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The Portrayal of Women in Opera: An Analytical Study of the Music in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

An honors thesis presented by
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Madama Butterfly is a highly popular opera composed by Giacomo Puccini that has become known for its heartbreaking story and beautiful music. With this popularity, however, came some controversy. Both scholars and audience members alike have brought up issues within this opera pertaining to the treatment of the main character and the opera's namesake, Butterfly. This thesis strives to understand the ways in which Butterfly, an Asian woman, is treated musically different from the other lead character, Pinkerton, who is a White man, through gaining an understanding of Puccini's compositional "voice," as well as how tropes pertaining to women and race exist in opera as a whole. Furthermore, musical analysis of prominent scenes in *Madama Butterfly* will demonstrate how both Butterfly and Pinkerton are musically represented, and how the music is used as a tool to express both what the two main characters are experiencing and the identities that they portray in the opera.

Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) came from a long line of musicians and composers who worked within the Catholic church as music directors. He was therefore trained to be a musician from a young age. He found a passion for opera in particular when he saw Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* at the age of fifteen. Over the course of his career, Puccini wrote a total of twelve operas, starting with *Le Villi* in 1884 (Roberts, 2022). He began his composing within the style of the Romantic period, which is characterized by a focus on emotion, the individual, more freedom within the traditional musical forms, as well as the individuality of the composer himself (Samson, 2001). As his career progressed, Puccini became more known for his works within the *verismo* tradition, which is the Italian word for realism. This is a post-Romantic musical era and, as the name suggests, the works within this category are characterized by their

ability to capture a more realistic world, with characters that are more inspired by people who exist within everyday life (Sansone, 2001). Musically, this style is characterized by more expressive melodic lines, as these works are usually more emotional and dramatic, which will be elaborated on more when discussing “Un Bel Di,” an aria in *Madama Butterfly*. With all of these influences, Puccini was able to create his own style and compositional voice.

Puccini is known for stepping away from the more traditional compositional approaches. Throughout his career, there is consistency in his ability to take certain compositional concepts but make them his own. As this thesis shows below, Puccini was able to showcase this ability through his utilization of compositional techniques such as leitmotifs and *Dramma Per Musica*. He also cultivated his own unique style through methods such as using motivic “cells” and extended lyrical melodies. Harmonically, he is known for having extremely emotional orchestration, which works in conjunction with the aforementioned melodic concepts. Lastly, Puccini experimented with tonality in his works.

The concept of the leitmotif is one that is more closely associated with composer Richard Wagner. Arnold Whittal (2001) defines it as “...a theme, or other coherent musical idea, clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances, whose purpose is to represent or symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force or any other ingredient in a dramatic work.” This definition is highly related to Puccini’s utilization of flexible motivic cells. These cells are quite short, often about a measure long, and yet can capture specific characters or moods (Burton, 2012). Puccini uses them in a variety of different combinations in order to portray any specific moment that is occurring in the libretto. For example, Butterfly’s short motivic cell and Pinkerton’s short motivic cell are combined in order to create the motivic cell for their son (Burton, 2012). The utilization of such short motivic

pieces acts as a reminder to the audience, in that they experience a sense of familiarity when they hear them, thus drawing connections between that sound and what they represent. Interestingly, however, the fact that they are so short may cause the listener to not be able to quite catch where this familiarity is coming from.

Dramma Per Musica is defined as a libretto that is composed with the intent of having it be set to music (Grove Music Online, 2001). Writing an opera in such a way makes it so that there is more of an emphasis on the melody, as it works together with the words so that they are able to bolster each other. This also works closely with Puccini's use of "extended lyrical melody," which is characterized by melodies that are more free flowing and emotional (Burton, 2012). In *Madama Butterfly*, this is most clearly seen in Butterfly's main aria, "Un Bel Di." Her emotions are completely reflected not only in the words that she is singing, but also in her melody. Chapter 4 presents an in-depth analysis of this aria. These melodic concepts are then coupled with Puccini's use of orchestration and harmony in order to portray the emotion that the character is feeling. The harmonies and orchestration selected for each part of the opera not only sound good from a technical standpoint, but Puccini also uses them as yet another tool to allow for the audience to feel the same thing that the characters are feeling. This is especially seen in the final death scene in *Madama Butterfly*, which will be discussed in chapter 5.

Lastly, Puccini is known for experimenting with tonality. He often does not stick to one tonal area, and he uses musical elements such as the whole tone scale, the pentatonic scale, and chromaticism in order to create a more thought provoking and emotional piece. All of these elements are seen throughout his twelve-opera career generally; however, more specifically they are seen in his opera *Madama Butterfly*, which is the focus of this thesis.

Synopsis

Madama Butterfly was Puccini's sixth opera, premiering in 1904 at the opera house La Scala in Milan. When it first premiered, this opera was received poorly by the public, which led Puccini to do some revising, including expanding the work from two acts to three. Three months later when it once again premiered, it was much more successful than it was the first time. Puccini worked with the librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, and the opera was based off of the short story "Madame Butterfly" by John Luther Long. This opera depicts a fifteen-year-old Japanese girl named Cio Cio San, or "Butterfly," as the heroine, who falls in love with a much older American soldier, Pinkerton, who is only marrying her out of convenience.

The opera opens on the day of their wedding as Pinkerton explains to his friend Sharpless that he is marrying Butterfly only until he finds a "real" American wife. From the beginning, the audience understands that this marriage is not for the right reasons for Pinkerton and, if anything, it is out of sheer physical attraction. Butterfly, while this is happening, expresses her excitement for this marriage and talks about how in love they will be. The first act ends with the married couple's first love duet, "Bimba Dagli Occhi," which will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

The second act opens three years later, and it is revealed that Butterfly has had a baby. This whole time she has also been waiting for Pinkerton to return, as he left soon after she became pregnant. She sings perhaps one of the opera's most famous pieces, "Un Bel Di," which depicts her sitting by her window and imagining that on "one beautiful day" she will see Pinkerton's ship on the horizon, and he will come back to be with her. Despite his absence for three years and encouragement from others to marry someone else, she holds onto hope. Sharpless eventually lets Butterfly know that he received a letter from Pinkerton stating that he will, in fact, be returning to Japan. She is so excited to hear this that Sharpless does not have the

heart to tell her the other part of this news, which is that Pinkerton has married an American woman as he said he would do in the first act. Butterfly asks Sharpless to let Pinkerton know that he has a son. As act two ends, Butterfly is waiting excitedly for Pinkerton's arrival,

