies do
have a courtship.

Many other works have
been inspired by the opera,
including multiple films,
novels, ballets, and musicals.
The rock band Wheezer
even titled their 1996
album *Pinkerton* and drew
inspiration from the story in
their lyrics!

Characters

Name	Voice Type	About
Cio-Cio-San	Soprano	Also known as the title role Madama Butterfly. An idealistic, fifteen-year-old geisha.
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton	Tenor	A handsome yet hard-hearted American lieutenant in the U.S. Navy stationed in Nagasaki, Japan.
Suzuki	Mezzo-Soprano	Cio-Cio-San's loyal handmaid and best friend. Stays by Cio-Cio-San's side through the years.
Sharpless	Baritone	U.S. Consul to Nagasaki. He acts as a voice of reason for Pinkerton.
Goro	Tenor	A marriage broker. He arranges the marriage between Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton for financial benefit.
The Bonze	Bass	Cio-Cio-San's uncle and priest. He curses Cio-Cio-San for abandoning her ancestral religion to marry Pinkerton.
Prince Yamadori	Baritone	A wealthy Prince who wishes to marry Cio-Cio-San.
Kate Pinkerton	Mezzo-Soprano	Pinkerton's American wife.
Trouble	Supernumerary (non-singing actor)	Cio-Cio-San and Pinkerton's son.

Synopsis

Act I

Japan, early 20th century. Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton of the U.S. Navy inspects a house overlooking Nagasaki Harbor that he is leasing from Goro, a marriage broker, who has also arranged his union with Cio-Cio-San, known as Madame Butterfly. The American consul, Sharpless, arrives for the wedding ceremony and Pinkerton describes to him his philosophy of the fearless Yankee roaming the world in search of experience and pleasure. Sharpless warns him that the girl may view the marriage more seriously. After the formal introduction, Cio-Cio-San explains that her family was once prominent but lost its position, and she has had to earn her living as a geisha. The Imperial Commissioner reads the marriage agreement, and the relatives congratulate the couple. Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze (a priest) interrupts the festivities. He curses the girl for rejecting her ancestral religion, and the shocked relatives denounce Cio-Cio-San as they swiftly leave the house. Pinkerton tries to console his "Butterfly" as they are left alone on their wedding night.

Intermission

Act II

Three years have passed, and Cio-Cio-San awaits her husband's return. Suzuki prays for help but is berated for believing in Japanese gods rather than in Pinkerton's promise to return "when the robins nest again." Sharpless appears with a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it, Goro arrives with the latest potential husband, Prince Yamadori. Butterfly politely insists she is not available for marriage—her American husband has not deserted her. Sharpless attempts to read Pinkerton's letter but is repeatedly interrupted. Giving up, he asks her what she would do if Pinkerton never returned. Cio-Cio-San replies she would either become a geisha again, or better, die. After Cio-Cio-San introduces her son, Trouble, Sharpless leaves, promising to tell Pinkerton of the child. A cannon shot is heard in the harbor announcing the arrival of Pinkerton's ship, the "Abraham Lincoln." Overjoyed, Cio-Cio-San joins Suzuki in strewing the house with flowers. As night falls, they keep vigil, waiting through the night for Pinkerton.

Act III

At dawn, Suzuki insists that Cio-Cio-San get some sleep. Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and Kate, Pinkerton's new wife. Suzuki realizes who the American woman is and agrees to help break the news. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and runs from the scene. Cio-Cio-San rushes in hoping to find Pinkerton, but sees Kate instead. After a moment, she grasps the situation. She agrees to give up the child but insists Pinkerton return for him. Once she dismisses everyone, she takes out the dagger with which her father committed suicide, reading the inscription, "It is better to die with honor than live without it."

A geisha is a member of a professional class of women trained to entertain in ways such as singing, dancing, and traditional Japanese art forms.

Cio-Cio-San names her son "Trouble" but wishes to rename him "Joy" upon Pinkerton's return

Director's Notes

It is an incredible honor to direct Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* as part of a first-ever collaboration between OPERA San Antonio and Austin Opera. Bringing this beloved masterpiece to life offers a profound opportunity to explore its breathtaking music, emotional depth, and complex cultural legacy.

