BY GIACOMO PUCCINI

BLAISDELL CONCERT HALL

APRIL – 8, 10 & 12, 2022





Welcome to the final production of Hawai'i Opera Theatre's 2022 season, Puccini's iconic masterpiece, *Madame Butterfly*.

Butterfly has a long history with HOT. Indeed, it was the very first opera the company ever produced, in March, 1961 when we were established as part of the then Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. Cio-Cio-san was sung by soprano Kunie Imai, who made history as the first Japanese singer to be engaged as a regular at the Metropolitan Opera. Indeed, she had made her Met (and American) debut just three years before her appearance with HOT, performing in the same role. Her Pinkerton was the Honolulu-born and educated tenor Charles K. L. Davis, and the production was conducted by the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra's music director, George Barati. The complete performance was even broadcast on a local radio station, so opera was definitely in (and on) the air!

The opera proved to be so popular that the production – with several of the same singers (though not in principal roles) – was revived the following year. Subsequent productions were presented in 1978, 1985, 1993, 2000, 2007 and 2014 – so our current outing brings us to an even 10 productions, making *Madame Butterfly* the most-performed opera for HOT – though only just ahead of three other popular operas: *La Bohème* (9 productions), *La Traviata* (8) and *Carmen* (7).

SOME NOTABLE TIDBITS:

 Kaua'i-born tenor Shigeru Hotoke performed the role of Goro in the 1961, 1962 and 1978 productions. He was a beloved choral director, singer and educator who headed the music department at Kailua High School as part of a teaching career that spanned 40 years. His Kailua High School Madrigal and Sounds of Young Hawai'i groups toured the West Coast, Japan and around the world, serving to generate much needed interest for Hawai'i tourism at a time when state's visitor numbers needed a boost during the 1960s and 70s.

- HOT's revered Artistic & General Director Henry Akina made his company debut directing the 1993 production of Madame Butterfly.
- Henry also directed the 2000 production, now in his leadership role with HOT, with costumes designed by Anne Namba!
- The 2007 Butterfly featured iconic scenic and costume designs by acclaimed Japanese ceramic artist Jun Kaneko and was directed by then-Executive Director Karen Tiller. And the cast included some HOT'ohana as well: Kip Wilborn (Executive Director of Manoa Valley Theatre) was our Pinkerton, Prince Yamadori was sung by our Director of Education Programs, Erik Haines, and Sharpless was none other than Quinn Kelsey.
- Henry also directed the 2014 production, once again employing costumes by **Anne Namba** and HOT's Artistic Program Officer **Jamie Offenbach** as The Bonze.

One of the magical – and to some, baffling – things about opera is a fascination in seeing the same operas over and over again. But it's really no different than re-watching a movie many times. As long as the quality is first-rate, each



viewing leaves us with something new to discover. And with live theater, each performance is going to be different – different sets and costumes, different director and conductor, different casting. Even from one performance to the next in the same run of an opera, changes large and small will occur. Because opera is a living art, and all the many components involve human beings reacting to the unique moments in time. And we as audience members come to each performance in a unique frame of mind and from diverse backgrounds. All those elements form an alchemy that can only be experienced by live opera.

I for one am beyond thrilled that your Hawai'i Opera Theatre is back doing what we do best: performing engaging performances in front of a live audience. We only exist because of you. Mahalo nui loa for making this great art form thrive here in Hawai'i!



MAHALO NUI LOA,

Andrew Morgan

General Director



ABOUT US

Opera has been part of island culture for more than a century. Its history in Hawai'i, which dates back to the 1850s, includes stories of Queen Emma singing in the chorus of Verdi's II Trovatore while her husband, King Kamehameha IV served as the stage manager! Today, Hawai'i Opera Theatre is known for its vibrant and creative productions and awardwinning education programs.

