

Albert Carré's Staging Manual for *Madama Butterfly* (1906)

INTRODUCTION BY MICHELE GIRARDI

TRANSLATED BY DELIA CASADEI

STAGING MANUAL TRANSLATED BY STEVEN HUEBNER

The French premiere of *Madama Butterfly*, which took place at the Parisian Opéra-Comique on 28 December 1906, occupies a particularly prominent position in the opera's history. It was on this occasion that Puccini, who was present at rehearsals, elaborated what is commonly considered the final version of a work that he had repeatedly, almost obsessively altered ever since its first, unsuccessful performance in Milan in February 1904.¹ This version emerged from the close collaboration between the composer and the director of the Opéra-Comique, Albert Carré (1852–1938), who had been involved with the stage all his life, first as an actor, then as a librettist, impresario, and director. In 1898 he had taken over the management of the Opéra-Comique where, before *Butterfly*, he had staged, among other works, *Carmen* and *Tosca*, and the premieres of Charpentier's *Louise* (1900) and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902). In this theater he also acted as *régisseur*, assuming direct and complete responsibility for the *mise-en-scène* of the operas performed on its stage.

As had been customary in France since the early nineteenth century, operatic stagings considered of particular importance—usually premieres, and almost always from Parisian theaters—were textualized in the form of so-called *livrets de mise en scène*, translated as “staging manuals” or “production books,” on which further performances should be based. This practice was later adopted in Italy, notably for operas published by the Milanese house of Ricordi, including several by Verdi as well as *Manon Lescaut*. Carré had already prepared staging manuals for *La bohème* and *Tosca*, which had been performed at the Opéra-Comique in 1898 and 1903, respectively, clearly considering his *mise-en-scènes* worth preserving, and hoping that the manuals might function as blueprints for subsequent

performances and revivals, at least in France. Puccini had been present at rehearsals for these productions, as he later would be for *Butterfly*; the *livret* drawn up for the “Japanese tragedy,” however, is unique insofar as it documents a production Puccini not only considered exceptional, but led him eventually to settle on a final version for this troubled opera, thus bringing to an end the convulsive revisions of the previous three years.

This *livret* was published in 2012 in a critical edition, and the excerpts printed here, in Steven Huebner’s English translation, are the frontispiece; the introductory texts and drawings for Acts 1 and 2 (see Figure 1 for the original drawing); and the final portion of Act 3, beginning with Butterfly’s entrance.² These excerpts have been chosen with two aims in mind. The first is to give a clear idea of the nature of these kinds of documents, which, in the words of Mercedes Viale Ferrero, contain “notes relative to the various aspects of a performance in its different stages: the exact placing of the ground plans of settings and anything needed to make them; [. . .] tools and props; stage directions, including movements for singers, chorus, and extras; the relationship between their gestures and voices and the orchestral score; and ways of expressing visibly a dramatic situation.”³ The second is to provide the reader with an opportunity to test my interpretation of the final scenes of the opera as staged by Carré, which I set forth below, against the text of the *livret*.

Puccini had already given ample evidence of his gift for conceiving stage action in relation to music, yet with *Madama Butterfly* he focused his efforts on aligning every detail with the nodal points of the drama. *Madama Butterfly*, both a psychological and costume drama, certainly lent itself to a visual and gestural interpretation of the musical and verbal texts, and for this reason Puccini worked unceasingly, together with conductor Arturo Toscanini among others, to make tiny yet constant adjustments to the score.⁴ It was the encounter with a director of Carré’s caliber, however, that drove Puccini to perfect the theatrical idea and musical form of *Madama Butterfly*, a process that led to some fundamental choices in the treatment of the opera’s subject matter.⁵ The dramaturgical sticking points encountered in previous versions were overcome in Paris: the contrast between East and West was placed on a symbolic plane more strongly connected with the protagonist’s intense personal tragedy, making for a more gripping finale. The tragic conclusion was strengthened by Puccini’s elimination from the Paris version of the brief, sarcastic *buffa* scenes in which the Japanese were either ridiculed or placed in a subordinate position. This in turn promoted



Figure 2. A red bridge in the Japanese garden of Edmond de Rothschild's family castle, Boulogne-Billancourt, Paris.

text in view of a new Italian-language edition of the score: a sign that Puccini was already anticipating that *Butterfly* would reach its optimal version on the Parisian stage. In those years the French capital was swept up by a vogue for all things Japanese, inspired by the two universal exhibitions of 1867 and 1900 and evident in texts that ranged from Pierre Loti's famous novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) to operettas.⁶ By 1906 the press and the public's expectations for "the first Japanese costume opera performed at the Opera-Comique" (at least according to Puccini) must have run quite high. Faithfulness to an "original" Japanese setting was one of Carré's objectives; to this end he researched the topic scrupulously, especially with respect to the costumes, and had his wife, Marguerite, who performed in the leading role, study with the famous actress Sada Yakko in order to learn to move and handle the fan like a geisha.⁷

