PUCCINI
Madama Butterfly

MARIA CALLAS



1955 Recording

Maria Callas • Nicolai Gedda
Lucia Danieli • Mario Borriello
Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan
Herbert von Karajan

NAXOS

Great Opera Recordings

Giacomo

PUCCINI

(1858-1924)

Madama Butterfly

An opera in two acts to a libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica
based on David Belasco's play *Madame Butterfly*

Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) . . . . . Maria Callas (soprano)
B.F. Pinkerton, Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy . . . . . Nicolai Gedda (tenor)
Suzuki, Cio-Cio San's servant . . . . . Lucia Danieli (mezzo-soprano)
Sharpless, U.S. consul at Nagasaki . . . . . Mario Borriello (baritone)
Goro, a marriage broker . . . . . Renato Ercolani (tenor)
Kate Pinkerton . . . . . Luisa Villa (mezzo-soprano)
Prince Yamadori, suitor for Cio-Cio-San . . . . . Mario Carlin (baritone)
The Bonze, Cio-Cio-San's uncle . . . . . Plinio Clabassi (bass)
Imperial Commissioner . . . . . Enrico Campi (bass)

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan
Norberto Mola, Chorus Master
Herbert von Karajan

Recorded 1st – 6th August, 1955 in Teatro alla Scala, Milan
First issued on Columbia 33CX 1296 through 1298

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Maynard F. Bertolet for providing source material

CD 1 — 76:32

Act I — 51:41

1. *E soffitto … e pareti …* 6:28
(Pinkerton, Goro, Suzuki, Sharpless)

2. *Dovunque al mondo* 4:38
(Pinkerton, Sharpless, Goro)

3. *Amore o grillo* 3:33
(Pinkerton, Sharpless, Chorus, Goro)

4. *Quanto cielo! Quanto mar! …* 3:11
Ancora un passo or via
(Chorus, Butterfly)

5. *Gran ventura* 3:43
(Butterfly, Chorus, Pinkerton, Sharpless, Goro)

6. *L'Imperial Commissario* 2:30
(Goro, Pinkerton, Chorus, Butterfly, Cousin, Mother, Yakusidé, Aunt, Sharpless)

7. *Vieni, amor mio!* 4:39
(Pinkerton, Butterfly, Goro)

8. *Tutti zitti!* 3:56
(Goro, Imperial Commissioner, Chorus, Sharpless, Registrar, Pinkerton)

9. *Cio-Cio-San! Cio-Cio-San!* 2:47
(The Bonze, Chorus, Butterfly, Goro, Pinkerton)

10. *Bimba, bimba, non piangere* 1:56
(Pinkerton, Chorus, Butterfly, Suzuki)

11. *Viene la sera* 3:21
(Pinkerton, Butterfly, Suzuki)

12. *Bimba dagli occhi pieni di malia* 3:38
(Pinkerton, Butterfly)

13. *Vogliateme bene, un bene piccolino* 7:20
(Butterfly, Pinkerton)

Act II, Part 1 — 24:51

14. *E Izaghi ed Izanami* 7:26
(Suzuki, Butterfly)

15. *Un bel dì vedremo* 4:37
(Butterfly)

16. *C'è. Entrate* 4:14
(Goro, Sharpless, Butterfly)

17. *Yamadori …* 5:06
(Butterfly, Yamadori, Sharpless, Goro)

18. *Ora a noi* 3:27
(Sharpless, Butterfly)

CD 2 — 62:54

Act II, Part 1 (concluded) — 28:17

1. *Due cose potrei far* 2:33
(Butterfly, Sharpless)

2. *E questo? E questo?* 2:25
(Butterfly, Sharpless)

3. *Che tua madre dovrà* 5:18
(Butterfly, Sharpless)

4. *Vespa! Rospo maledetto!* 2:01
(Suzuki, Butterfly, Goro)

5 *Una nave da guerra …* 2:32
(Suzuki, Butterfly)

6 *Scuoti quella fronda di ciliegio* 5:27
[Flower Duet]
(Butterfly, Suzuki)

7 *Or vienmi ad adornar* 5:02
(Butterfly, Suzuki)

8 "*Humming Chorus*" 3:00
(Chorus)

Act II, Part 2 **34:37**

9 *Oh eh! Oh eh!* 7:38
(Chorus)

10 *Già il sole!* 4:53
(Suzuki, Butterfly, Sharpless, Pinkerton)

11 *Io so che alle sue pene* 4:05
(Sharpless, Pinkerton, Suzuki)

12 *Addio, fiorito asil* 3:04
(Pinkerton, Sharpless, Kate, Suzuki)

13 *Suzuki! Suzuki!* 6:39
(Butterfly, Suzuki, Sharpless, Kate)

14 *Come una mosca prigioniera* 3:37
(Suzuki, Butterfly)

15 *Tu! Tu! Tu!* 3:31
(Butterfly)

16 *Butterfly! Butterfly! Butterfly!* 1:11
(Pinkerton)

Giacomo Puccini (1858 -1924)
Madama Butterfly

When EMI [Columbia/Angel] recorded Callas as Madama Butterfly in August 1955, she had not yet sung it in the theatre, nor would she ever do so at La Scala, Milan, where it was made and her career based. In November that year, three months after it was completed it was first published in the United States, when she ventured three performances; the only time she ever would, at the end of her second and last season with the Chicago Lyric Opera; the last time she would sing in opera there. The most [in]famous photograph of her ever taken was backstage immediately after that last performance when she is still clad as Butterfly. A startled looking process-server is hastening away having just satisfied legal requirements and thrust a writ into her kimono; she is shrieking after him, her mouth contorted in a hyena-like snarl. In a trice, the world's press translated her from the arts section into a front-page personality.