Since 1961, HOT—founded as a division of the Honolulu Symphony Society and incorporated in 1980—has enhanced the quality of life in Hawai'i by presenting opera performances and education programs of the highest standards. Celebrating 60 years as the only professional opera company in Hawai'i, HOT is one of the largest performing arts organizations in the state with performances and education presentations on all of the main islands. Each season, HOT's

opera productions provide 10,000 audience members annually with access to internationally renowned artists, innovative design & direction, and cultural experiences that enrich the quality of life for Hawai'i residents. HOT's year-round educational programs serve as both catalyst and active participant in the artistic education of Hawai'i's youth, serving over 20,000 students, parents, and teachers each year.







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Madame Butterfly

Composed by Giacomo Puccini Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

CAST

KAREN CHIA-LING HO®

Cio-Cio-san

JOHN PICKLE

Pinkerton

ALICE CHUNG®

Suzuki

LEVI HERNANDEZ*

Sharpless

TAKA KOMAGATA**

Goro

ROBERT FENG[†]

Prince Yamadori & Il Bonzo

IAN MCGUFFIN[†]

The Imperial Commissioner

PHIL HIDALGO

II Registrare

LAURIE RUBIN®

Kate Pinkerton

LEAH HAYASAKA*

Trouble



ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Production created for the L.A. Opera

Scenery designed by John Gunter

Made available courtesy of Utah Symphony | Utah Opera

English & Japanese supertitles courtesy of Pacific Opera Project (Josh Shaw & Eiki Isomura)

*HOT Debut | ¹Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio member

ARTISTIC TEAM

BENJAMIN MAKINO Conductor

GREGORY B. KELLER®

Director

SUNNY YOON*

Répétiteur

NOLA NĀHULU
Chorus Director

CONNIE YUN°

Lighting Designer

Lighting Designer

ANNE NAMBA

Costume Designer

KATHE JAMES

Costume Coordinator

MEI CHIBANA

Makeup Designer

CAROLE KASAMOTO

Hair Stylist

MIA YOSHIMOTO

Makeup Designer

EMILY ROSE CARR HUNT

Stage Manager

CHRIS WALSH

Chorus Coordinator

JAMIE SANBORN

Orchestra Personnel Manager

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SYN0



ACT I.

Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton of the U. S. Navy inspects a house overlooking Nagasaki harbor that he is leasing from Goro, a marriage broker. The house comes with three servants and a geisha wife known as Butterfly (Cio-Cio-san). The lease runs for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, subject to monthly renewal. The American consul Sharpless arrives breathless from climbing the hill. Pinkerton describes how he, like other Yankees, roams the world in search of experience and pleasure ("Dovunque al mondo"). He is not sure whether his feelings for the young girl are love or a whim, but he intends to go through with the marriage

ceremony. Sharpless warns him that the girl may view the marriage differently, but Pinkerton brushes off such concerns and says someday he will take a real, American wife. He offers the consul whiskey and proposes a toast ("America forever!"). Butterfly is heard climbing the hill with her friends for the ceremony. In casual conversation after the formal introduction, Butterfly admits her age—fifteen—and explains that her family was once prominent but lost its position. Cio-Cio-san, consequently, has had to earn her living as a geisha. Her relatives arrive and chatter about the marriage. Cio-Cio-san shows Pinkerton her few possessions and quietly tells him she has been to the Christian mission

and will embrace her husband's religion. The Imperial Commissioner recites the marriage agreement, and the relatives congratulate the couple. Suddenly, a threatening voice is heard from afar—it is the Bonze, Butterfly's uncle, a priest. He curses the girl for going to the Christian mission and rejecting her ancestral religion. Pinkerton orders the Bonze and the guests away, and the shocked relatives denounce her as they leave. He tries to console Butterfly with sweet words. She is helped by Suzuki out of her wedding kimono and joins Pinkerton in the garden, where they anticipate the night ahead of them ("Vieni la sera").



P S I S

ACT II.

Part I.