In act three, Pinkerton arrives with his new American wife, Kate, who has agreed to raise Butterfly's child, as Pinkerton intends on bringing him back to the United States. When Pinkerton sees that Butterfly has excitedly decorated the house awaiting his arrival, he realizes that he cannot admit that he remarried and is planning on bringing her child back to the U.S. He leaves, and when Butterfly comes out expecting Pinkerton, she is instead confronted with Kate. She learns who Kate is, and agrees to give her child to them so long as Pinkerton agrees to get him from Butterfly himself as opposed to sending someone. When Kate leaves, Butterfly finds the dagger that was once her father's, and she makes the decision to commit suicide. She is about to commit the act, when suddenly her son comes in. This is when Butterfly says goodbye to her child, because at this point her decision is made, and she then blindfolds him. She dies by suicide, and just as it is too late, Pinkerton comes running to her yelling her name. This is the end of the opera, left with Pinkerton's words and Butterfly never seeing him after his return.¹

Literature Review

Madama Butterfly is a very popular opera, often described as both heartbreaking and beautiful. While all of this is completely true, there has also been a lot of discussion surrounding how this opera is also a problematic piece. Puccini was of course a composer who wrote this in a time where issues pertaining to gender and race were not as progressive or thought about in the same way as they are now. The fact that he, as a male composer in the western tradition, was composing for a character who was an Asian woman seemed to be cause for criticism for his use

¹ Synopsis was written using metopera.org as reference

of exoticism. This issue, of course, did go beyond Puccini, and it is important to mention that the concept of the soldier finding and falling in love with a woman from another race or culture is one that was popular in opera during the years 1875-1920 (Parakilas, 1994). With *Madama Butterfly* premiering in 1904, this opera was composed and written in the heart of the rising popularity of this trope. This, of course, also has to do with the librettists as well as the story that this opera is based off of, however what is interesting is Puccini's ability to write music that expresses the story as well as these themes. Puccini is a talented composer, whose ability to capture a story is highly fascinating. Before looking into the music, which is the foundation of any opera, however, it is important to better understand these aforementioned themes. Puccini is a White man writing about another White man as well as an Asian woman, and thus it is important to understand both how non-White individuals may be musically represented in opera, beginning with the concept of exoticism.

Exoticism in this context pertains to the use of certain musical concepts or sounds which may be used in order to try and capture the "essence" of a country that seems foreign to those who do not live within the culture. Puccini utilizes a lot of different methods in order to try to express the Japanese culture that he is trying to capture in this opera. For some scholars, however, this attempt seems to be disingenuous and, in some cases, problematic. Puccini's usage of musical concepts that are not constructed around a tonal center is an example of this. In order to musically portray Butterfly's "otherness," he often utilizes the whole-tone and pentatonic scales. With the elimination of half steps in both scales, there are no tendency tones, which the Western ears of his primary audience were attuned to hearing. The half steps that exist in diatonic scales, which happen in between both the third and fourth scale degree as well as between the seventh and eighth scale degree in a major scale, evoke an urge for them to resolve

to certain notes in the scale, and due to this, certain chords are then expected to resolve to other chords. When these half steps are eliminated, it may cause a sound that the listener is not used to. Due to this, a listener could in theory hear this completely different sound as closely associated with Butterfly, therefore attributing that otherness to her. In contrast, Puccini represents White characters, and more notably Pinkerton, by tonal and largely diatonic music, which individuals at that time would be more accustomed to hearing. This creates a sense of Pinkerton being more closely related to them, while Butterfly is sonically represented as being completely different. These musical devices that are not composed around a tonal center are seen in love duets between the two characters, which allows for a very clear juxtaposition of how Pinkerton and Butterfly are represented individually. An in-depth musical analysis of this love duet, “Bimba Dagli Occhi,” will take place in chapter 3.

Puccini also utilizes the concept of musical quotation throughout the entirety of the opera in order to musically portray White and Asian characters alike. Musical quotation is the act of essentially taking direct passages from preexisting music and inserting it into one’s own composition. Puccini takes snippets of Japanese pieces such as “Jizuki-Uta,” “Suiryo-Bushi,” and “Kappore-Honen” when he is portraying Butterfly and other Japanese characters (Tsou, 2014). He utilizes them very similarly to the way he utilizes motivic cells, as he extracts from them short but effective excerpts and sandwiches them in between each other, as well as within his own composition. Because of this, while he did use direct quotations, he also took a lot of liberties due to the length of the excerpts he chose (Tsou, 2014). He seemingly does this in order to be able to portray the “different” sound that he is after when a Japanese character is on stage. He once again wants to create a difference between their music and the music of the White characters. He does not only use musical quotations from Japanese music, however. One thing

that certainly brought Puccini's authenticity into question was the fact that he also used snippets from Chinese folk tunes (Tsou, 2014). His use of music from an entirely different country in order to represent Japan seems to call into question what it was about the musical excerpts that were important to him. If it wasn't the fact that they were Japanese compositions, perhaps he cared more about the fact that they were simply different to Western ears. However, Puccini's music is not only used in order to create a difference between the White and Japanese characters, but also to portray certain messages and tropes about *Madama Butterfly's* female lead.

Catherine Clément, in her 1988 book *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, highlights the ways in which women in opera often do not have an existence on stage besides their love interest. The man they are involved with becomes their entire identity. Furthermore, it seemingly became an operatic trope to have the woman die at the end. And, as Clément highlights, their deaths seem to be something that entire operas build toward, causing the ends of the operas and deaths to become spectacles for audiences. The scenes are usually beautifully staged and over the top with beautiful, flourishing music and orchestration. *Madama Butterfly* is not different, as the last scene, which is also Butterfly's death scene, is usually made out to be a spectacle as well as something that the entire opera has been leading up to and foreshadowing. One way to understand the treatment and ways in which Butterfly is represented within this opera is to understand both the voice of the composer, as well as the voice of Butterfly.

In her book *Unsung Voices*, Carolyn Abbate discusses the role of the "voice" in operatic works and music in general. There are two voices that are important within this context, which are Puccini's and Butterfly's. Abbate makes it clear that she is not necessarily referring to the physical act of saying or singing words. Instead, she discusses musical devices that highlight certain characters so that they can be more active narrators. In the context of Abbate's work, it is

not necessarily the one who is on stage who is telling the story. This, when thinking about *Madama Butterfly*, may make one wonder whether or not this is Butterfly's story that is being told, regardless of how much stage time she physically has. Butterfly throughout this opera is usually discussing topics related to Pinkerton. He seems to always be at the front of her mind, and her existence within this opera often does not go beyond him. So, while Butterfly is the main heroine in the opera, it could be argued that it is not truly her who is telling the story.