Contrary to legend Callas was not a famous Puccini singer. In her Athens days she appeared as Suor Angelica and Tosca. Later, during her first years in Italy, she sang Tosca in a number of provincial theatres, and abroad at Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, but there are few reviews of her performances and those that there are, at least by the standards she was accustomed to even then, are not very revelatory or enthusiastic. She appeared in it at the Met in two seasons, 1956/7 and 1957/8, but only because its repertory was narrow and there was little else; she was for ever complaining about it. Not until the end of her stage career was she able to make an effect as Tosca, by which time her histrionic skill, adeptly supported by Zeffirelli, notwithstanding fast failing vocal powers, had matured. Turandot she sang at the beginning of her international career in Italy and South America on 24 occasions in 1948 and 1949, but save for a recording she did not undertake it again: 'It's not really very good for the voice', she admitted. She recorded Mimì [1956] and Manon Lescaut [1957], but neither would she undertake on stage.

The star of the set is Karajan. Recorded less than fifty years after the première of the opera, it enables us to admire how eloquent the beautifully idiomatic performance of La Scala's orchestra and chorus could be in a *verismo* opera and under the sway of a front-ranking conductor then at the height of his powers. Unfortunately the singers are not so successful. The Swedish/Russian lyric tenor, Nicolai Gedda, although still young, he was only thirty, is a refined musician of considerable linguistic skill and has an easy, well-blended head register; what he lacks, however, is the one thing essential that Pinkerton calls for, a sensual Italianate vocal quality to match the melodies: in the duet *O quanti occhi fissi* and aria *Addio fiorito asil*.

When Callas undertook Butterfly in Chicago, critics were unconvinced. Roger Dettmer, in the 'Chicago American', who describes himself as 'Callas-crazy for more than a year', having been at all her performances during the two seasons, Norma, Violetta, Lucia, Elvira in *I Puritani* and Leonora in *Il trovatore,* expresses his disappointment. '[It] is scaled for an intimate house … [s]uch a setting would require a measure less of coyness of expression and deportment in the first act, but it would reward all present with the subtle Callas conception, and one that may yet find maturity.' Cassidy, in the 'Chicago Tribune', no less a Callas acolyte, was also disappointed: '[the] full-throated, soaring ardour was seldom heard … Not even its love duet was the flood of melody to send the pulses pounding … This was charming make-believe, but it was not Cio-Cio-San, nor was it the ultimate Callas.' She went again, as if she were anxious to give her another try, by this time she is unequivocal. 'If it were anyone else, I would say the music does not lie in her throat'.

Records of her Butterfly confirm the Chicago critics. In Act I, instead of just singing she seems to speak the music, as she fancies, *à la japonaise;* but she should have remembered this music is occidental, not oriental. It is not in the pages of quasi-recitative that the music is memorably encapsulated but in the famous lyric passages: the *Entrance*, the *Love Duet*, *Un bel dì* and the *Flower Duet*. True, as is typical with all her

recordings, there are many impeccable details. For example, the faultless way she attacks the unaccompanied G flat at the beginning of *Un bel dì*; it recalls Eduard Hanslick, the famous Vienna critic in 1877, and Adelina Patti [1843-1919] with her unerringly precise sense of pitch when she encored the Jewel Song. 'Without giving any signal to the orchestra, she attacked the trill on the B natural. The orchestra entered in the next measures, and all was precisely in tune.' In the death scene, *Con onor muore*, which I heard Callas sing in concert in 1963 when her career was pretty well over, she was still able to create a memorable effect shaping the phrases and colouring her tone. As she admits to Lord Harewood, after venturing another *verismo* rôle in only one season, Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier:* 'I know I vary … but I am always trying to do something and only sometimes will it be successful.'

Nicolai Gedda [b.1925] is one of the greatest lyric tenors of the twentieth century and unquestionably the most versatile. Born in Stockholm, his father was a Russian who sang in the Don Cossack Choir; after a brief interval in Leipzig, where the family went when his father was appointed cantor with the Orthodox Church, they returned to Stockholm in 1934. There it was that young Nicolai discovered his voice and began his studies with a distinguished teacher, Carl Martin Ohmann. He made his début in 1951 in the altitudinous tenor rôle of Chapdelou in Adam's *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*. His career over fifty years took him to pretty well all the leading opera houses throughout Europe and America, and he sang a vast repertory in pretty well every language, in operas like *Oberon, Don Giovanni, Boris Godunov, La sonnambula, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, I vespri siciliani, L'elisir d'amore, Der Barbier von Bagdad, Mireille, La traviata, I Puritani, Faust,* among many others. Equally renowned as a concert singer, he appeared in recital with piano and in liturgical works with orchestra. His recording career was no less exceptional; one of the busiest undertaken by any singer, it also included operetta and other music he did not venture in public. Even in the 21st century, at Covent Garden, he was still singing and in for him a new rôle, the Archbishop in Pfitzner's *Palestrina*.