Three years have passed, and Cio-Ciosan is still waiting for her husband's return. Suzuki prays to the gods for help, but Butterfly berates her for believing in lazy Japanese gods rather than in Pinkerton's promise to return one day ("Un bel dì"). Sharpless appears with a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it to Butterfly, Goro arrives with the latest potential husband for Butterfly, the wealthy Prince Yamadori. Butterfly insists she is not available for marriage as her American husband has not deserted her. The three men privately discuss that Pinkerton's ship is due in port soon. Butterfly politely serves tea to Sharpless, but snubs Yamadori and then unceremoniously dismisses the ever-hopeful suitor. Sharpless attempts to read Pinkerton's letter and warns that the officer may never return; perhaps, he suggests, she should reconsider Yamadori's offer. "And this?" asks the outraged Butterfly ("E questo?"), presenting her small child to the consul. Sharpless, too upset to tell her more of the letter's contents, leaves, promising to tell Pinkerton of the child. A cannon shot is heard in the harbor, announcing the arrival of a ship. Butterfly and Suzuki take a telescope to the terrace and

read the name of Pinkerton's ship. Overjoyed, they strew the house with flowers, and Suzuki dresses Butterfly as she was on her wedding night ("Scuoti della fronda"). Night falls, and Butterfly, Suzuki, and the child settle into a vigil over the harbor (Humming Chorus).

Part II.

Dawn breaks, and Suzuki insists that Butterfly get some sleep. Butterfly brings the child into another room. Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and Kate—Pinkerton's new wife. Suzuki realizes who the American woman is and agrees to help break the news to Butterfly. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and runs from the scene, pausing to remember his days in the little house ("Addio fiorito asil"). Cio-Cio-san rushes in hoping to find Pinkerton but sees Kate instead. Grasping the situation, she agrees to give up the child but insists Pinkerton return for him. Dismissing everyone, Butterfly takes out the dagger with which her father had committed suicide, choosing, like him, to die with honor rather than live in shame. She is interrupted momentarily when the child comes in, and Butterfly says a final goodbye to him ("Tu, piccolo iddio"). She stabs herself as the returning Pinkerton calls her name.



OPERA

Should the strains of a lusty aria unexplainably come into your mind as you pass by the Honolulu Post Office or the corner of Hotel and Alakea Streets, do not wonder. The early history of opera in Honolulu hinges on those two corners. Or didn't you know Honolulu had a history in opera? This ·article barely touches on some of that history's high spots.

Hotel and Alakea was the site of the Royal Hawaiian Theater, "a quaint, old-fashioned building in the midst of a beautiful garden," opened in 1848. On the grounds now occupied by the Post Office on Palace Square, there once stood Honolulu's Opera House, originally built in 1879, rebuilt in 1895 after a fire, and finally demolished in 1917 to make way for the present Federal Building.

When Verdi and Wagner were in their prime, and the Sandwich Islands were at an exotic distance, the stages of the Royal Hawaiian Theater, Honolulu Music Hall (as the Opera House was originally called) and others vibrated to an inconstant but astonishing array of operas in the grand tradition.

From posters preserved in the Archives of Hawaii it is apparent Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment* was given at the Varieties Theater on King Street as early as February 11, 1854. The Varieties, built the year before, competed with the Royal Hawaiian, but not for long; it burned in 1855.

Opera was only an occasional blessing of the period, however, intermingled with minstrelsy, drama and miscellaneous spectacles. Musical celebrities came now and then, too. Anna Bishop, of the "bird-like voice", is said to have sung in recital at the Royal Hawaiian for the first time in 1857. Her first husband was Henry Rowley Bishop, composer of *Home, Sweet Home*. Two acts of *II Trovatore* were staged at the Royal March 8, 1861 and the next year a touring Italian opera company from San Francisco put on selections from *Ernani* for the "first time here" April 7, 1862. Signora Bianchi was billed as prima donna with Signor Bianchi conducting.

A relative tidal wave of opera hit town in October, 1871 when the Agatha States Italian Opera arrived to put on a repertory series with Madame States as the star. The series included Lucia di Lammermoor, Un Ballo in Maschera, Il Trovatore, The Barber of Seville and Don Pasquale. Next year Madame States returned and sang an operatic concert with Carlo Orlandini. Their accompanist was Henry Berger, conductor of the Royal Hawaiian Band.

Between 1880 and 1890, during Kalakaua's reign, Italian and French opera vied with Gilbert and Sullivan. *Pinafore, Trial by Jury* and *The Mikado* shared the stage at intervals with Donizetti and Gounod.