At the heart of *Madama Butterfly* is a poignant and tragic love story, brilliantly set in Nagasaki, Japan, at a time when two cultures were thrust together in complex and often painful ways. Despite the difficult conversations surrounding the opera today, I believe *Butterfly* is Puccini's love letter to opera and that his intentions were to create a powerful drama that ultimately condemns Pinkerton's perspective and cavalier attitude. While Puccini himself never visited Japan, he was invested in capturing its essence. His librettist, Luigi Illica, traveled to Nagasaki to immerse himself in Japanese culture, and Puccini studied traditional Japanese music with the wife of the Japanese ambassador to Italy. He incorporated these melodies into his composition, striving to create a world that felt authentic to him. Yet, for all its beauty and sincerity, *Madama Butterfly* is not without controversy. Over time, the opera has been criticized for its historical inaccuracies and for presenting Japan through a Western lens. Some of its portrayals reflect stereotypes that, though common at the time of its creation, require careful consideration today.

Puccini was deeply moved by the real-life stories that inspired *Madama Butterfly*. His fascination with the subject was sparked when he saw David Belasco's theatrical adaptation of John Luther Long's novel in London in 1900. He was immediately drawn to its emotional intensity and wrote to his publisher Giulio Ricordi about his intent to turn it into an opera. Puccini's own letters reveal the depth of his research. In an undated letter, he wrote: "My dear Signor Giulio, I have had a visit today from Mme Oyama, wife of the Japanese Ambassador. She told me many interesting things and sang some native songs to me. She has promised to send me some native Japanese music. I sketched the story of the libretto for her, and she liked it, especially as just such a story as *Butterfly*'s is known to her as having happened in real life."

The figure of Cio-Cio-San was not just a dramatic creation; her story mirrored the real experiences of many Japanese women in treaty ports at the end of the 19th century. The practice of "temporary wives" was a widespread and heartbreaking reality, making *Madama Butterfly* a reflection of historical truths as well as artistic invention.

Puccini's music embodies the same mixture of reality and fiction. He painstakingly studied Japanese music, drawing from ten authentic melodies, while also constructing his own sonic image of Japan. His score blends these Japanese influences with Western musical themes, such as the inclusion of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in Pinkerton's first aria, emphasizing the stark contrast between the two cultures. The result is a musical language that both defines and separates *Butterfly*'s world from that of the Americans who enter it.

The tragic conclusion of *Madama Butterfly* is one of its most haunting and misunderstood aspects. In Japanese society at the time, "jigai" - female ritual suicide - was considered an honorable way to face dire circumstances. When Cio-Cio-San takes her own life, she is making a devastating but culturally significant choice, reclaiming her dignity in the face of betrayal.

With these complexities in mind, OPERA San Antonio and Austin Opera have approached this production with great care and thoughtfulness. Our goal is to honor the extraordinary beauty of Puccini's work while engaging with its cultural challenges in a meaningful and respectful way. We have worked closely with cultural advisors, Momo Suzuki and her son Kevin Suzuki, to ensure that our portrayal is well informed. Our wonderful cast of talented artists brings richness to the performance, reflecting the vibrant, multicultural world we live in today. Additionally, we have partnered with the San Antonio Japanese Tea Garden, Jingu House, and the Austin Japan Community to raise awareness and to encourage deeper discussions about the cultural contracts this piece presents.

We invite you to experience this production with an open heart, to be swept away by Puccini's extraordinary music while also reflecting on the opera's themes. *Madama Butterfly* is more than just a story of love and loss - it is an opportunity for conversation, for understanding, and for appreciating both the timelessness of opera and the ever-evolving perspectives through which we experience it. Thank you for joining us for this special performance, and we hope it resonates with you long after the final note is sung.

-E. Loren Meeker

Principal Cast



Raquel González
Cio-Cio-San



Malcolm MacKenzie
Sharpless



Nicholas Nestorak
Goro



Joseph Dennis
B.F. Pinkerton



Kristen Choi
Suzuki



Hidenori Inoue
Bonze



Kyle White
Prince Yamadori



Yulia Lysenko
Cio-Cio-San
Austin Opera, April 23 & 26

Creative Team

Giacomo Puccini
Music

Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa
Libretto



Francesco Milioto
OPERA San Antonio Conductor



Timothy Myers
Austin Opera Conductor



E. Loren Meeker
Director



Dottie Randall
OPERA San Antonio
Chorus Master



Cina Crisara
Austin Opera
Chorus Master



Stephanie Williams
Wig & Makeup Designer

John Gunter
Set Design

Alice Bristow
Costume Design

The Orchestra San Antonio
Austin Opera Orchestra

Marcella Barbeau
Lighting Design

Momo Suzuki & Kevin Suzuki
Movement Directors & Cultural Advisors

Meet a key player



Meet the Mezzo with Kristen Choi

Questions:

1. What was your process for learning this role and becoming Suzuki?
2. What is your favorite musical moment or scene in the opera?
3. Tell us about your journey to becoming a professional singer. What advice would you give to young singers who want to pursue a similar path?



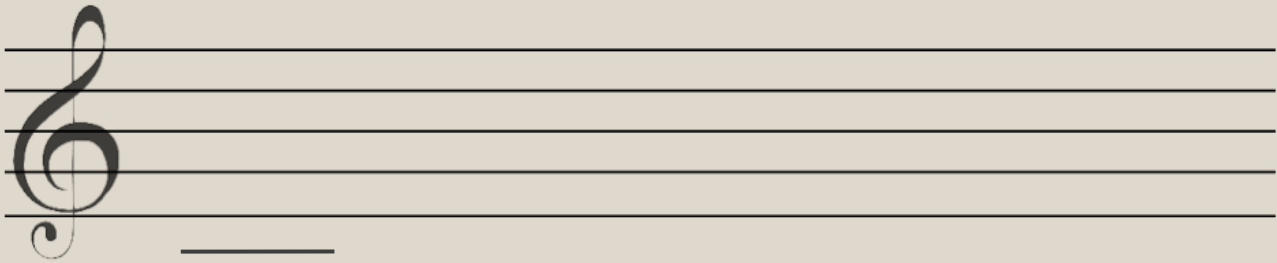
MUSIC

Major Pentatonic Scale

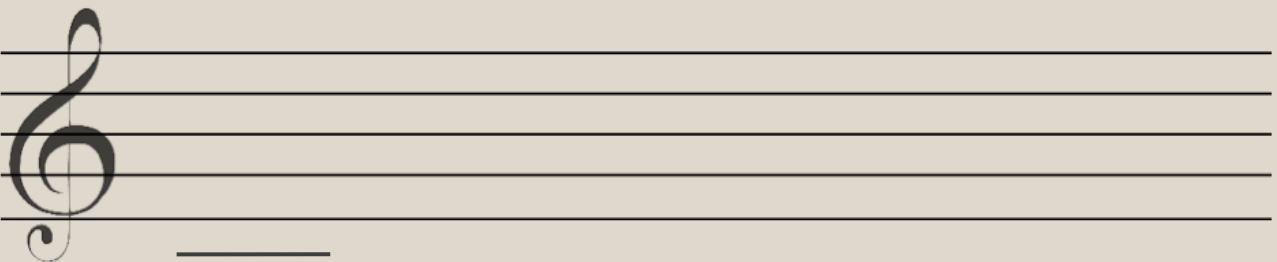
Composer Giacomo Puccini wanted to imitate the Japanese style of music of the time. One of the ways he did this was by using the major pentatonic scale in his songwriting. A regular scale has 8 notes, notated in solfege as do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do. **A pentatonic scale only has 5.** The solfege notes in a major pentatonic scale are **do-re-me-so-la-do**.

Try singing the regular scale and then singing the pentatonic scale. How do they sound different, aside from one being longer?

Write the major pentatonic scale on the staff below. Begin on middle C:



Now write your own melody using only the notes from the pentatonic scale:

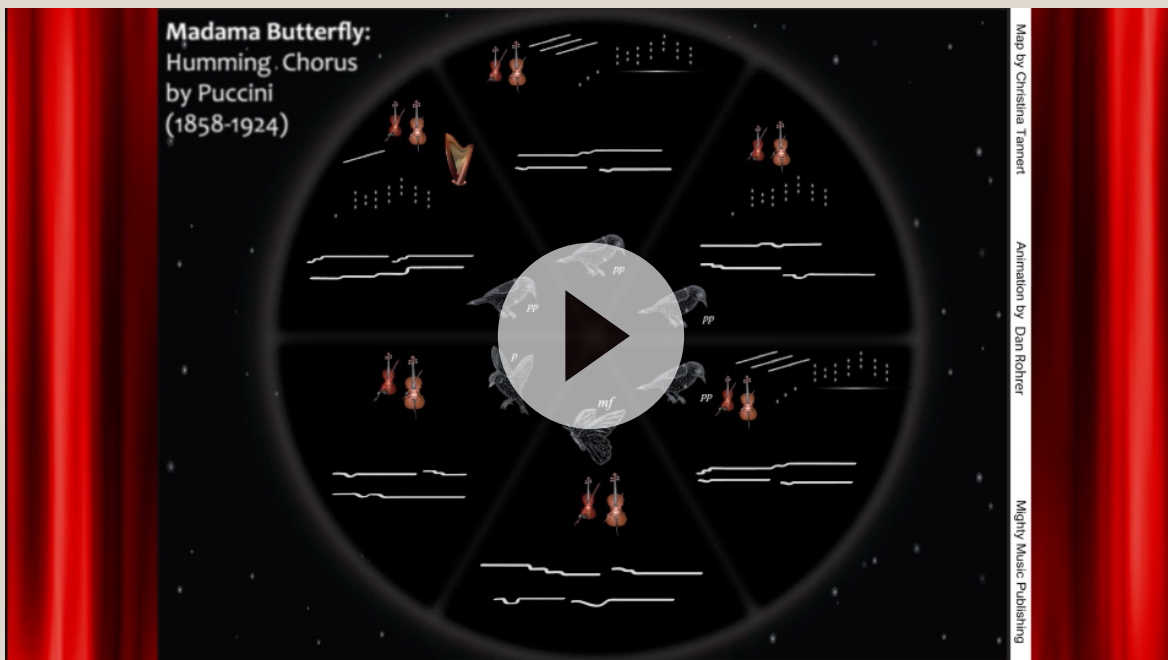


Guided Listening

The Humming Chorus

“The Humming Chorus” is one of the opera’s most poignant and atmospheric moments. It occurs near the end of Act II, as Cio-Cio-San waits through the night for the return of her beloved Pinkerton. The chorus hums softly in the background, creating a haunting and dreamlike effect. The absence of words allows the music to evoke pure emotion and prolongs the tension, reflecting Butterfly’s quiet hope, longing, and the inevitable heartbreak that awaits her.

Watch the listening map below with this in mind, and be ready to answer the following questions:



Which instruments did you see/hear on the map?

What were the dynamic markings used in the piece?

What do you think the moon phases represent on the map?

What do the crows, and their changing position, represent?

What does the melody make you think of?

The melody repeats a few times throughout the piece, why do you think that is?

Points of Discussion

Despite Puccini's intention to create a realistic portrayal of Japan, *Madama Butterfly* has been criticized by modern audiences for its inaccuracies. For instance, many Japanese phrases are used incorrectly, and the opera frequently conflates elements of distinct East Asian religions. Additionally, the show has faced significant critique for its Orientalism, which reflects a biased Western lens, leading to exoticized, reductive, and oversimplified portrayals of complex and diverse cultures. Accusations of Orientalism arise from several aspects of the opera:

Character Stereotypes: The depictions of Cio-Cio-San and other Japanese women have been interpreted as reinforcing stereotypes of obedience, childlike-ness, and seduction. Cio-Cio-San, for instance, is described as both a “doll” and a “child,” despite being the romantic interest of the adult Pinkerton.

Inaccurate Settings and Costumes: As the opera is set in Japan, many productions depict the setting in culturally insensitive ways. Set designs and costumes are often presented in a vague, generalized “Asian style,” blending elements from Japanese, Chinese, and other East Asian cultures without accurately reflecting the distinct traditions of 18th-century Japan.

Use of Yellowface: Most opera companies have discontinued the practice of having non-Asian performers wear Yellowface—using makeup to imitate East Asian features. This practice is widely regarded as offensive by many in the Asian community and perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

Discuss this as a class:

Can you think of other cultures that have been misrepresented in art, media, or performance?

These issues have sparked discussions about the cultural implications of staging *Madama Butterfly* today and the responsibility of artists to approach it with sensitivity. OPERA San Antonio and Austin Opera have taken steps to present the work thoughtfully, fostering inclusivity and honoring its legacy while engaging contemporary audiences.