In his *Souvenirs* Carré recounted how he prepared for *Madama Butterfly*. He was in the habit of visiting the places in which operas were set, but this time he went no farther than Boulogne-Billancourt, in the suburbs of Paris, where a peculiar character named Albert Kahn had



Figure 3. Marcel Jambon and Alexandre Bailly, sketch for Act 1 of *Madama Butterfly*, Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1906.

begun to reproduce—among other things—a Japanese village and garden in such vivid detail that the theater’s scene painter, Alexandre Bailly, was told merely to copy what he saw there.⁸ By the time of the French premiere of *Madama Butterfly*, Kahn had not yet built Japanese bridges on his property, but banker Edmond de Rothschild had commissioned the construction of a Japanese garden around the lake in front of his family’s castle, also located in Boulogne-Billancourt, that boasted no less than two red bridges (see one of them in Figure 2). Carré and his scene painters thus had a model for the bridge that features at the center of the stage in Act 1 (Figure 3).⁹

Carré took great care to emphasize blocking and the stage’s setting for dramatic effect. In the scene for the first act in the Milan version (Figure 4), the characters enter from a path that disappears into the background, whereas in Paris, after entering on the left and climbing a hill, they have to cross a bridge that further separates Butterfly’s garden from the world outside (MES, 59–61). This will also be the setting for the Bonze’s departure (although he enters on the right), an action that precipitates the



Figure 4. Vittorio Rota, sketch for Act I of *Madama Butterfly*, Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1904.

protagonist's traumatic detachment from her people. As he lingers on the bridge on his way out, the Bonze briefly dominates the crowd of relatives: stage directions instruct him to adopt a violent demeanor; he snarls his curse and then rushes toward his niece and shoves her (MES, 83). Such violence obliterates all matrimonial serenity, transforming the garden into a reject's refuge.

This setting pleased Puccini a great deal, and he relayed his enthusiasm to Giulio Ricordi in a letter of 25 November 1906, to which we will return below. The Bonze's devastating behavior is clearly motivated by Butterfly's conversion to Christianity; indeed, the priest screams "Elle a trahi nos Dieux" (She betrayed our Gods), instead of "Ci ha rinnegato tutti" (She disowned us all), as he had in the original Italian version. The issue of religion will also be emphasized by the director in two subsequent scenes. At the beginning of Act 2, the knife that Cio-Cio-san had produced from the sleeve of her kimono in the previous act appears again, this time hung next to the altar that holds the statue of Buddha, as if to establish an association between the instrument for the imminent tragic ritual and the image of the traditional divinity (MES, 96). On the shelves to the left of the altar we find two other important objects: a white veil that Butterfly will wrap around her neck once she has wounded herself and a portrait of Pinkerton that the tenor will behold with great emotion

upon his return in the final scene. Before beginning the ceremony of suicide, Butterfly will go over to these shelves, pick up Pinkerton's image, and, after placing it next to the statue on the altar, kneel down to pray (MES, 150). The protagonist thus returns to her original religion and retrieves the dignity she lost after the devastating collapse of her ideals.

The most important changes concern the heroine's relationship to the world that surrounds her, suspended as she is between her traditional upbringing and the potentially disruptive new rules imposed by a Western man. Carré's contributions to the representation of Japan changed the relationship between the two civilizations in the opera, moving the center of gravity to the East. In Paris, the excision of the short *buffa* scenes gave back at least some dignity to the Japanese characters, which were now much more forcefully contrasted with the Western ones. This also afforded greater psychological coherence to the female protagonist, whose unwavering refusal to adapt to her society's custom of arranged marriages provides the scaffolding for the catastrophe.

The most obvious sign of Carré's desire to downplay the servile behavior of the Japanese characters is found, however, at the very beginning: Cio-Cio-san and her friends enter the scene with dignified composure and do not kneel down to the incarnation of the Western god in an officer's uniform, but instead bow gracefully in a courteous gesture consistent with their custom (MES, 61). This will also be the behavior of the relatives at the end of the post-wedding *concertato*, a scene in which they do not throng the refreshments table as they had done in Milan (MES, 80).

Pinkerton also comes across as less vulgar on the Paris stage. Yet, though he no longer openly mocks the servants as he had done at La Scala in 1904, he still walks away irritably from Suzuki and continues to talk and laugh with the Consul when the relatives arrive; what is more, besides drinking whiskey with his compatriot, he boldly lights up a cigarette before intoning the hymn to the "Yankee vagabondo" (MES, 55). He then proceeds to show off his wealth by paying for the imperial commissary and a musician, thus further humiliating his wife's impoverished family. Given the disappearance from the French version of nearly all of the clumsy behavior of the Japanese characters, including the uncle's annoying drunkenness, Pinkerton is left fully responsible for expressions such as "Faisons vite, la famille est bouffonne, que l'Hymen ici me donne!" (Let's hurry up, it is a ludicrous family that marriage gives me here), which betray his racist prejudices. Carré was certainly not kind with the standard bearer of crass Occidentalism.