In 1891, Queen Liliuokalani and a large and fashionable audience greeted the New York Bijou Company, which presented, in addition to Italian favorites, *The Bohemian*







Biographical note from 1961: Ben Hyams is completing his fourteenth year as producer and music commentator of Hawaii's oldest continuous radio series, the Sunday Evening Music Hour, now sponsored by the Hawaiian Electric Company and in its thirtieth year. He was former music annotator of the Columbia Network in New York before settling in Honolulu in 1947.

Out of the HOT Archives, this article about Opera in Hawai'i appeared in the program book for HOT's inaugural production of Madame Butterfly.



Girl, Carmen, Jakobowski's Erminie, Norma, Fra Diavolo and The Flying Dutchman. In deference to the Honolulu audience, "whose hearts turn to the light opera", the company topped off its schedule with Pinafore.

After the fire of 1895, the rebuilt Opera House was reopened with a local amateur production of *Trovatore* November 7, 1896. Opera then vanished from the scene until late 1899 when the Boston Lyric Opera Company revived it with a seven-week season. In this final decade of the 19th century three companies produced 30 operas.

Between 1910 and 1920, Honolulu not only heard an assorted list of 82 opera and opera-concert performances, but was treated to the sight and sound of such visiting celebrities as John McCormack and Emma Calve. *Madame Butterfly* comes into this tentative record for the first time in 1913, nine years after its La Scala premiere. The Lambardi Company gave it March 15, and in 1916 the De Folco Grand Opera Company presented scenes from it.

A more recent *Butterfly* was presented May 14, 1936 by the Morning Music Club and Honolulu Community Theater at McKinley Auditorium, with the late Fritz Hart conducting. Ululani Robertson (now Jabulka) sang Cio-Cio-San and Aroldo Collini Lieutenant Pinkerton. Rita Raymond was Suzuki, the late Carl Basler the consul, and others in the cast included Jennings Moss, Richard Bryer, E. H. Anderson and Joaquin Wanrell.

During Hart's tenure as conductor of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra (1931-1949) he also conducted his own opera, Even unto Bethlehem, and four Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. In the past dozen years, increased opera activity has been carried on by the Civic Light Opera Association, Honolulu Pops Orchestra and Parks Board, Opera Guild of Honolulu, University of Hawaii and Central Union Church. Productions of this period have included The Bartered Bride, Cavalleria Rusticana, Carmen, The Beggar's Opera, Amahl and the Night Visitors, The Telephone, Down in the Valley, Street Scene, Gianni Schicchi and Don Pasquale.

Honolulu's picturesque old Opera House, seating nearly 1,000, with its "four large proscenium boxes, independent structures of a quasi-Hindoo-Moorish type" and an "acanthus leaf motif" on the front balustrading, went into limbo 44 years ago.

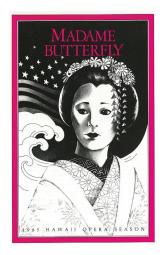
Will it ever be replaced?

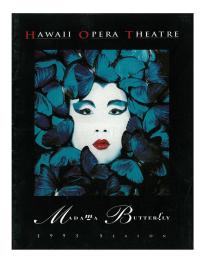
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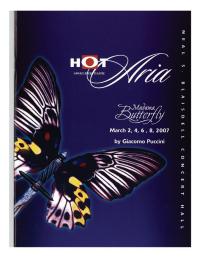
MADAME BUTTERFLY THROUGH THE YEARS

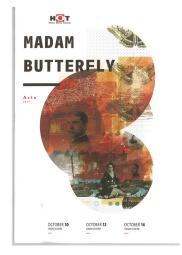














About the program cover, 1961

Selected from the James A. Michener collection of Japanese prints at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, this woodblock was done in the early 1700's by Kaigetsudo Dohan, one of the leaders of the Ukiyo-e school. Like other members of this school, Dohan was inspired by the gorgeous Japanese kimono of the period, and considered it sufficient raison d'être for many of his lovely prints.