The mezzo soprano **Lucia Danieli** [1929-2005] was born at Arzignano near Vincenza in the Veneto, and studied at Florence with Arrigo Pedrollo. It was there at the Comunale that she made her first stage appearance as Clotilda in *Norma* on 30th November, 1948, in company with Callas, who was then undertaking her most famous rôle the first time. In 1952 Danieli sang Cieca in *La Gioconda* making her début at La Scala, also in company with Callas; and this occasion would prove the last time Callas sang Gioconda. Danieli was a typical Italian mezzo-soprano of her day; although there were others with voices more characteristic, and more revealing musical executants. Still, as Azucena in *Il trovatore*, in which I saw her at Genoa in 1966, there may have been no trills in '*Stride la vampa*', but in the fashion of *verismo,* she packed a punch and had no difficulty bringing the house down.

The Italian baritone **Mario Borriello** [1914-2000] was in fact born in Vienna but travelled to Italy as a boy where he studied voice and made his début at the Rome Opera in 1942, during World War II, as Silvio in *Pagliacci*. He took part in a number of seasons during the next quarter of a century: at the Comunale Florence, La Scala Milan and the San Carlo Naples. It was not, the evidence of this recording suggests, a particularly large instrument, nor did it possess an especially individual quality, but a rôle like Sharpless does not need it. His career continued until his mid50s.

Herbert von Karajan [1908-1989] was undoubtedly the most famous conductor in Europe since Toscanini. A native of Salzburg, after graduating from the Academy in Vienna he made his opera début at Ulm in 1929 conducting *Le nozze di Figaro*. In 1934 he joined the Nazi Party and moved to Aachen. After another three years he arrived at the Vienna Staatsoper and then at the Berlin Staatsoper, conducting *Fidelio, Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*. The swift progress of 'Das Wunder Karajan', as he was described by a critic, was interrupted only by the end of the war and denazification, but his fallow period did not last long. In 1946 his career took off again when Walter Legge, EMI's record producer, had him make his first LPs with the Philharmonia Orchestra. After 1948 he started to

appear regularly at La Scala, Milan; after 1953, and the death of Furtwängler, he became chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; after 1956, artistic director of the Salzburg Festival; and after 1957, director at the Vienna Staatsoper. But to continue his story beyond the time he made this recording, notwithstanding his increasing eminence through the remaining thirty years of his career, as recordings suggest, show his art subject to the laws of marginal diminishing returns.

Michael Scott
is the author of *Maria Meneghini Callas*

Producer's Note

The present transfer of *Madama Butterfly* was made from the best portions of two mid-1950s British LP pressings. Some occasional noises and overload distortion are present in the original tape master.

Mark Obert-Thorn

CD 1

Act 1

It is 1904. The scene is outside a small Japanese house, set on a hill overlooking the port of Nagasaki. There is a terrace and a garden, and, in the distance below, the harbour and city.

1 The orchestra introduces Act I with a busy opening theme, followed by a second theme of more overtly Japanese character. As the curtain rises, the obsequious marriage-broker Goro is seen showing Pinkerton the delights of the little house on the hill, and demonstrating the use of the partitions that screen one room from another. Pinkerton is surprised at what he sees, to the delight of Goro, who explains further. Pinkerton asks where the marriage chamber is, and Goro shows how rooms can be made by moving the screen-walls. Pinkerton understands that the building is as fragile as a house of cards, but Goro reassures him of its solidity, and claps his hands. At this sign two men and a woman come in and bow down before Pinkerton. Goro introduces them as Pinkerton's wife's servant, a cook and a man-servant, naming them as Gentle Cloud, Rising Sun and Wafted Spices. The first of these, Suzuki, remains kneeling and embarks on a long speech, praising Pinkerton's smile, and citing the sage Okunama on the subject. She rises and follows Pinkerton who has moved away in the garden, assuring him that a smile disentangles the web of sorrows. Pinkerton shows impatience and Goro, sensing this, claps his hands again, and the three servants retire at once into the house. All women are alike, Pinkerton remarks, and Goro now expects the imminent arrival of Cio-Cio-San, since all is now ready. Goro announces the approach of the wedding-party, the Registrar, the relations, the American consul and the bride. Pinkerton asks if there are many relatives, and Goro lists Cio-Cio-San's mother, her grandmother, her uncle, the Bonze, who is not likely to come, and a host of cousins, some two dozen of them. Pinkerton and Butterfly will, of course, provide ample progeny, Goro continues, bowing obsequiously. The voice of the consul Sharpless is heard, exhausted by the climb. Goro announces the consul's arrival, bowing down, and Pinkerton greets him, shaking hands, and telling Goro to see to some refreshment. The view is a fine one, Pinkerton points out; and the place is high up, Sharpless complains, but admires the distant city, the sea and the harbour. Pinkerton claims that the house obeys the stroke of a wand and, as Goro bustles in, followed by two servants with bottles and glasses, explains that he has bought the place for 999 years, with the right to leave it at a month's notice, Japanese contracts are as elastic as Japanese houses. Sharpless remarks that some have found this profitable. They sit at a table on the terrace to take their refreshment.