Puccini's own voice clearly shines through in this work as well. He is a composer who is known for his ability to musically capture the story that is being told. Although he is not the librettist, every note Puccini used is intentional and bolsters the words, and perhaps even tells a story of its own. In this thesis, I will explore the ways in which Puccini represents a Female, Asian heroine in *Madama Butterfly* through a theoretical analysis of the music, starting with Butterfly's entrance in the first act and ending with her suicide in the final scene. Through understanding the ways in which Puccini crafted this opera, with concepts such as the musical quotation and motivic cells, it is possible to get a clearer and more rich understanding of this opera, the story it is trying to tell, and Puccini's intentions as the composer. First, it is important to understand the ways in which Butterfly is introduced in the first act.

Chapter 2: Differences in the Introductions of Butterfly and Pinkerton

Recognizing the different ways in which Butterfly and Pinkerton are first introduced in *Madama Butterfly* is an important step in understanding how they are treated differently. The audience meets Pinkerton first, and from there we know exactly who he is and what his plans and intentions are. Within the first few minutes, the audience is privy to the fact that Pinkerton is not marrying Butterfly for the right reasons, even though this is something that she remains in the dark about for most of the opera. She is thus set up from the start to be at a disadvantage. While even the viewers know that Pinkerton does not actually love Butterfly, she does not know this. This is emphasized through the fact that Pinkerton is very openly talking about it in the beginning of the opera. Not only does he not have the right intentions, but it is made clear that he never has. This immediately places him into the role of being an essential narrator. He perpetuates the plot of the opera from the start, which, as we will see, Butterfly is not able to do in the same way.

Pinkerton's identity as an American is one that is also emphasized, beginning when he is first introduced. There are several repetitions of him saying lines such as "America Forever," as well as the use by Puccini of musical quotations from "The Star-Spangled Banner." At the top of rehearsal 21 in act one, there is a direct quotation of the national anthem of the United States, which functions as the opening to the new aria (see example 2.1).

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a piano introduction, marked with a rehearsal number '21' in a box. It begins with the tempo and mood markings 'ALL.^o SOST.^{to} CON SPIRITO' and a tempo indication of a quarter note equal to 112 (♩ = 112). The music is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line in the right hand with several notes highlighted in light blue. The bottom staff is for the vocal part, labeled 'PINKERTON'. It starts with the instruction '(con franchezza)' and the lyrics 'Do - vun - que al mondo'. The piano accompaniment for the vocal part is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'cantando'.

Example 2.1: I/21/0-3². Highlighted in blue is the direct quotation of the Star-Spangled Banner which happens within the introductory instrumental section of the aria “Dovunque al Mondo.”

This aria, “Dovunque al Mondo,” [I/21/0-I/26/8] is used to introduce Pinkerton as a sort of heroic and patriotic figure. In order to establish this right away sonically, Puccini sets the scene through this direct quotation, which is set in a higher register than the rest of the notes in the passage, thus making it the most apparent to the listener. Beyond these direct quotations, Puccini also makes this identity sonically obvious through the instrumentation he uses.

Throughout the entire piece, there are flourishing strings and moments of brass. This provides a strong and triumphant sound which bolsters the high register at which Pinkerton is singing.

Furthermore, Pinkerton’s melody is often doubled melodically by an instrument or multiple instruments, such as when he first comes in on measure 8 of rehearsal 21 (example 2.2).

² Examples will be labeled with parentheses indicating the act, rehearsal number, and measure number that the example begins and ends on. Please note that the measure numbers begin on measure 0, so for example the first measure after the rehearsal number changes would be measure 0.

38

Ob. *crescendo a poco*

C.Ing.

Cl. in E

Cl. in Bb

Fag.

Corni

PINK. *(riprendendo)*
 Af-fon-dalancora al-la-ven-tu-ra fin-chè u-na raf-fi-ca scom-pi-gli
 An manch Gestade führt ihn seiner Schiffe Wandel, bis ei-nes schö-nen Tags das wil-de

Viol.

V.le

Vc.

Cb.

p crescendo a poco

R. R. 112

Example 2.2 (I/23/2-8): Highlighted in blue is the melody sung by Pinkerton, which is doubled by the clarinet, violin, and bassoon (highlighted in green.)

This doubling emphasizes the importance of his melodic line in that it draws attention to what Pinkerton is saying and makes his presence apparent. At rehearsal 26, as “Dovunque al Mondo” continues, there is once again a quotation from “The Star-Spangled Banner,” emphasizing that he is from the United States. Here Puccini also utilizes brass instruments in order to create a more militaristic sound, thus reminding us that Pinkerton is a U.S. naval officer (example 2.3).

44

Ob. *ten.*

C. Ing. *ten.*

Cliti *ten.*

ClIne *ten.*

Fag. *ten.*

Corni *ten.*

Tr.bø *ten.*

Tr.nl. *ten.*

Timp. *mf*

Arpa

PINK. *ten.*

SHAR. *ten.*

(si alza, toccando il bicchiere con Sharpless)

(Pinkerton e Sharpless si siedono ancora sulla terrazza).

A - me - ri - ca for e - ver.
A - me - ri - ca for e - ver.

A - me - ri - ca for e - ver.
Ed è bel - la la
Ist'incinlièliches

Example 2.3 (I/26/1-5): Highlighted in blue is the quotation of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” which once again takes place during this aria. It is played here by the woodwinds (the oboe and clarinet) as well as by the trumpet.

From the beginning of Pinkerton's introduction, the audience knows exactly what his intentions are and who he is. When Pinkerton steps onto the stage for the first time, he is instantly in charge of putting the plot into motion as he explains exactly what is going on and what is to be expected in the next scenes.

Butterfly has an introduction that is handled in a very different manner. She is first introduced at the beginning of "Ancora un Passo" (I/39/0-I/40/12). Instead of being introduced as an individual, she comes onto stage with a group of women who are all singing in unison. She and the group of women are saying things such as "Quanto cielo! Quanto mar!" which translates to "sky and ocean near and far," as well as "Ecco la vetta. Guarda, guarda quanti fiori" or "we're at the summit, see the lovely, lovely view."³ This is not explaining anything about who Butterfly is as an individual or her opinions on the wedding. Butterfly finally breaks out from the crowd in order to say her own lines; however, she is essentially talked over by the other sopranos, and then by Sharpless. Furthermore, when she first begins singing, she begins on notes that the other sopranos are singing as well. This may be seen in rehearsal 39 measure 6 (see example 2.4), where the sopranos say a line and end on a high A5. On the same beat that the sopranos end on, Butterfly comes in also on an A, but A4. The A5 would sound more prominent than A4 due to its height in their register, causing Butterfly to not only be covered by the fact that they all sing an A, but also by the fact that the other sopranos sing that note an octave higher. This masks Butterfly's entrance, making it more difficult for the audience to even process that she is singing. In order to further convolute this listening experience, when Sharpless comes in he is also on an A, in his case an octave lower, on A3 (example 2.4).