In addition to the artist's original inscription, and both Happer and Watanabe seals of authentication, this print carries the following handwritten Happer notation, dated October, 1916: "Print made from a genuine old block engraved not later than 1705, on paper of the same period, with ink over 200 years old."



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Madama Butterfly is one of the most popular and oftenperformed operas in the entire canon of Western culture. We all know the story, we all know the ending – even if we have never sat through the entire opera. We all recognize some of the music – even if we do not know the context within the drama. Since its premiere in 1904, Butterfly has become a cultural icon – and with that elevated status, it has acquired a lot of cultural "baggage." Yet, for how frequently it is produced, there is very little variation in the way the piece is presented. When the curtain rises, we expect a realistic Japanese house with shoji screens, geishas in kimonos, and trees laden with fake cherry blossoms.

Cio-Cio-san mentions to Pinkerton on her wedding night that she is afraid because she has heard that if a man catches a butterfly, he will pin it to a board. And that is exactly what has happened to stage representations of this powerful, beautiful and brutal story of a clash of cultures. It has been trapped, stuck to a board and not allowed to fly.

Compare this to another early 20th Century work, Richard Strauss's *Salome*, which is a similar cultural icon. Even if we have never sat through this opera either – we all know there is a titillating Dance of the Seven Veils and a gruesome ending with John the Baptist's head served on a silver platter. Yet Salome has escaped being trapped by its success, and is presented on stage in a wide variety of styles – from setting the story in biblical times to placing it in modern-day Middle East. That story still manages to resonate its power and intensity no matter whether the characters are wearing swords and sandals, or combat boots and AK-47s.

We also tend to think of *Butterfly* as a "traditional" work and *Salome* as a "modern" work, in part because of this cultural baggage that has petrified the former and liberated the latter. It is intriguing to note that when Puccini came to New York in 1907 for the premiere of *Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, he also attended the American premiere of *Salome*. In an amusing interview with the New York Times, he hailed *Salome* as the greatest of all modern

operas and said: "I find it admirable in every respect." A few minutes later, a confused but well-intentioned bellboy appeared with a note for "Mr. Rossini," to which the head of the Met replied: "Poor man, he's dead."

Puccini's masterpiece presents even more challenges when producing the work in 2022, with our awakened concern for diversity and inclusion, our growing sensitivity to cultural appropriation, and our awareness of the long-damaging effects of imperialism. While I believe Puccini was trying his hardest to accurately and respectfully represent Japanese culture, he had never actually visited Japan. He listened to Japanese records, composed some musical phrases in a pentatonic scale to evoke the exotic sounds of the far East, and in one of the first examples of "sampling," he interwove recognizable bits of the "Star Spangled Banner." But like that embarrassed bellboy in the Hotel Astor, he was stumbling around his own cultural assumptions.

In this production of *Butterfly*, it is my hope to shake the dust off of the fake cherry blossoms, to remove that layer of lacquer which has grown cloudy with age, and to liberate that marvelous insect which has been stuck to the board for so long. What you will see tonight may challenge your assumptions about the piece, but it is always in service to allowing this beautiful creature to spread its wings, take flight and soar once again.

Gregory B. Keller

Director

HOT PROFILES



Karen Chia-ling Ho Cio-Cio-san



Taipei, Taiwan

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Princess Jia, Dream of the Red Chamber (San Francisco Opera)
- Meretaten, Akhnaten (Metropolitan Opera)
- Crowned Child, Macbeth (Metropolitan Opera)
- Soloist, Mozart's Requiem (Philharmonia Orchestra of New York)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Winner, South Carolina & Southeast Regional Finals
- Maria, Der Diktator (American Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall Debut)
- Recipient of the Renee Fleming Award from the Eastman School of Music

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Alice Chung Suzuki

HOMETOWN:

Loma Linda, California

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Granny Jia (cover), Dream of the Red Chamber (San Francisco Opera)
- Maddalena, Rigoletto (Academy of Vocal Arts)
- Soloist, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (United States Naval Academy)
- Mercédès; Carmen (cover), Carmen (Tulsa Opera)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Winner 2021 William Matheus Sullivan Foundation Audition Awards
- 2019 Merola Opera Program Alumnus
- Founder, Wear Yellow Proudly