2 Pinkerton sings in praise of the life of a roving Yankee, anchoring where he will. He offers Sharpless milk punch or whisky, and goes on to explain how then, one day, he may sail away: life is to enjoy, a view that Sharpless finds a simple gospel, but destroying the heart. Pinkerton, however, is happy to enjoy an arrangement that he has undertaken for 999 years, but which can be abrogated at a month's notice. They raise their glasses to America, to the continued strains of The Star-Spangled Banner. Pinkerton and Sharpless sit once more, and the latter asks if the bride is beautiful, bringing from Goro praise of her beauty, comparable to a garland of fresh flowers, a star with golden beams, and only costing a hundred yen. He offers Sharpless an assortment of such beauties. Pinkerton impatiently tells him to fetch Butterfly and he hurries away.

3 Pinkerton sings of his love, or passing fancy, the delicacy of Cio-Cio-San, like a figure on a Japanese screen, a graceful butterfly. Sharpless tells Pinkerton that he has not seen Butterfly, but heard her voice, when she visited the consulate: her love for Pinkerton is sincere and should not be treated lightly. Pinkerton

offers his guest whisky and they drink to Pinkerton's family in America and the latter adds a toast to his future wife, a true American.

4 The distant sound of Butterfly's friends is heard, as Goro rushes in to announce the imminent arrival of the wedding-party. Pinkerton and Sharpless move to the back of the garden, from where they can see the road up the hill. The friends of Butterfly are heard praising the beauty of the scene, the sky, the sea. Butterfly herself adds her own voice to their admiration: she is the happiest girl in Japan, in the world, at the call of love. The procession comes gradually into view, many of the girls carrying different coloured parasols.

5 They see Pinkerton, shut their parasols, and, after Butterfly, greet him. They advance ceremoniously towards Pinkerton, who remarks on the difficulty of the ascent to the house, but Butterfly declares her impatience to be there the greater. Pinkerton with some irony offers his compliments, which Butterfly ingenuously returns. Sharpless compliments Miss Butterfly and asks her if she is from Nagasaki. She tells him that her family there was once prosperous: no-one ever admits to being born poor and even a vagabond claims noble lineage, but the strongest oaks can be uprooted in storms, and she is now a geisha. Sharpless, interested, asks if she has sisters, but she tells him she has only her mother - a noble lady, Goro adds - now impoverished. In reply to his tactless question, she admits that her father is dead, as Goro looks embarrassed and her companions fan themselves nervously. Sharpless asks Butterfly how old she is and with child-like simplicity she asks him to guess: ten - no, more than that; twenty - no, fifteen, an old woman. The age for children's games, says Sharpless, and for sweets, adds Pinkerton.

6 Goro now announces the arrival of important officials, the Imperial Commissioner and the Registrar. Butterfly's relatives appear, greeting her friends and regarding the two Americans with some curiosity, to Pinkerton's expressed amusement. The officials greet Pinkerton and are taken into the house by Goro. [Butterfly's relations now express their opinions of Pinkerton, who may not be handsome, but is presumably rich. Pinkerton guesses his mother-in-law to be somewhere among the open fans and identifies Butterfly's drunken fool of an uncle, Yakusidé. Butterfly's family is equally uncomplimentary, expecting the worst of the match, while Goro goes among them, telling them to speak more softly. They continue their disparagement: Yakusidé hopes for wine, but there is not even tea for the guests. Some express more complimentary views on Pinkerton's appearance, while Butterfly's cousin claims that Goro had given her first choice in the matter, but she had turned him down. At a sign from Goro the guests come together in a group, still chattering among themselves. Sharpless congratulates Pinkerton, who is happy with the girl who has turned his head. Sharpless warns him that Butterfly is serious in her affection, while she calls her mother and relatives, childishly instructing them to bow to Pinkerton and Sharpless.]

7 The visitors disperse, some to see the garden, some the house. Pinkerton takes Butterfly's hand and leads her towards the house, asking what she thinks of it. She takes out some of the precious things she has brought with her, carried in the sleeves of her kimono, and hands these objects over to Suzuki, neckerchiefs, a pipe, a sash, a little clasp, a looking-glass, a fan, a cosmetic jar. The last of these she throws aside, suspecting Pinkerton's displeasure. Finally she holds something more precious, not for all to see, which she carries into the house. Goro, who has reappeared, explains in Pinkerton's ear that it is a present from the Emperor to Butterfly's father, with a command that he had obeyed. Butterfly returns with the Ottokid. Pinkerton examines them curiously, and Butterfly explains that these are the souls of her ancestors. She tells him how she has visited the Christian mission, but her uncle, the Bonze, knows

nothing of it: she must follow the god of Pinkerton, to kneel in prayer with him to the same deity and forget her own gods. She throws herself into his arms, but then holds back, afraid to be overheard by her family.