Honoring the Opera's Rich History: By maintaining the integrity of Puccini's masterpiece, we will showcase its beautiful score and dramatic depth, ensuring that the opera receives a production that respects its origins while simultaneously exploring and presenting the story through a modern lens.

Addressing Cultural Sensitivity: With the aid of cultural advisors, Momo Suzuki and her son Kevin Suzuki, this production will navigate the historical contexts and cultural sensitivities inherent in the opera's storyline, offering a thoughtful exploration of its themes.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion: Casting diverse artists not only enriches the performance but also reflects the multicultural tapestry of our community.

Engaging the Community: Through interactive community events and partnerships with local cultural organizations, like the Japanese Tea Garden, Jingu House and Austin Japan Community, we aim to deepen the community's engagement with the arts and foster meaningful discussions around the themes presented in the opera.

Japanese Fans

What do you need?

Scrapbook or Origami paper
String

Instructions:



Step 1

Fan-folding – Turn your paper over (if using scrapbook paper, it's blank side up), and fold up the edge about an inch so the pretty side shows. Be sure to crease it really well!



Step 2

Turn the paper back over and fold the section you just folded so that the colorful side of the paper is still showing on top. Continue this process, making an accordion-fold, lining up your sections until you run out of paper.

Pinch one end of the paper, and fold it upwards. Hold it...



Step 3

Wrap your string around the end you're holding and tuck any excess string underneath. Feel free to leave some string to tie on any beads or charms if you like!

Madama Butterfly

Word Search

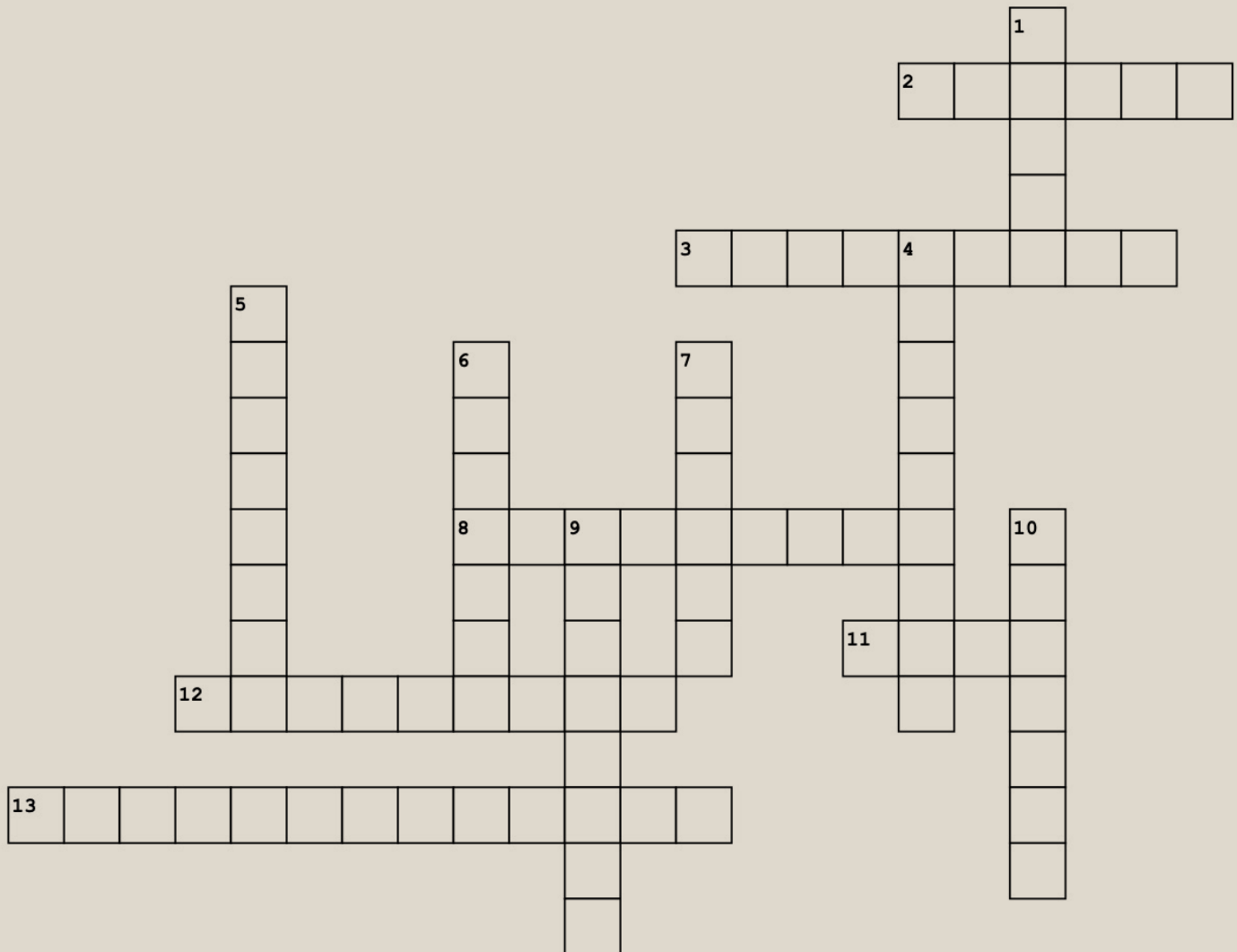
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K	A	T	E	T	P	D	R	T	J	C	N	S	T
A	T	U	U	R	N	E	B	E	A	H	J	S	C
R	O	R	A	O	H	S	S	N	P	O	I	S	U
I	I	N	S	T	S	R	P	O	A	R	T	E	D
K	O	U	E	Z	R	S	E	R	N	U	P	L	N
U	I	K	A	S	A	G	A	N	K	S	G	P	O
Z	E	B	A	R	I	T	O	N	E	S	S	R	C
U	S	U	P	E	R	T	I	T	L	E	S	A	K
S	O	N	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y	H	R
R	A	P	I	N	K	E	R	T	O	N	S	S	O
P	N	O	M	E	Z	Z	O	S	N	I	E	U	A
O	R	I	G	A	M	I	T	S	S	Z	K	P	T