³ All translations based off of Ricordi *Madama Butterfly* vocal score.

Musical score for Butterfly and Sharpless. Butterfly's vocal line is in the top staff, and Sharpless's vocal line is in the second staff. The piano accompaniment is in the bottom two staves. A blue vertical bar highlights the first note of Butterfly's vocal line, which is an octave higher than the first note of Sharpless's vocal line. The lyrics are: Butterfly: 'ter - - ra un pri - ma - ve - ril sof - fio gio -'; Sharpless: 'O al - -'; Piano: 'Quan - to cie - lo! quan - to mar!.....'

Example 2.4 (I/39/6): *Butterfly enters on the A which is sung an octave higher by the other sopranos at the same time. Sharpless then comes in on an A as well.*

Butterfly's vocal line is therefore not only directly derived from a preexisting vocal line, but she is then sung over beginning on the same note. If everyone were to come in on a different note, it would have perhaps been clearer as to what Butterfly was singing, even if others were singing at the same time, but the fact that they are singing on the same pitch emphasizes the fact that her vocal line is essentially hidden during the audience's first impression of her. This is heavily contrasted to Pinkerton's clear and uninterrupted lines. A harmonic analysis of this introductory scene further showcases the differences in the treatment between Butterfly and Pinkerton musically.

When listening to this introductory piece for Butterfly, it is hard to pinpoint a tonal center. It seems as though the melody and harmonies, although they are following a certain formula and are similar to each other, are going through modulations. Through harmonic

analysis and as seen in example 2.5, the chord progression is actually going through the whole-tone 02 scale.⁴ There is a symmetry to this scale, which is caused by the fact that there are only whole steps, something that is very different from a diatonic scale in which there would be both half and whole steps, thus creating asymmetry due to the order in which the whole and half steps occur.⁵ Because of the whole steps that make up the whole-tone scale, there are also no tendency tones due to the absence of half steps. This creates an interesting listening experience because with this symmetry there is no utilization of goal directed functional harmony, in which there would be voice leading and the resolution of the aforementioned tendency tones. When these are eliminated from a score the music created is often more ambiguous because there is also a lack of tonal center which thus does not portray any particular key. Puccini begins in the established key of Ab major, however he quickly convolutes things through his use of a V+/Bb major chord, which consists of the notes F, A, and C#, of which only the F is found in the key of Ab major, although the C# is represented in Ab major as Db. There is then a tonicization that occurs through the appearance of the I chord of Bb major. Puccini then goes to a V+/C chord, characterized by G, B, and D#, before transitioning to the one chord in C major. He follows this pattern as he goes through the tonal areas of Ab, Bb, C, D, E, Gb. The piece then ends in the key of Gb major (see example 2.5). Through these constant tonicizations, Puccini outlines the entirety of the whole-tone scale. This, from the beginning, establishes the notion that Butterfly will be represented by music that distances itself from conveying a tonal center.

⁴ The whole tone scale is a scale containing only whole steps. The whole tone 02 scale starts on C and D (which are assigned pitch class numbers 0 and 2, hence the 02 in the title) and contains the notes C, D, E, F#, G#, and A#.

⁵ For a major scale, the whole and half steps are as follows: W, W, H, W, W, W, H.

Ab V+/Bb Bb V+/C C V+/D D V7b5/E E V+/Gb(enh) Gb

Example 2.5 (I/39/0-9): *This is a simplified version of the chord progression which happens throughout “Ancora un Passo.” The scale goes through the whole-tone 02 scale (see highlighted notes: Ab, Bb, C, D, E, Gb) while using secondary V+ chords as transitions. Please note that Puccini utilizes the enharmonic of Gb which is F#.*

This is contrasted by Pinkerton’s opening aria, in which tonal centers are clearly established and portrayed through both the melodic line as well as through the harmonization. The symmetry used in “Ancora un Passo” is further emphasized by Puccini’s use of the augmented V chords. Not only are these chords not naturally occurring in a key without any accidentals, but they are also, quite like the whole-tone scale, symmetrical. When thinking about it within the context of pitch classes, the whole-tone scale used in this piece is made from 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, t (10). The augmented chords are created through pitch classes such as 0, 4, 8, which are also perfectly symmetrical. This absence of leading tones and the symmetrical sound of the whole-tone scale and augmented triads causes listeners to immediately hear the music associated with Butterfly as sonically different, which in turn classifies her as different from Pinkerton, as he is primarily represented with tonally-centered music. This difference in the characters’ musical treatment is most clearly seen as they are singing together in their love duet “Bimba Dagli Occhi Pieni di Malia,” which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Comparing Butterfly and Pinkerton in their Love Duet “Bimba Dagli Occhi”

Act I rehearsal 120 features the first duet that the audience hears from Butterfly and Pinkerton after they are married, as they sing “Bimba Dagli Occhi.” In typical operas, this would be a piece in which the newly married couple would express their love for each other. However, due to the fact that Pinkerton is not in love with Butterfly, as everyone except for Butterfly knows, this is not the typical love duet. It is undeniable that Butterfly is in love with Pinkerton, as she has clearly expressed thus far in the opera. This disjunction of their feelings towards each other is clearly portrayed both lyrically, as well as musically by Puccini in order to make it clear to the audience that this is not a couple who feels the same about each other.

When it comes to the lyrics themselves, it is clear that they both have separate intentions with this relationship. Pinkerton in his first stanza says “Ora sei tutta mia” or “Now you are all mine,” while Butterfly is singing lyrics such as “Somiglio la dea della luna... che scende la notte dal ponte del ciel” which translates to “I feel like a goddess... descending at night by her sky bridge of dreams.” Pinkerton expresses his possession of Butterfly which he gains through their marriage. He constantly comments on her appearance and fantasizes about “clipping her wings” throughout the first act, which is represented here through him simply stating that she is his. This is while Butterfly expresses throughout the entirety of the first act how lucky she is to marry this man. This displays a clear disconnection between their feelings behind this marriage. Furthermore, the music is as disconnected as the couple is, with Butterfly’s music and melody being quite different from Pinkerton’s in more ways than one.