8 Goro opens the room-screen, revealing everything ready for the wedding. Sharpless is there, with the officials, and Butterfly enters and kneels, while Pinkerton stands, with the relatives in the garden now kneeling. Japanese bells sound, and the Imperial Commissioner announces permission for Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of the ship Lincoln, an officer of the American navy, to marry the girl Butterfly, he by his own will, she by permission of her family. Pinkerton signs the marriage document, followed by Butterfly, and Goro announces that all is completed. Her friends come forward to congratulate Butterfly, now Madama Pinkerton. The officials bring their task to an end and the Commissioner congratulates Pinkerton, who thanks him. He accompanies Sharpless out, the latter promising to see Pinkerton the next day. The Registrar takes his leave, to go down with the other two to the city, but Sharpless turns with one last word of warning to Pinkerton. Now I am with my family, Pinkerton remarks to himself, as servants offer sake to the guests. He drinks their health, and they in turn toast the newly married pair.

9 The scene is interrupted by angry cries from the path, at which the company grows pale with alarm. Cio-Cio-San, the voice shouts, abomination. It is Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze, who makes his appearance, preceded by two porters bearing lanterns and followed by two bonzes. The Bonze stretches a threatening hand towards Butterfly and demands an account of what she has done at the Christian mission. Pinkerton is angry, but the Bonze continues, his question repeated by Butterfly's relations, scandalised at this revelation of her infidelity. She covers her face with her hands and her mother steps forward to defend her, while the Bonze pushes her back and shouts menacingly at the girl, threatening eternal punishment on her soul. Pinkerton interrupts, impatient. The Bonze, surprised, turns to the guests and tells them to come away with him, leaving the renegade. Pinkerton bids them all be gone: in his house he wants no disturbance and no priest-craft. At his words they all hurry towards the path, to return down to the city. Her mother tries to approach Butterfly, but is prevented by the others, and the Bonze and his acolytes take the same path down the hill, leaving Butterfly and Pinkerton alone. She remains for a time, her hands over her face, while Pinkerton goes to the head of the path to see that they have all gone. The menacing voices of her uncle and relatives are heard, as they descend the path, while evening falls.

10 Pinkerton approaches her and gently takes her hands away from her face, telling her not to cry, but she can still hear their curses. Pinkerton assures her that all her family and all the Bonzes in Japan are not worth her tears. She begins to be comforted and kisses his hand, a sign, she thinks, of respect among educated people. The voice of Suzuki is heard, at her prayers, as Butterfly explains to Pinkerton. It grows darker, as Pinkerton leads Butterfly towards the house.

11 The evening draws on, he tells her, but she cannot forget what she had heard: now she is alone and a renegade to her faith. Pinkerton claps his hands and Suzuki and the servants come running in. He tells them to shut the house for the night: now they are alone, she says, and with no mad Bonze to worry them, he adds. Suzuki comes to prepare Butterfly for the night. Butterfly, helped by Suzuki, prepares herself for the night, taking off her bridal dress, and donning a white robe. She sits on a cushion and looks at herself in the glass.

12 Pinkerton tells her of his love for her, now she is his alone. Dressed in white, she is like the goddess of the moon. They stand together, looking at the heavens. She has a moment of fear, as if hearing again the cries of her

family, but then turns again to Pinkerton, whose love will put to flight all sorrow.

13 Night has fallen. Butterfly kneels before Pinkerton and looks at him with tender supplication, seeking his love, but when he compares her with a real butterfly, she takes fright: in America butterflies are caught and killed with a needle through the body, fixed to a board. That, Pinkerton assures her, is so that they do not fly away. Comforted she looks again at the beauty of the stars, as Pinkerton leads her into the house.

Act II, Part 1

14 The scene is inside Butterfly's house. The room is half in darkness, with the screen-doors closed. Suzuki is praying before an image of the Buddha, from time to time sounding the prayer-bell. Butterfly stands in thought, as Suzuki's prayers continue, begging the gods to comfort her mistress. Butterfly finds the gods of Japan useless: the American god is better, but he does not know where she lives. Suzuki rises and opens the screen-door to the garden, and Butterfly asks her how much money they have left. Suzuki takes up a little moneybox and shows her how little they now have: if Pinkerton does not return soon, they will be in the greatest difficulties. Butterfly is still confident, otherwise why should Pinkerton have asked the consul to continue providing for them or have seen to locks for the house. Suzuki has never heard of a foreign husband who came back again, but Butterfly tells her to be quiet: he had promised to return when the roses bloom and the robin builds his nest. Suzuki remains sceptical, but her mistress is confident.

15 One fine day, we shall see smoke on the horizon and then his ship will appear, white in the harbour. Butterfly will wait for him, and will see a little white figure emerge from the city, gradually, as he climbs the hill, revealing Pinkerton. For a moment she will tease him by hiding and then reveal herself, and all will be as before.