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



John Pickle Pinkerton

HOMETOWN:

Akron, Ohio

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- · Title Role, Les Contes d'Hoffmann (Opera Louisiane)
- Tenor, Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Soloist, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (Canton Symphony)
- Soloist, Mozart's Requiem (Pacific Symphony)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Erik, Der fliegende Holländer (Los Angeles Opera)
- 2008 Carnegie Hall debut, Schubert's Mass in G Major
- Featured on several operetta recordings for Albany Records and Newport Classic labels

HOT DEBUT:

Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (March 2022)



Levi Hernandez Sharpless

HOMETOWN:

El Paso, Texas

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Count Almaviva, The Marriage of Figaro (Intermountain Opera Bozeman)
- Alvaro, Florencia in the Amazons (Lyric Opera of Chicago)
- Title Role, Gianni Schicchi (Tulsa Opera)
- Rappaccini, La hija de Rappaccini (Chicago Opera Theatre)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Papageno, The Magic Flute (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis)
- · Guglielmo, Cosí fan tutte (Spoleto Festival USA)
- Rambaldo, La rondine (Minnesota Opera)

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Taka Komagata Goro

HOMETOWN:

Japan

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Radames, Aida Touring Production (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Ellis (Guerilla Opera)
- Bastien, Bastien & Bastienne (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Male Lead, I'll Be Home for Christamas (Asakusa Kyuqeki Theater)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- HOT Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio Artist
- Rinuccio, Gianni Schicchi (Varna International Opera Academy)
- Soloist, Mozart's Great Mass in C minor (Varna International Music Academy Orchestra)
- Mr. Foster, The Séance (Hartford Opera Theater)

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Ian McGuffinThe Imperial
Commissioner

HOMETOWN:

Kentucky

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Abraham Fleischman, Hometown to the World (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Baritone, Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- I McGuff, I'll Be Seeing You (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- HOT Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio Artist
- Count Almaviva, Le Nozze di Figaro (Miami Summer Music Festival)
- Marcello, La Bohème (Tuscia Opera Festival)

HOT DEBUT:

Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (March 2022)



Robert Feng Prince Yamadori & Il Bonzo

HOMETOWN:

Kailua. Hawai'i

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Bobbie Fe, I'll Be Seeing You (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Anna Bolena (Dell'Arte Opera Ensemble)
- · Bass, Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- Mad Hatter, The Garden of Alice (City Lyric Opera)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- HOT Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio Artist
- Il Commendatore, Don Giovanni (Opera on the Rocks)
- Don Alfonso, Così fan tutte (Opera Alchemy)
- George Woodhead Prize in Voice Recipient

HOT DEBUT:

Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (March 2022)



Phil Hidalgo Il Registrare

HOMETOWN:

Honolulu, Hawai'i

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Musical Director for several musicals at Diamond Head Theatre
- Artistic Director for the Gay Men's Chorus of Honolulu
- Accompanist for Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Dance Dept
- Member of the HOT Chorus
- Po'okela Award Winner

HOT DEBUT:

Andrea Chenier (February 1992)

HOT PROFILES



Laurie Rubin Kate Pinkerton



Honolulu, Hawai'i

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Solo Recital (Ravinia Festival)
- Penelope, The Return of Ulysses (Greenwich Music Festival)
- Title Role, La Cenerentola

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Co-Founder & Co-Artistic Director, Ohana Arts
- Collaborator, Peace On Your Wings
- · Author, Do You Dream in Color? Insights From a Girl Without Sight

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Leah Hayasaka Trouble

HOMETOWN:

Honolulu, Hawai'i

ENJOYS:

- Roblox
- Minecraft
- Ikura
- Loves Meerkats!