Baritone
Butterfly
Chorus
Conductor
Japan

Kate
Mezzo
Nagasaki
Origami
Pinkerton

Sharpless
Soprano
Supertitles
Suzuki
Tenor

Madama Butterfly Crossword



Across

2. Group of singers that mostly sing together
6. Puccini's first name
7. The Japanese city where the opera takes place
9. The wealthy prince who wishes to marry Butterfly
10. The U.S Consul and voice of reason
11. Butterfly's husband

Down

1. Tells the orchestra when to play and the singers when to sing
3. Butterfly's real name
4. A word for a Buddhist priest
5. The marriage broker
8. Butterfly's maid and best friend
10. A non-singing actor in an opera

Madama Butterfly

Word Search (Answer Key)

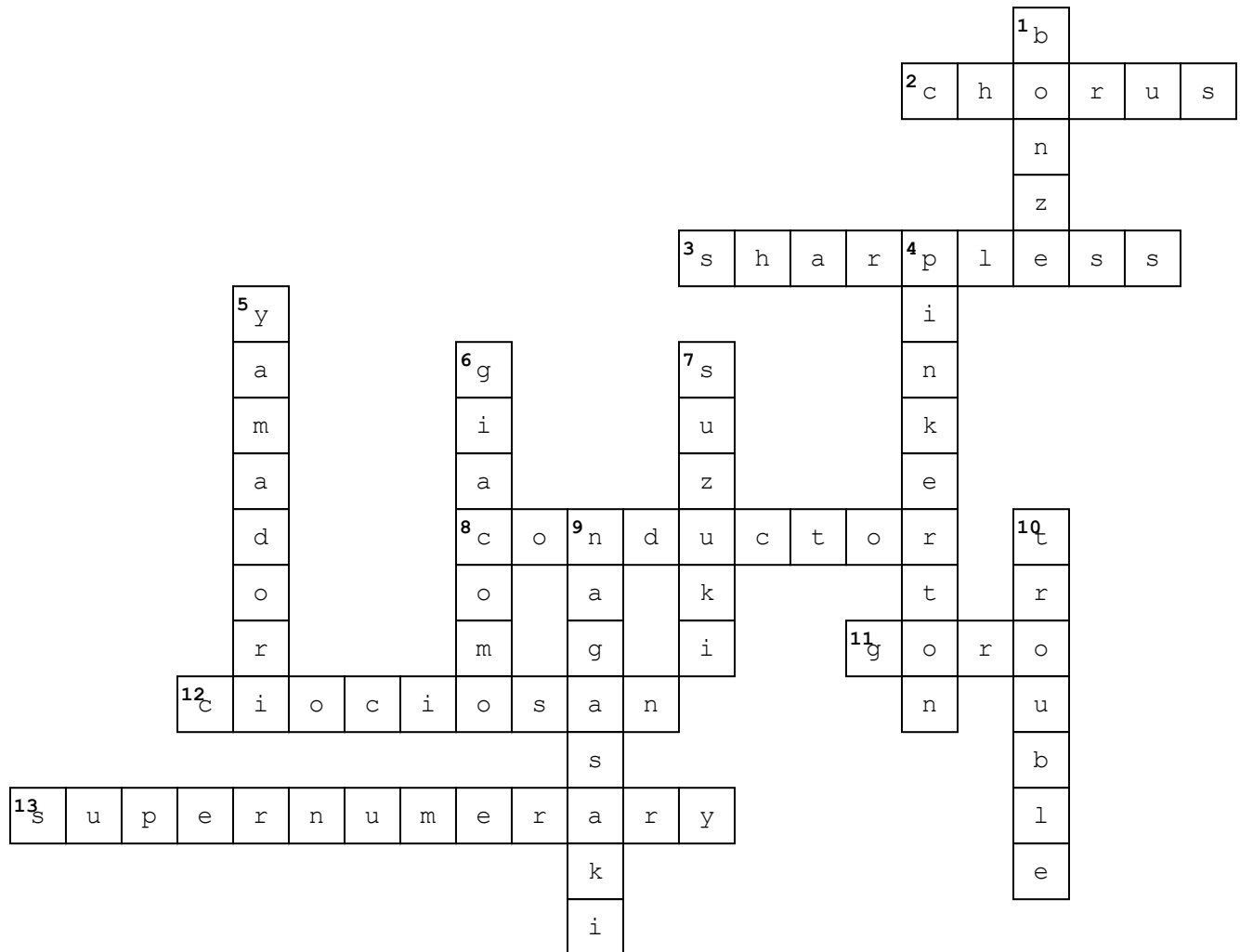
O	R	B	A	S	S	E	S	E	T	P	G	L	R
O	E	A	A	R	I	O	E	S	R	O	O	I	O
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A	T	U	U	R	N	E	B	E	A	H	J	S	C
R	O	R	A	O	H	S	S	N	P	O	I	S	U
I	I	N	S	T	S	R	P	O	A	R	T	E	D
K	O	U	E	Z	R	S	E	R	N	U	P	L	N