16 Goro and Sharpless enter the garden. Goro looks at the house and tells Sharpless to go in, before moving off into the garden. The consul knocks gently at the inner screen-door, calling her name. She corrects him: she is Madame Pinkerton. She turns and recognises Sharpless, delighted to welcome him to an American house, while Suzuki sets a table with material for smoking. The consul sits down clumsily on a cushion, regarded with amusement by Butterfly, who asks politely after his ancestors, as she signals to Suzuki to prepare a pipe for him. He takes a letter from his pocket, the purpose of his visit, while Butterfly takes a puff at the pipe, before handing it to him. He refuses it, and she offers him American cigarettes, now rather dry, but he again refuses. Coming at last to the point, Sharpless tells her that he has had a letter from Pinkerton, interrupted by her exclamations of delight. Suzuki is preparing tea, and Butterfly asks the consul if he can tell her when robins nest in America, a question he finds puzzling, until she explains that that is when Pinkerton has said he will return. Goro, meanwhile, has approached and is listening to what she says. He laughs at her ingenuous trust in her husband and she catches sight of him and acknowledges his presence, not wanting him, though, to overhear her conversation. Sharpless, in any case, cannot tell her about the nesting habits of the robin, and will not explain the meaning of her husband's promise.

17 She tells him that Goro has been pestering her with offers of marriage from various suitors, particularly one idiot. Here Goro interrupts, telling the consul that the suitor is the rich man Yamadori: Butterfly has been cast off by her family and she is poor. At this moment the palanquin of Yamadori is seen approaching. He descends and greets the consul and Butterfly, who remains kneeling in the room, while he takes a seat on the terrace. Butterfly mocks her suitor, whose divorces have left him free. Yamadori, however, would be

faithful to her. Sharpless expresses his fears of revealing the contents of the letter he holds, while Goro urges the suit of Yamadori, and Butterfly declares herself married by American law, not Japanese, to the increased dismay of Sharpless. American laws, she declares, are different, and magistrates punish husbands who try to desert their wives. She breaks off to tell Suzuki to bring tea. The men can do nothing: Sharpless is worried at her credulity, while Goro says that Pinkerton's ship has already been signalled. Sharpless tells them that he has come to undeceive Butterfly, whose return with tea cuts short the conversation. She offers tea to Sharpless and, opening her fan, gestures disparagingly at the other two, who now take their leave. Yamadori still hopes for success, but bids Sharpless farewell and steps into his palanquin.

18 Sharpless sits down and courteously invites Butterfly to be seated, drawing Pinkerton's letter from his pocket. She takes the letter, kisses it and holds it to her heart: Pinkerton is the best man in the world. She hands the letter back and prepares to listen to its contents. Sharpless reads out aloud. Pinkerton tells him to seek out that beautiful flower of a girl - does he really say that, Butterfly asks. Three years have now passed - Butterfly interrupts again, in praise of Pinkerton's accuracy - and perhaps Butterfly no longer remembers him. Again she interrupts, calling Suzuki to witness her fidelity. If she still wishes him well and still waits for him - sweet words, she cries - Sharpless must carefully prepare her for the blow. Butterfly does not understand the import of the words: Pinkerton is coming back, and she is overjoyed. Sharpless puts the letter back in his pocket, cursing Pinkerton under his breath, and asks Butterfly what she will do if Pinkerton never comes back.

CD 2

Act 2, Part 1 (concluded)

1 Butterfly pauses, dumbfounded, and then replies with childish innocence, telling the consul that she can do two things, return to her life singing to entertain people or, better, die. Sharpless, moved, turns and takes her hands in his, urging her, in a fatherly tone, to accept Yamadori. She withdraws her hands: how can Sharpless give her such advice? He is nonplussed, and Butterfly claps her hands, summoning Suzuki to see the consul out. Suddenly sorry for her haste, she sends Suzuki out again, and Sharpless apologizes for his cruelty. Butterfly tells him he has caused her great pain. She staggers for a moment, but recovers: she seemed for a moment to die, death like a cloud passing over the sea.

2 Butterfly asks if Sharpless has forgiven her, and, suddenly resolute, runs into the room to the left and returns, triumphantly holding her child, something that Pinkerton cannot ignore. She sets the child down on the floor and asks Sharpless if he has ever seen a Japanese child with blue eyes, lips like this, and golden hair. Pinkerton, she tells him, does not know, because the child was born after he left: the consul must write and tell him that his son is waiting for him and he must hurry home. She kneels by the side of the boy and kisses him tenderly: surely Pinkerton cannot hesitate.

3 Butterfly holds the boy up again: must his mother now carry him through wind and rain through the city and beg, to keep them both in food and clothing, crying out for charity? While the child plays unconcernedly with a doll, she laments that she must dance and sing, as a geisha once more, her song of joy ending in sorrow. She throws herself on her knees before Sharpless, declaring death preferable to such a fate, and falling to the floor by the side of her child, whom she now embraces passionately.

Butterfly excuses herself for the moment and gently offers Sharpless her hand, then putting the child's hand in the consul's. He admires the boy and asks his name. She tells him that today his name is Dolore (Sorrow), but the day his father returns he will be Gioia (Joy). Sharpless promises to let Pinkerton know. Sharpless takes his leave.