Figure 5. Marcel Jambon and Alexandre Bailly, sketch for Act 2 of *Madama Butterfly*, Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1906.

Goro, the ensign of cultural contamination who serves as the suture between East and West, maintains his role in Paris, albeit with a few changes to further assimilate his behavior to Western models. Carré has him pour the beverages himself (MES, 54), thus pointing to his familiarity with American customs. Always attentive to practical demands over the course of the wedding ceremony, he claps his hands to signal the beginning of the reception, and steals away behind relatives after the Bonze unleashes his wrath upon the scene. In Act 2, his utilitarian behavior provokes a much stronger reaction in the protagonist. When he smirks at Butterfly's recounting of Pinkerton's unkept promises, she walks over toward him threateningly and then strikes him (MES, 106). Later, after Suzuki drags him back onstage, Butterfly throws herself upon him brandishing a knife: she is furious to hear from her servant that he goes around saying that nobody knows the identity of the father of her child (MES, 119).

In the original version Prince Yamadori was to take on an analogous role to Goro, and was therefore "vestito all'Europea" (dressed in the



Figure 6. Carlo Songa, sketch for Act 2 of *Madama Butterfly*, Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 1904.

European style). Yet the Yamadori episode takes on a unique role in Carré's staging, as we learn from Puccini's enthusiastic description of a key detail in the letter to Giulio Ricordi of 25 November:

Yamadori does not enter the room but instead sits courteously on the stoop outside the garden: because you must know that the level of the room was raised forty centimeters above the stage and they specially built a small, lighted platform for it, and most of the thickness of the raised platform facing the audience is covered by flowers. The garden thus remains forty centimeters below.¹⁰

Carré simply writes "Prince Yamadori has moved toward the house, but remains in the garden" (MES, 108), because the manual has already indicated that the little house, shown from outdoors in Act 1 and as a cross-section of the interior opening on the veranda in Act 2, is raised forty centimeters above stage level (MES, 44–45 and 96; see Figure 5). No such elevation appears in the scene for Act 2 in Milan (Figure 6). This is not just a detail, but rather forms part of a strategy that coherently outlines Cio-Cio-san's psychology as she relates to the world that surrounds her. Carré steadily pursued his intent to separate Butterfly's illusory microcosm from reality, thus increasing the importance of the

role of the Consul, the only character who can enter into the protagonist's "American" world.

Pinkerton's two wives meet in the opera's finale, an epilogue that took its shape thanks to a few textual modifications that radically changed the audience's perspective of the action on stage. Carré immediately showed the Western woman to the audience, thus confining her to the emblematic role she will maintain in the following scenes (MES, 137). After deciding—during the drafting stage of the libretto—to eliminate the scene set in the American consulate, where Cio-Cio-san was to meet her rival before the finale, Puccini had felt the need to tighten Kate's scene, and communicated this to Illica.¹¹ If up until the Paris version Kate and Suzuki had walked into the house from the garden, thus giving Butterfly the opportunity to address Kate directly, in Paris the heroine turns to Sharpless instead, in a moment of desperate realization: "Quella donna? Che vuol da me?" (That woman? What does she want from me?). Originally, Kate had been meant to gently approach the heroine, be rejected, and then sing the line "È triste cosa" (It's a sad thing), showing herself to be profoundly moved; nowadays we see the same scene unfold (with a modified text) between Butterfly and the Consul.¹² Despite Kate's compassionate demeanor, the line that now defines her character, delivered in the deafening silence that dominates this scene, is the cruel and inhumanly pragmatic question that she poses to Sharpless: "E il figlio lo darà?" (So, will she give up her son?). Although not meant to be heard by Butterfly, the protagonist nonetheless overhears it, and perceives it as a further, final blow.

In his review of the Paris premiere, critic Henri de Curzon described the finale of the opera with the following words: "In the denouement, Pinkerton's new wife turns out to be the person sent out to look for the child. [. . .] Mr. Carré has left the foreigner in the distance, in the garden, like a passing shadow." This passing shadow condenses the idea that governs both the staging and the drama at large: Pinkerton's wife is translated into a ghost. Puccini's letter to Ricordi of 25 November 1906 shows that he had no reservations about the finale of the new version:

I have the score nearly ready, tomorrow it will be completed and as far as the *mise-en-scène* goes, shall I leave it as it is or have the important things changed? Carré has changed nearly everything, and has done it well. [. . .] Everything has been well rehearsed and I hope it will be a really good performance. Act 3 as Carré has done it (taking away much of Kate's part and having this woman stay outside in the

garden, which is at the same level as the stage and without the hedge, that is, without obstacles) pleases me very much.¹³

