



canadian **OPERA** company

ALEXANDER NEEF, GENERAL DIRECTOR

# ***Madama Butterfly* Synopsis**

## **ACT I**

*A house in Nagasaki*

Goro, the marriage broker, and Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton of the United States Navy are inspecting the house where Pinkerton will live with his Japanese bride-to-be, Cio-Cio-San (called "Butterfly" by her friends). Sharpless, the American Consul, arrives and expresses doubt about the wisdom of Pinkerton's imminent marriage. Pinkerton makes it clear that this will not be a permanent union, for he plans to marry an American woman later on. Butterfly and her relatives enter, together with Japanese marriage officials, and the consul becomes more concerned when he learns that Butterfly is deeply in love with Pinkerton and is taking their marriage seriously. The festivities are interrupted by the arrival of the Bonze, a Japanese High Priest and Butterfly's uncle. He curses Butterfly for renouncing the faith of her ancestors and becoming a Christian. Pinkerton and Butterfly affirm their love for each other and consummate their union.

## INTERMISSION

## **ACT II**

*Three years later*

Butterfly and her companion Suzuki pray for the return of Pinkerton, who has gone away and not yet returned from the United States. Sharpless enters with news that Pinkerton will soon arrive in Japan, but suggests that Pinkerton might not return to her. Butterfly remains firm in her commitment to Pinkerton, who has fathered her young son, and when the wealthy Prince Yamadori arrives she refuses his offer of marriage. A cannon salute in the harbour announces the arrival of Pinkerton's ship, and Butterfly and Suzuki decorate the house in anticipation of his return.

## **ACT III**

*The next morning*

Suzuki is asleep, as is Butterfly's son, Sorrow. Butterfly has kept watch through the night. Suzuki wakes and persuades Butterfly to sleep, promising to wake her the moment Pinkerton arrives. Sharpless enters with Pinkerton, who, unable to face Butterfly, leaves before she sees him. Butterfly realizes that Pinkerton has abandoned her forever, forcing her to acknowledge that her life no longer holds any honour. She kills herself, leaving her young son behind.