4 The voice of Suzuki is heard, shouting abuse, and she comes into the room, dragging in Goro, who tries in vain to break away. She tells Butterfly that this vampire has been spreading rumours about the paternity of the child. Goro justifies himself, claiming that he has only said that in America a child like this would be an outcast all his life. With a cry Butterfly seizes a knife from the household shrine and accuses Goro of lying. He falls to the ground, calling out in fear, while Butterfly threatens him with death, if he repeats such a lie. Suzuki picks the child up and carries him into the room on the left. Butterfly spurns Goro with her foot, and he makes his escape. She stands motionless for a moment, and then puts the knife back, thinking now of her child, to her both a sorrow and a comfort: his father and protector will come and take him away to a far land. At this moment the sound of a cannon is heard.

5 Suzuki sees a warship in the harbour, and Butterfly, who joins her on the terrace, sees that the ship is white and flying the American flag. She takes a telescope from the little table and runs again to the terrace, trembling with emotion, trying to decipher the name of the ship - Abraham Lincoln. In joy she hands the telescope to Suzuki and goes back into the room, her faith in Pinkerton justified, now that her love has come back to her.

6 She tells Suzuki to gather blossom from the cherry-tree. How long must they wait? One hour? Longer, Suzuki thinks. Two hours perhaps? The whole house must be full of flowers, as the night is full of shining stars, Butterfly orders, urging Suzuki into the garden. Must she pick all the flowers, she asks, but her mistress wants all of them, peach-blossom, violet, jasmine. The garden will be like winter, Suzuki complains, but in the house, Butterfly says, it will be spring. They busy themselves decorating the house with flowers: now the long, sad period of waiting and watching is over. Suzuki has gathered all the flowers and helps her mistress, garlanding the room with lilies and roses and scattering petals.

7 Suzuki sets two lamps on the low dressing-table, where Butterfly is preparing herself, but first the child must be dressed. The sun is setting, as Suzuki puts the boy down by his mother, who looks at herself in the glass, regarding her faded beauty. She takes rouge for her cheeks, and for her son, while Suzuki sees to her hair. Now the Bonze's curse has come to nothing and she can be rid of Yamadori. Butterfly asks Suzuki to bring her wedding robe, which she dons, while Suzuki dresses the child. Pinkerton will be delighted to see her as he did on that first day. She tells Suzuki to put a poppy in her hair and makes three holes in the screen, so that, like little mice, they can watch in secret. The night grows darker and Suzuki closes the door-screen. The three of them remain by the door-screen, in which holes have been made for them to look out.

8 They patiently await Pinkerton's arrival, accompanied by the distant humming of unseen voices. The little boy falls asleep, as does Suzuki, but Butterfly remains watching.

Act II, Part 2

9 The orchestra introduces the last part of the drama, hinting at the tragedy to come. Dawn is breaking and Butterfly is seen, motionless, still watching, while the other two sleep. The distant cries of sailors are heard and the sounds of activity in the harbour.

The far-away sound of the French horn heralds daybreak: birds sing in the garden, as the sun rises.

10 Suzuki awakes with a start, rises and taps Butterfly on the shoulder. He will come, she says, you will see, picking up her sleeping child, to carry him into the adjacent room. Suzuki tells her to rest: she will wake her when Pinkerton comes. Butterfly's voice is heard from the next room, as she nurses her child in her arms. Suzuki pities her mistress. A gentle knocking is heard and she calls out to know who it is. Pinkerton tells her to be silent as he and Sharpless tiptoe in. Suzuki tells them that Butterfly is exhausted after watching all night. In reply to Pinkerton's question, she tells him that they knew of his arrival, because for three years her mistress has examined every ship that came into the harbour for signs of his return: yesterday they decked the house with flowers. Sharpless, deeply moved, reminds Pinkerton of what he has already told him of Butterfly's fidelity and love. Suzuki sees a strange woman in the garden and, with increasing agitation, asks who it is. Pinkerton, embarrassed, explains that the woman is with him, but it is Sharpless who reveals the truth: the woman is Pinkerton's wife. Suzuki, horrified, raises her arms to heaven then fails prostrate on the ground, calling on the holy spirits of her ancestors, now that Butterfly's sun has set for ever. Sharpless tries to explain that they have sought her out so early in the morning for her help in dealing with Butterfly.

11 Sharpless can offer little comfort but Pinkerton's American wife will take good care of the child and his future. As he urges Suzuki to persuade Butterfly to surrender the child, Pinkerton, in some agitation, paces the room, seeing the flowers, smelling their bitter fragrance, and recalling the past. Suzuki is appalled at the proposal of the consul, while Pinkerton notices now his own portrait. He cannot bear to see Butterfly and tells Sharpless he will wait for him outside, full of remorse. Sharpless reminds him of his earlier warnings, now fulfilled.

12 Pinkerton, in sorrow, bids a passionate farewell to his former love, leaving the consul and his wife Kate to see to matters. Suzuki now comes from the garden, followed by Kate, who speaks gently to Suzuki, reminding her of her promise to speak to Butterfly on what has been proposed: Kate will be a mother to Butterfly's child. Suzuki tells her that she must speak to Butterfly alone, she will weep so much.