U	I	K	A	S	A	G	A	N	K	S	G	P	O
Z	E	B	A	R	I	T	O	N	E	S	S	R	C
U	S	U	P	E	R	T	I	T	L	E	S	A	K
S	O	N	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y	H	R
R	A	P	I	N	K	E	R	T	O	N	S	S	O
P	N	O	M	E	Z	Z	O	S	N	I	E	U	A
O	R	I	G	A	M	I	T	S	S	Z	K	P	T

ORIGAMI
 BUTTERFLY
 CHORUS
 SOPRANO
 SUZUKI
 PINKERTON
 JAPAN
 MEZZO
 BARITONE
 KATE
 BASS
 NAGASAKI
 SHARPLESS
 CONDUCTOR
 TENOR
 SUPERTITLES

O	R	B	A	S	S	E	S	E	T	P	G	L	R
O	E	A	A	R	I	O	E	S	R	O	O	I	O
K	A	T	E	T	P	D	R	T	J	C	N	S	T
A	T	U	U	R	N	E	B	E	A	H	J	S	C
R	O	R	A	O	H	S	S	N	P	O	I	S	U
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K	O	U	E	Z	R	S	E	R	N	U	P	L	N
U	I	K	A	S	A	G	A	N	K	S	G	P	O
Z	E	B	A	R	I	T	O	N	E	S	S	R	C
U	S	U	P	E	R	T	I	T	L	E	S	A	K
S	O	N	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y	H	R
R	A	P	I	N	K	E	R	T	O	N	S	S	O
P	N	O	M	E	Z	Z	O	S	N	I	E	U	A
O	R	I	G	A	M	I	T	S	S	Z	K	P	T

Madama Butterfly

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