Pinkerton begins this love duet, therefore taking on the role of establishing the tonality of the piece. The duet begins with a clear establishment of A major, going through the clear

motions of I to V, with other chords along the way prolonging these tonic and dominant areas.

He is so clearly establishing A major that there are no accidentals at all through his opening lines (see example 3.1).

The image shows a musical score for Pinkerton's opening lines. The score is in A major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The vocal line (top staff) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and the lyrics "o - ra sei tut - ta mi - a Sei". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) starts with a V chord (V₄⁶) in the first measure, which resolves to the I chord (I₃⁵) in the second measure. The piano part is marked *m.d.* (mezzo-forte). The score is labeled "PINKERTON" at the top left.

Example 3.1 (I/120/2-5): *The beginning lines of this duet, which clearly establish the key of A major*

This tonal clarity is quickly complicated by Butterfly's entrance at the end of measure 8, which is when she begins seemingly singing in C major with the elimination of F, C, and G sharps through the consistent addition of naturals on these notes (see example 3.2). This shift, however, is seemingly slight and sudden, as it begins right when she starts singing and she does not quite establish the key in the same way Pinkerton does when he starts. Furthermore, there is no easy transition from A major to C major generally speaking because of how many accidentals there are in between the keys. There is a pretty swift tonicization of C major, which happens as she is singing both B and E, notes that belong in both keys. These two notes may be interpreted as pivot notes, however there are no pivot chords present. This would then perhaps make it sound

as though she is still in A major, but is flat (see example 3.2). If there was a pivot chord and a strong switch over to A major, then it would make it clear that there was a modulation. The fact that there is no clear transition makes it seem as though there was no modulation, and that Butterfly is simply consistently a half step below the F sharp, C sharp, and G sharp.

Musical score for "BUTTERFLY" and "PINKERTON". The score is in 3/4 time and A major. Butterfly's part starts with a *sostenendo* marking and a piano (*p*) dynamic. Pinkerton's part includes *allarg.* and *a tempo* markings. The piano accompaniment features triplets and dynamic markings like *m.d.* and *f*. Below the piano part, chord diagrams are shown: "A maj:" and "V".

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Musical score for "BUTTERFLY" starting at measure 121. The score is in 2/4 time and C major. It includes a *Sostenendo* marking and a *pp* dynamic. The piano accompaniment features triplets. Below the piano part, chord diagrams are shown: "C maj: I6", "vii°6", "vi6", "vii°6", "I6", "vii°6".

Example 3.2 (I/120/9-I/121/2): Although Pinkerton ends his first section of the duet on a root position V chord, Butterfly quickly takes over with her a quick transition to a I chord in C major.

For her entrance in this piece (I/121/0), Butterfly begins on the I chord, however this is quickly changed to the vii° chord, which would then be expected to serve as the dominant area. There is then a sort of rotation that happens between the I, vii°, and vi, which seems as though it

is a prolongation of the tonic, with the vii° chord acting as a bridge between the I and vi because it allows for stepwise motion between the chords. The progression finally lands on a V chord, but it is a mode mixture minor v chord with the addition of the B flat as opposed to the B natural (see example 3.3).

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'BUTTERFLY'. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is C major (one sharp). The score is divided into four measures. The chords are labeled as VI, V, VI, and V. The V chords are highlighted in cyan, indicating the addition of a B flat. The lyrics are: 'lu - na che scen - de la not - te dal pon - te del'. The piano accompaniment features a bass line with a 7 3 fingering and a treble line with a 7 3 fingering. The V chords are specifically minor v chords with a B flat.

Example 3.3 (I/121/3-4): *Although Butterfly is still singing in the key of C major, the addition of the Bb (highlighted) makes it so her melodic line is harmonized with a mode mixture minor v.*

The mode mixture chord containing the B flat perhaps hints at this change in keys as it happens four measures before the tonicization of F major, which contains only B flat in its key signature. However, besides that this modulation once again seems sudden. At this point the music remains in the dominant area as the orchestra goes through different inversions of the V chord, before ending with a fermata on a diminished $vii\ 4/3$ of F major (I/122/12).

Interestingly, Pinkerton enters again in A major, despite at this point being quite far away from that key tonally (I/121/12). He enters on an E, which can act simultaneously as the leading tone of F major and the fifth scale degree of A major, making for an easy transition back into the original key. This seems to only solidify the fact that A major is the “correct” key. If it wasn’t he would have perhaps spent more time in either C major or F major. The key of A major is once

again strongly established with the introduction of the I chord, which is prolonged through the first few measures. After a while of Pinkerton singing in A major once again with no accidentals besides the typical F, C, and G sharps to convolute what we hear, Butterfly enters once again. This time when she enters, however, her melody seems to suggest D minor due to the F natural as well as the C# (I/122/6-8). This is a short moment in time, however, before she ends up quickly back in A major which Pinkerton promptly picks up again (I/123/0). He then finishes out the piece with an interesting pattern in which there is a back and forth between V7 and I chords, however due to the use of nonharmonic tones on the down beats, the listener does not get to understand what the actual chord is until it becomes more clear on the offbeat. The duet ends with a half-cadence in A major on the V7 chord (I/123/11). The end of the piece is thus left unresolved. Furthermore, despite the next aria directly after containing an A major chord it feels disconnected to the ending of this duet and therefore does not act as a proper resolution of the V7 chord.

Through listening to the duet as well as through examining the score, there is this sense that Pinkerton is leading the way and setting up the tonality, and then as Butterfly tries to follow suit, she falls short. It is also interesting that her key of C major makes it seem as though she is flat because she is just a half step below the sharps of A major. This is perhaps then perpetuated by her quick modulation to F major, as well as the short period of time in which there is the mode mixture v chord. The addition of the B-flat in the key of C could make it sound as though she is flat within that context too, not just in the key of A major. This consistency of her being a half step under in order to change the harmonization or established key is interesting in that it sets her up for never quite being where she is supposed to be harmonically. This is perhaps

another way in which Puccini is “othering” Butterfly and treating her in a way that is musically different from Pinkerton. It is as though she is trying to keep up with him but is not quite able to.

This piece is highly representative of the relationship between Pinkerton and Butterfly because there is this sense that Pinkerton is setting up the melody and Butterfly is trying to follow suit. In the opera, Butterfly expresses that she wants to be a good wife for Pinkerton in the way that she believes he wants her to be. She goes so far as to convert to Christianity, and even remains loyal to him while he is away in the United States, waiting for the day when he will come back. Despite these efforts, however, Pinkerton moves on to another wife. While the audience knows that this is all Pinkerton’s doing, as he had the intention of marrying someone else even before they got married, this led Butterfly to believe that she was not enough for him to stay. This is represented in the song as it appears as though Butterfly is trying to keep up and follow Pinkerton’s lead in this piece, but is not quite able to do so, harmonically speaking. This could perhaps be a musical foreshadowing of what is to come, or a musical representation of their relationship dynamic.