13 Now Butterfly's voice is heard, calling Suzuki. She appears at the door of the room, and Kate, anxious not to be seen, retires into the garden. Suzuki assures her that she has not deserted her post, but tries unsuccessfully to prevent her coming into the room. Butterfly is jubilant: Pinkerton is here, but where is he hiding? She sees Sharpless, but Pinkerton is not to be seen. Suddenly she catches sight of Kate in the garden, and looks fixedly at Sharpless, asking him who the woman is and what she wants. Suzuki sobs quietly to herself, and Butterfly now begins to guess what has happened. Like a child, Butterfly addresses Suzuki, begging her not to cry, but to say just yes or no: is Pinkerton still alive? Yes. But they have told you he will not come back? Suzuki is silent. Butterfly, in anger, demands an answer. He will never return. Now Butterfly understands and looks at Kate in fascination, a woman who strikes such fear into her. Sharpless explains that Kate is the innocent cause of her sorrow. Full realisation dawns: Kate is Pinkerton's wife, and now for Butterfly all has ended: they even want to take her son. Sharpless urges her to make this sacrifice for the child, and Butterfly, distraught, now agrees, since her husband must be obeyed. Kate approaches, asking forgiveness, and Butterfly greets her as the happiest of women, telling her to feel no sadness for her. She will give the child to Pinkerton, if he comes for him.

14 Kate and Sharpless leave, and Butterfly falls weeping to the ground. Suzuki runs to help her, putting her hand on her mistress's heart, which beats like the wings of an imprisoned fly. Aware that it is now full

day, Butterfly tells Suzuki there is too much light, too much of spring, and bids her shut the door-screen, so that the room is now in half darkness. She asks where her son is, and Suzuki tells her that he is playing. Butterfly tells her to play with him, but Suzuki is at first reluctant to leave her, until her mistress commands her to do so. Butterfly now kneels before the image of the Buddha, motionless and in sad thought. Then, rising, she goes to the household-shrine and takes from it the dagger, kept there in a lacquered box. She kisses the blade and tries the point with her hand, then reading with a low voice the words inscribed-on it: "He who can no longer live with honour, dies honourably".

15 She puts the dagger to her throat, but the door suddenly opens, and Suzuki pushes the boy towards his mother, who drops the dagger and embraces and kisses him. She then bids her child farewell, now that he can travel to another land and no longer be troubled by her. She takes the child and blindfolds him, putting in his hands an American flag and telling him to play. She then picks up the dagger and moves behind the screen. The dagger is heard falling and Butterfly struggles towards the boy, embracing him once more, before collapsing.

16 At this moment the voice of Pinkerton is heard, as he climbs the hill to the house. The door opens violently and Pinkerton and Sharpless rush in. Butterfly can only gesture towards the child, as she dies. Pinkerton falls on his knees by her side, while Sharpless sees to the child. The tragedy has run its course.

Keith Anderson

Mark Obert-Thorn

Mark Obert-Thorn is one of the world's most respected transfer artist/engineers. He has worked for a number of specialist labels, including Pearl, Biddulph, Romophone and Music & Arts. Three of his transfers have been nominated for Gramophone Awards. A pianist by training, his passions are music, history and working on projects. He has found a way to combine all three in the transfer of historical recordings.

Obert-Thorn describes himself as a 'moderate interventionist' rather than a 'purist' or 're-processor,' unlike those who apply significant additions and make major changes to the acoustical qualities of old recordings. His philosophy is that a good transfer should not call attention to itself, but rather allow the performances to be heard with the greatest clarity.

There is no over-reverberant 'cathedral sound' in an Obert-Thorn restoration, nor is there the tinny bass and piercing mid-range of many 'authorised' commercial issues. He works with the cleanest available 78s, and consistently achieves better results than restoration engineers working with the metal parts from the archives of the modern corporate owners of the original recordings. His transfers preserve the original tone of the old recordings, maximising the details in critical upper mid-range and lower frequencies to achieve a musical integrity that is absent from many other commercially released restorations.

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

NAXOS Historical

PUCCINI: Madama Butterfly

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ADD

Giacomo
PUCCINI
(1858 – 1924)

Madama Butterfly

Playing Time 2:19:26

Madama Butterfly	Maria Callas
B. F. Pinkerton	Nicolai Gedda
Suzuki	Lucia Danieli
Sharpless	Mario Borriello
Goro	Renato Ercolani
Kate Pinkerton	Luisa Villa
Prince Yamadori	Mario Carlin
The Bonze	Plinio Clabassi
Imperial Commissioner	Enrico Campi

Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala, Milan
Norberto Mola, Chorus Master
Herbert von Karajan
Recorded 1st – 6th August, 1955
at Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Twenty years after the death of Maria Callas, *The Gramophone* critic J. B. Steane wrote of this 1955 recording of *Madama Butterfly*: "Callas' Butterfly! That I would keep till last in the dreaded shipwreck, earthquake, house on fire, or whatever… she is the best of all recorded Madama Butterflies". The recording is further distinguished by beautifully idiomatic performances from the Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Herbert von Karajan who, already at the peak of his powers, had been approached by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to become their Chief Conductor.

CD 1		76:32	CD 2		62:54
1-13	Act I	51:41	1-8	Act II, Part 1 (concluded)	28:17
14-18	Act II, Part 1	24:51	9-16	Act II, Part 2	34:37

Reissue Producer and Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Maynard F. Bertolet for providing source material
Cover photo: Maria Callas posing as Cio-Cio-San at home, Milan, Summer 1955
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