

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE April 28, 2010  
CONTACT Selina Rajani, 604-331-4824  
[srajani@vancouveropera.ca](mailto:srajani@vancouveropera.ca)

Love, honour and betrayal take the stage in Vancouver Opera's

**MADAMA BUTTERFLY**

Stunning new production designed by sculptor Jun Kaneko  
features opera's hottest new tenor James Valenti

**Vancouver, BC** ~ Honour, love, betrayal and an ultimate sacrifice play out in a breathtaking new production of Giacomo Puccini's heartbreakingly gorgeous *Madama Butterfly*, on stage for six performances only, May 29 to June 10, 2010 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

This stunning production is designed by world-renowned Japanese-born sculptor **Jun Kaneko** and includes tenor **James Valenti**, winner of the prestigious 2010 Richard Tucker Prize, as Pinkerton and Japanese-born soprano Mihoko Kinoshito in the title role. Spine-tingling, emotionally searing and achingly beautiful, Puccini's exquisite work remains one of the world's most captivating operas and is the final production of Vancouver Opera's Golden Anniversary Season.

Opening night is **Saturday, May 29, 2010**, with subsequent performances **Tuesday, June 1, Thursday, June 3, Saturday, June 5, Tuesday, June 8** and **Thursday, June 10**. All performances take place at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. and begin at 7:30pm. Tickets starting at \$29 are available exclusively at the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) or by telephone (604-683-0222). See complete ticket information below.

The *New York Times* recently acclaimed rising tenor **James Valenti** for his Metropolitan Opera debut as Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He has been praised by the *New York Post* for his "even lyric tenor, an aristocratic way with a vocal line and easy confidence" (as well

as his “smoldering good looks”.) “Like [Pavarotti], he is able to capture the “soul” in singing. Bravo!” raved Dallas’ *Pegasus News*.

Soprano **Mihoko Kinoshita** is one of the world’s most in-demand Butterflies (Cio-Cio-San). “Her every inflection, physical as well as vocal, is real. Her death is nearly unbearable,” praises the *Detroit News*.

Soprano **Zheng Cao**, currently singing Cherubino in Pittsburgh Opera’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, makes her Vancouver Opera debut as Suzuki. Baritone **Jeff Mattsey**, praised for the “colors and range” of his voice (*Opera News*) returns to VO to sing Sharpless.

The sets and costume are designed by **Jun Kaneko**, Japanese-born ceramicist and sculptor, creator of more than 25 public art commissions, recipient of an honorary doctorate from the Royal College of Art in London, and one of the artists at the forefront of the contemporary ceramics movement. Noted stage director Bernard Uzan has declared this production “...Exquisite. It's like a series of incredible paintings, and gives more opportunity for the story to bring emotion.”

VO Music Director **Jonathan Darlington** conducts the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and the Vancouver Opera Chorus (**Leslie Dala**, Associate Conductor and Chorus Director). The stage director is **Leslie Swackhamer**.

## The Story, in brief

In Nagasaki, a pleasure-seeking American naval officer leases a house and weds a young geisha. He is only briefly enchanted with his “Butterfly”, while she gives herself wholly to the marriage. When he abandons her and then returns to claim their child, Butterfly is devastated and dishonoured. In a supreme act of devotion to her ancestors, she ends her life. Read a full synopsis at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca).

## Background

The origins of the Madama Butterfly story are found in many sources. Giacomo Puccini based it on the short story “Madame Butterfly” (1898) by John Luther Long, which was also dramatized by David Belasco. Inspiration also came to Puccini from the novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) by Pierre Loti. There are also reports that the opera was based on events that actually occurred in Nagasaki in the early 1890s.

The first version of *Madama Butterfly* premiered in Milan at La Scala on February 17, 1904. It was, like many now-beloved operas, poorly received. Puccini substantially revised the opera, and on May 28, 1904 it was performed again and enjoyed overwhelming success. Puccini went on to write three more revisions, with the fifth version now considered the standard version.

*Madama Butterfly* has since become a staple of pop culture, with the story becoming the basis many film adaptations and the music appearing in everything from dance remixes to animation. A substantial list is available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madama\\_Butterfly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madama_Butterfly).

## Full Ticket Information

Single tickets starting at \$29 (plus handling fee) are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at [www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca), or by phone at 604-683-0222. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted.

Groups: For special pricing for groups of ten or more, call 604-683-0222.

## Learn More

### Film screening: *M. Butterfly*

Thursday, May 6, 2010

Doors: 6:30pm. Guest Speaker: 7:10pm

Vancity Film Centre, 1181 Seymour Street, Vancouver

Regular admission: \$10/\$8 senior or student (includes \$2 Vancity Film Centre membership).

With membership: \$8/\$6 senior or student

The Vancity Theatre and VO present a special screening of *M. Butterfly*, David Cronenberg's 1993 exploration of the self-deceptions of a French diplomat who makes the mistake of falling in love with a Chinese opera singer, Song Lilang. The screening includes an introduction and discussion by **Brian McIlroy**, Professor, Film Studies & Chair of the Arts One Program, Department of Theatre and Film, UBC.

Seating is limited. This special event continues a series of co-presentations between Vancouver Opera and the Vancity Theatre.

### Opera Speaks @ VPL – a free public forum: “Nagasaki 1900”

Tuesday, May 11, 7:00 – 9:00pm

Alice MacKay Room, Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch, Lower Level

Admission is free. Seating is limited.

Explore the fascinating history and culture of Nagasaki, Japan's most “European” city, the setting for Puccini's lovely and tragic opera *Madama Butterfly*. A panel of experts will include historian **Midge Ayukawa** and UBC professor of Anthropology **Dr. Millie Creighton**.

Opera Speaks in presented in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library and is sponsored by OMNI BC Diversity Television.

**explorOPERA**

Thursday, May 13, 7:00pm – 8:30pm

Richmond Cultural Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond

Admission is free. Seating is limited.

Take a whirlwind tour of opera from its historical beginnings to its life on the stage at Vancouver Opera with host **Michael Grice**, VO's Director of Education, pianist **Tina Chang** and singers **Sheila Christie** and **Brian Kwangmin Lee**. From Monteverdi to Puccini, discover the world of opera through its history, music and words.

Presented by Vancouver Opera, explorASIAN and The City of Richmond

- 30 -

Vancouver Opera's Golden Anniversary Season is generously sponsored by  
Goldcorp, Inc.