Melodically, there are also very interesting ways in which Puccini has these characters express their lines. Throughout this duet, Butterfly’s melody always seems as though it is growing towards different. Every time she comes in, her melody is trying to reflect what Pinkerton has just sung; however, she never quite gets there. This is seen in Example 3.4, in which Pinkerton’s melody follows a certain melodic contour in which it goes up and down through stepwise motion before ending right where he started on an E. It appears as though Butterfly tries to reflect what Pinkerton is doing, through her use of stepwise motion and the back and forth between building up and then going back down. She, like Pinkerton, begins on the same note that she ends on, which is that same E; however, her journey to get there is much less

straight forward as she goes through D#, G natural, and F natural, all of which are outside of the piece's key of A major. Her reflecting his melody but not quite getting there is reflective of the fact that Pinkerton is melodically taking the lead in this piece. Furthermore, her not quite being able to match this melodic contour or remain within the key is reflective of the fact that she is trying to follow Pinkerton's lead, however despite her best efforts she is not quite able to do so (see example 3.4).

Pinkerton

Butterfly

Example 3.4 (I/120/2-I/121/11): *This is a condensed version of the melodic lines sung by Pinkerton and Butterfly in the duet. Their melodic contour is similar yet not the same, and they do begin and end in the same place.*

As seen in this chapter, this duet represents the dynamic that Butterfly and Pinkerton have. Butterfly tries but fails to fit into his life and to meet his expectations, as seen through the melody as she follows the same melodic contour, however, is singing what sounds like a half step below the F#, C#, and G#. She is also not aware of his true intentions, which is reflected through her singing in a different key. Her not being privy to or able to sing in A major directly reflects the ways in which she is not aware of Pinkerton's plans and is therefore not able to prevent them from happening. As a result, Pinkerton is in charge of propelling the plot and letting the viewer in on information that even Butterfly is not aware of, which is seen through his setting up the melodic contour from the beginning, and the fact that he begins and ends the piece.

Chapter 4: The Portrayal of Emotion in “Un Bel Di”

“Un Bel Di” is perhaps the most popular aria from *Madama Butterfly*. It occurs early in the second act (II/12/0) and takes place as Pinkerton is still in America. It is the first time that the viewer experiences the uninterrupted perspective of Butterfly and how she feels about Pinkerton being away and leaving her in Japan. At this point, she is still unaware of the fact that he has found another wife in the United States. Butterfly expresses, as she looks into the horizon, what she imagines it will be like when Pinkerton comes back on “one beautiful day.” She believes that he will eventually be a husband who is devoted to her and their son.

This aria primarily focuses on a hypothetical situation that Butterfly imagines in which Pinkerton returns and they are happily together. Due to this, some viewers interpret this scene as showcasing Butterfly’s living in denial, while others are able to see this as her resilience and determination to keep her hopes high for herself and her child despite Pinkerton’s long absence. In “Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*: When my Ship Comes,” an episode of the podcast *Aria Code*, host Rhiannon Giddens and guests Ana María Martínez, Huang Ruo, Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, and Kyoko Katayama discuss these various interpretations. Ruo describes the height and softness of the piece as representing Butterfly’s hope, and Martínez describes Butterfly’s loyalty to Pinkerton in this moment as an example of her strength. Martínez also describes how other individuals interpret this aria as a moment of weakness or her simply being a victim. Despite how it may be interpreted, however, it is undeniable that this is an extremely emotional piece, which Puccini very clearly expresses through his musical choices. As my analysis will show, not only is this seen through the instrumentation, however, it is also seen through the choice of melodic contour.

“Un Bel Di” is undeniably beautiful. It forces the audience to give it their undivided attention as they are watching and this is, in part, due to the piece's simple instrumentation. The vocal line is often doubled by the high strings and woodwinds. In fact, besides this voice doubling, there is very little going on instrumentally. There are instances in which other instruments fill in the chords, but for the most part, they are simply following along with what Butterfly is singing. This is showcased clearly in example 4.1.

The image displays a musical score for the opera "Madama Butterfly," specifically the scene "Un Bel Di." The score is written for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist (Butterfly). The tempo is marked "Un poco mosso." and the key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The score is divided into three measures, with the first measure marked "a due" and the second "riten." (ritardando). The third measure is marked "Un poco mosso." and "Sola" (solo). The vocal line is in Italian and German. The instrumental parts are for Flute I and II, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in E-flat, Bassoon, Horns, Trumpets, Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The score is annotated with dynamics (p, mf, f, cresc., div., pizz.) and performance instructions (via sord., unite, tutti, con sord., Sola). The vocal line is highlighted in blue, and the instrumental parts are highlighted in green.

Un poco mosso. a due riten. Un poco mosso.

Fl. I. II. *p* *mf*

Ob. *a due* *p* *mf* *cresc.*

2. Ing. *mf* *cresc.*

Cl^{ti} *p* *mf*

Cl^{ri} *p* *mf*

Fag. *a due* *mf* *cresc.*

Corni *p* *mf* *cresc.* con sord. *f* con sord.

G. C. *mf* Sola *mf*

BUTT. *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

Poi la na-ve bian-ca en-tra nel por-to, rom-ba il suo sa-lu-to.
Und das wei-ße Kriegsschiff, schnell naht sich's dem Ha-fen, donnert den Sa-lut-schuß.

Viol. *via sord.* *mf* *cresc.*

V. le *via sord.* *unite* *mf* *cresc.*

Vc. *Tutti* *p* *mf* *cresc.* *div.*

Cb. *mf* *cresc.* *pizz.*

Un poco mosso. riten. Un poco mosso.

Example 4.1 (II/12/8-13): This doubling of the melody is highlighted in blue while the harmony is highlighted in green.

Due to this simple accompaniment, she is for the first time taking lead musically. This can be seen as she is saying “Poi la nave bianca entra nel porto, romba il suo saluto,” which translates to “It enters into the port, it rumbles its salute” (example 4.1). This is a prime example of what is happening throughout the entirety of the aria due to the fact that the majority of the instruments are emphasizing what Butterfly is saying through their doubling of her part. This is seen especially when she says “romba il suo saluto.” There is some basic harmony here such as from the oboe and French horn, but for the most part every other instrument is playing exactly what she is singing. This draws attention to the importance of what she is singing about, which is imagining the first moment when Pinkerton’s ship comes into the harbor and he is finally home, the moment she has been waiting for this whole time. Puccini, through his emphasis on the melody, highlights what Butterfly is saying and thus draws attention to this moment when Pinkerton and Butterfly are to be reunited. Without this doubling and focus on the melody, it would perhaps not be as apparent that she is finally freely saying what she has been waiting for this whole time.