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Gregory KellerDirector

HOMETOWN:

Los Angeles, California

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- La Bohème (Jacksonville Symphony)
- The Pirates of Penzance (Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre)
- Don Carlos (Metropolitan Opera)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- 26 Seasons as Stage Director at the Metropolitan Opera
- Cosí fan tutte (Houston Grand Opera's Studio Program)
- Creator & Director, Patriot Act (New York Theatre Workshop)

HOT DEBUT:

Yes



Benjamin MakinoConductor

HOMETOWN:

Fullerton, California

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Both Eyes Open (Presidio Theatre)
- Hometown to the World (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)
- The Love Potion (Long Beach Opera)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Former Music Director of Opera Memphis
- 2015 Memphis Business Bureau's 40 Under 40
- · Led establishment and debut performances of PRIZM Chamber Orchestra

HOT DEBUT:

La Traviata (May 2019)



Nola A. Nāhulu Chorus Director

HOMETOWN:

Makaha. Hawai'i

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Annual performances by HYOC & Kawaiaha'o Church
- HYOC's 6oth Annual Holiday Concert
- Chorus Director, Re-Emerging: HOT Live in Concert (Hawai'i Opera Theatre)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Debut of eight Hawaiian Youth Operas for the Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus
- Debut of KINOHI-First Hawaiian a cappella Oratorio by Herb Mahelona Jr.
- Began preparing HOT's Choruses with Beebe Freitas in 1990

HOT DEBUT:

Tosca (October 2019)



Sunny Yoon Répétiteur

HOMETOWN:

Seoul, South Korea

RECENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

- Principal Coach, San Francisco Conservatory of Music
- Coach & Pianist for Opera San Jose, the Music Academy of the West, International Music Academy in Siena, and Maryland Opera Studio

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Alumna, San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship program
- 2010 Winner, Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition
- Chamber music collaborations with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Daniel Hope and Nicholas Stovall

HOT DEBUT:

Yes

fine day we'll see a trail of smoke rising from the edge of the sea."

-Cio-Cio-san



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CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

I'm fairly certain Madama Butterfly was the second, maybe the third opera I saw as a child. Whether that was on TV or live, I can't remember. I know it wasn't the first opera I saw in person — that was Aïda. Aside from that, all I know for certain is that I've been aware of Madama Butterfly basically as long as I've been aware of opera, which is to say, for most of my life.

I've seen it again since then, of course, and even got to hang around a couple of productions, thanks to the kind of access that is sometimes provided to ambitious young artists. This, though, is the first production with which I will be directly connected as an artist. And, I hope not the last.

All three of Puccini's exotic operas, of which *Madama Butterfly* is the first, have become controversial in recent years, both as regards issues of representation, and in the depictions of Japanese, Native American and Chinese cultures by the composer and his librettists. There is, perhaps, some irony then that in these works I believe we also see Puccini at his most musically progressive and dramatically nuanced.

In Madama Butterfly, Puccini develops a musical language equal in sophistication to contemporaries like Debussy and the young Stravinsky, experimenting in harmony and voicing, and exploring the full range of the large orchestra the work calls for. Beyond their novelty, these techniques provide near numberless ways to explore subtleties of characterization and action, placing this opera in a psychological world much closer to our own than those of the Italian operas composed even only a handful of years before it.

This is a work where the perception of a low flute line or single note from a horn can radically change your understanding of place, time and relationships in the

drama as it unfolds. A figure that in one moment may seem simple accompaniment becomes critical in shaping the emotional quality of the next.

Still, there are also moments that may strike a contemporary listener as banal — a kind of musical kitsch, not unlike the samurai sword letter opener hurriedly purchased in Asakusa the last day of vacation. Yet for me, in these moments, as I participate in the performances of my colleagues on stage and in the pit, I am transported back to childhood memories, not only of Madama Butterfly but also seeing The Seven Samurai for the first time with my dad and my brother, or a vague recollection of my grandfather singing enka at a family gathering while I drank a Hawaiian Punch from the can. These early experiences are now connected to Puccini's score and his attempts, imperfect as they may be, at bringing two worlds together.

Are these connections real in any objective sense? It doesn't matter, because I would say the purpose of art concerns not the outwardly universal, but the inwardly specific. These layered experiences, where the apparent contradictions in my life are momentarily reconciled are the reason I got into the arts in the first place.

My hope for you is that, whether this is your first time, or fiftieth, attending the opera be a similar experience.

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