Puccini’s use of register for Butterfly’s melody is very interesting here, as he utilizes notes that are quite high as well as notes that are quite low in order to bolster what Butterfly is saying and her emotional state as she is saying it. It is clear that everything he is doing is in order to portray her emotion to the listener. “Un Bel Di ” starts with the emphasis on the voice, as Butterfly comes in on Gb5, a highly difficult note to begin a piece with even for the soprano who would be singing the part (II/12/0). This is highlighted once again by the episode of *Aria Code*, as Ruo discusses the difficulty begin an aria on a note that high, while also having it be in tune. This would cause the soprano who is singing to begin very softly. This starts the piece off as being very emotional, not only due to the height of the note but also because of the isolation of

the voice that occurs at the same time. She then goes into her lower range as she drops from the Gb5 down to Db4 (II/12/0-6). This very gradual downward motion as well as the sparsity of other instrumental movement besides the doubling of the vocal line and the soft dynamics draw attention to the fact that this is an inward vision as she is picturing Pinkerton's return back to her. This reflection displayed through the musical techniques of Puccini and the lyrics cues the audience into the fact that they are hearing exactly what she is thinking.

The melody then climbs back up and goes even higher to a G5 as Butterfly talks about the welcoming back of the ship that Pinkerton will be on. As she continues through the piece, she vacillates between the high and low sometimes gradually, however sometimes with sudden downward octave jumps. She doesn't quite make it back up to the G5 or Gb5 until the moment she talks about dying from the excitement of him coming back. This is perhaps used to draw the listeners to this line as a way to foreshadow that his return will, in fact, lead to her death by the end of the opera, but not in the way she is discussing here. After lowering gradually back down to the Db4, there is a quicker rise to the G5 as she talks about her unshaken faith for Pinkerton. Throughout this aria, it seems as though there is a constant draw to either the Gb, which is the tonic, or the G natural, which is just a half step higher. This draw emphasizes the importance of what Butterfly is saying during these moments. When the piece ends, Butterfly sings her final upward build to Bb5, which is the last sung note of this aria as she reaches the word "l'aspetto" or "forever." The height of this ending seems to be the climax of the entire piece, despite taking place at the end. This creates a certain horizontal build throughout "Un Bel Di," which captures the build up of her emotions as she envisions this return. As she gets more invested in her imagining of this reunion, she becomes more emotional and thus her vocal line ascends (example 4.2).

Example 4.2 (II/12/0-16/0): *This a condensed version of Butterfly’s melodic line in “Un Bel Di.”⁶ The numbers below the notes (12-16) indicate the rehearsal numbers. There is a very gradual, but effective build as the height of Butterfly’s vocal line becomes higher (highlighted in blue). She begins on the high Gb5, however, ends on the high Bb5. The yellow highlight indicates where she repeats her melodic line. Note that the second time she sings through this line Butterfly’s melody is changed in order to allow her to make it up to the G faster than before, so that she can then end on the high Bb.*

It could be that the build toward and arrival on the Bb5 represents the anticipation that Butterfly feels as she waits for Pinkerton’s return to her, which we find out later that she will not fully get. Furthermore, this Bb5 is not only the highest note in this aria but is also the highest note that she sings in the entire opera. This further emphasizes the importance of this aria, as the height of the melodic line draws attention to what she is saying not only in this moment, but it makes it seem as though this is her climax in the entire opera.

⁶ This melodic line was condensed via the elimination of any repeat notes that happen in a row.

Harmonically, everything is pretty much within the tonal area of Gb major, with only some exceptions. This is interesting because up to this point it is to be expected that Butterfly is represented by harmonies outside of the established key. This was seen especially in “Bimba Dagli Occhi,” the love duet that was discussed in chapter 3, in which Butterfly’s more chromatic part was juxtaposed with Pinkerton’s diatonic part. In “Un Bel Di,” the clarity of her melody and harmonization without any chromatic complications bolsters the fact that this aria is Butterfly’s chance to clearly and without distraction talk about her current emotions about what has happened in the opera thus far. Having both the melody and supporting harmonies be simple makes it so that nothing is there to distract from or convolute what she is saying.

All of this is representative of what Carolyn Abbate discusses in her work *Unsung Voices*. Because of the difference between this aria and the other pieces that we have heard Butterfly sing, it becomes clear that it is really the first time that Butterfly is in charge telling her own story and expressing herself. These concepts such as the simpler harmonic content and accompaniment, as well as the voice doubling are devices Abbate identifies as tools composers may use to make the narrator clear, and this is clearly seen for the first time within this aria. When compared with Butterfly’s first appearance in the opera as discussed in Chapter 2, where she was completely covered up by not only the other sopranos but also by Sharpless, it becomes even clearer that “Un Bel Di” constitutes the first time we are truly hearing Butterfly express herself.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: The Clipping of Butterfly's Wings

Butterfly's death is a very powerful scene that concludes *Madama Butterfly*. She has just found out that Pinkerton has decided to go back to the U.S. and take their son with him. Butterfly agrees to this, but she says that Pinkerton has to pick up their son himself. It is after this that she chooses to take her own life, and once she does her mind seems made up. She uses a dagger that her father used in order to commit suicide as well, and she discusses how she would rather die an honorable death than live with what she has been going through. Right when she is about to take her life, her son enters and interrupts her. However, instead of this stopping her, it is clear that her mind is made up and she blindfolds her son and completes the act. Just when it is too late, we hear Pinkerton yell Butterfly's name as he runs on stage.

In opera, death is a popular plot point, which is often romanticized. The audience watches as the main character that they have become attached to dies, often on stage as this character is forced to come to terms with the fact that they are going to die (Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 2013). Furthermore, these operas usually have their female main characters end up being the ones who die, as Catherine Clément highlights in her book *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*. Opera makes this death into an arrival point of sorts, as if the entire story has been leading up to and foreshadowing their death.

In *Madama Butterfly* Pinkerton shows how he has no need to be mindful of the harm that he does to Butterfly or her "wings" in "Amore o Grillo" (I/29/0-37/9). This occurs before Butterfly is introduced, and in fact takes place right before her introduction. He is talking about taking away her independence and her freedom as he marries her, which ends up happening as she dedicates her life to him. Once she realizes that he does not want a life with her, she decides

that she can no longer live with that knowledge. Furthermore, the fact that the audience knows from the beginning that Pinkerton is not interested in a genuine marriage with Butterfly makes this even more intense. It adds the component of waiting for her to find out, and wondering what she is going to do about it when she does. Then finally when she does find out and makes the decision to take her own life, it makes it even more heart wrenching, as the anticipation has already built up for the entirety of the opera. Before using it to commit suicide, Butterfly opens the final scene in the opera by reading the inscription on the dagger, which says “Con onor muore chi non può serbar vita con onore,” which translates to “he shall die with honor who no longer can live with honor.” She believes that her decisions pertaining to Pinkerton have been dishonorable, and therefore decides that she cannot live with what she has been through.

Musically, Puccini brings back the same high register that was seen in “Un Bel Di,” as well as an emphasis on the vocal line through sparse accompaniment and simple harmonies in order to once again make it clear that she is expressing herself to the audience truthfully and uninterrupted, which is a rare occurrence. There are even instances where all of the instruments rest while Butterfly continues to sing unaccompanied, something that has not been seen thus far. Furthermore, Butterfly’s vocal line is so high and utilizes so many different quick, complex rhythms that it almost makes it seem as though she isn’t even singing, and more so as if she is frantically yelling (example 5.1).

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a due a tempo animando un poco

Ob.
C. Ing.
Clf. ti
Cl. B.
Fag.
Corni
Timp.
G. C.
Tam-Tam

BUTT.
ro. sa. Non sa- per- lo ma - i — per te, — pei tuoi puri occhi, muor Butterfly... perchè tu
Rosen! Sollst es nie er - fah - ren — für dich, für deine reinen Augen, stirbt Butterfly... daß über's

Viol.
V. le
Vc.
Cb.

*) I Pizzicati debbono essere eseguiti colla massima forza quasi con esagerazione.

animando un poco

Example 5.1 (III/54/13-23): *Butterfly's* vocal line (highlighted in yellow) is high in pitch and rhythmically complex and quick. This is while the instruments have many instances of rest (highlighted in blue) and even instances where no instruments are playing at all (highlighted in green).

The high register used in Butterfly's melodic line not only highlights the raw emotion that we are watching Butterfly experience, but also brings back the concept of the active narrator, which Abbate discusses, and which was also discussed in relation to "Un Bel Di" in chapter 4. Once again, Butterfly is back in the role of active narrator, but in this case, it is unfortunately to express her decision to end her life.

When she dies, Pinkerton sings "Butterfly" three times from offstage so high that it almost seems as though he is yelling (III/57/2-6). This was also seen in Butterfly's melodic line right before she dies as she is singing so high that it similarly sounds as though she is yelling very emotionally as opposed to singing (example 5.1). Soon after, he and Sharpless run out on stage. Despite this being Butterfly's death scene and her being the namesake of the opera, Pinkerton still gets the last word, and he and Sharpless are the last people seen. This ensures that Pinkerton is the last person the audience sees or thinks about before the opera ends, not Butterfly. This gives him the power one final time, something that he has had throughout the entire opera as the person whose actions perpetuates the plot. Furthermore, this final appearance seems like Puccini's attempt to absolve Pinkerton of fault, as he seemingly shows remorse when he finds out what she has done through his yelling her name off stage and then running onstage to look for her. Pinkerton is finally paying attention to her, but by the time he does it is too late.

Madama Butterfly is arguably one of the most well-known operas in the world. Its tragic story and beautiful, heartbreaking music is alluring to anyone who gets the opportunity to watch it. To this day, however, the opera remains controversial for not only the themes presented within the opera itself, but also for decisions made about casting. Although the opera contains several Japanese characters, oftentimes to this day the cast is primarily White people who are dressed in traditional Japanese clothing. Due to a rise of understanding about cultural appropriation, this has

been something that in recent years has been acknowledged and done less, however there is still a long way to go in order to make sure that White people are not cast in these Asian roles.

There have also been modern day reimaginings of *Madama Butterfly*, including *Miss Saigon*. *Miss Saigon* is in itself a very popular musical which has been performed in theaters all around the world. It is based off of the Puccini opera; however, it takes place during the Vietnam war in the 1970s and is therefore a more modern take of the original. The musical, however, has been met with many controversies. Many individuals believe that it is full of harmful stereotypes about Asian women and that it should therefore not be allowed to be performed (Do, 2021). Despite this, however, the musical continues to be performed. Interestingly, while *Madama Butterfly* is seen as controversial as well by some, it has not received nearly the same amount of backlash as *Miss Saigon*. This is perhaps due to the fact that it was written so long ago and is a part of a very old tradition. Regardless, it is interesting to see how *Madama Butterfly* is almost able to get away with more than a more modern rendition inspired by the same story.

The story of Butterfly in *Madama Butterfly* is heartbreaking. She gets married to and has a child with a man who does not love her, and although she is nothing but dedicated to him the whole time, she is the one who is forced to pay the ultimate price through losing her life. Not only that, but the audience knows her fate all along through knowing about Pinkerton's true intentions and through the foreshadowing of her death and lack of independence throughout the opera. Her whole existence in the opera is made up of her reacting to Pinkerton's propelling of the plot. He for the most part is the one who makes the decisions, while she is left to react to them. Two instances where Butterfly defies these odds are when she is singing "Un Bel Di," as discussed in chapter 4, and when she is about to die as she is singing "Con Onor Muore."

And yet in both cases, even though she is narrating how she truly feels, she is still reacting to Pinkerton's actions.

The tropes presented in *Madama Butterfly* go far beyond just the scope of this one opera. In opera in general, women are mistreated, and often killed. Clément's entire book *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* discusses how these women suffer as the audience grows attached to them, and then they end up dying, often at the hands of the man or because of his actions. This begs the question of why these women suffer and why it is because of men. Opera is a very old tradition, which began in a time in which gender roles were very much reflected in society. Through this, these operas, including *Carmen*, *La Boheme*, *Tosca*, and so many more perpetuate these gender roles. If there were to be a man who died at the end of an opera, for example, it would have been much less accepted and questioned a lot more. It is also important to note that the operas in this tradition were all composed by men, which further perpetuates the fact that the dynamic seen in these operas are a direct reflection of society at the time. *Madama Butterfly* is a widely watched opera with an alluring score and a heartbreaking story to tell. It is, however, important to acknowledge the ways in which Puccini treats both Butterfly and Pinkerton differently from a musical standpoint, as well as how this is a part of a much larger trope within opera.

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