Although Puccini had had doubts about Kate's scene even before the Milan premiere, it was only in Paris that he settled on a solution he found entirely satisfactory, and explicitly credited Carré and his idea to keep Pinkerton's American wife "outside in the garden." Kate's modified role and the transferring of her lines to Cio-Cio-san and the Consul allow for a more coherent dramatic unfolding. The blocking for the character of the American wife takes on a key role: left outside the room, as had been the case with Yamadori, she becomes a ghostly projection of the protagonist's private obsessions, and will remain substantially foreign to her. Kate's complete lack of musical personality—she is given but a few notes in a musical world in which everything is intensely connotated—makes her character entirely functional: when Butterfly finds Kate standing before her, she will grasp in one moment all that she has refused to understand up until then.

A final staging detail works to lend symmetry to the narrative as it returns full circle, in perfect tandem with the musical conclusion on an unresolved first-inversion chord—the same chord that had closed Act 1. After gently pushing her child into the garden and before committing suicide, the heroine locks herself in (MES, 152–53), using the same locks she had referred to at the beginning of Act 2, when she had interpreted them positively, a sign of Pinkerton's jealousy and therefore love. Not only does the gesture color the ritual sacrifice with a touch of grim irony, but it also emphasizes Butterfly's final realization of her situation. She now understands that she has been locked into a cage ever since Pinkerton left, and now locks the room herself, so that nothing and no one may prevent her from dying.

Excerpts from
Albert Carré's Staging Manual for *Madama Butterfly*

Théâtre National de l'Opéra-Comique

Madame Butterfly

A Japanese Tragedy

In three acts,

by Mrs. L. Illica et Giacosa.

Translated by M. Paul Ferrier.

Music by Mr. Giacomo Puccini

Staging

by Mr. Albert Carré

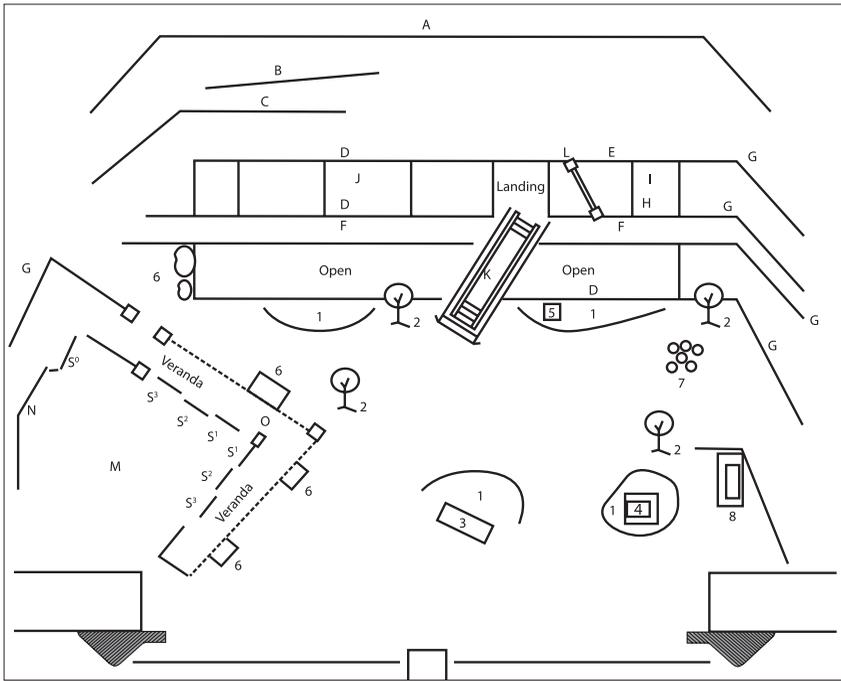
And recorded by Mr. Carbonne

English translation by Steven Huebner

Cast of Characters

Pinkerton	M. M. Ed.[mond] Clément
Sharpless	" Jean Périer
Goro	" [Émile] Cazaneuve
The Bonze	" [Gustave] Huberdeau
Prince Yamadori	" [Fernand] Francell
Yakuside	" [Louis] Azéma
The Imperial Commissioner	" de Potter
The Registry Officer	" [André] Février
Madame Butterfly	M ^{es} Marguerite Carré
Suzuki	" B[erthe] Lamare
Kate	" [Marguerite] Beriza
The Cousin	" R[achel] Launay
The Aunt	" Villette
The Child	La petite Planson

Act I



A: Backdrop showing Nagasaki, its harbor, and the sea. – B: City views.
 – C: Flat representing the city. – D: Flowers and greenery. – E: Large flat showing the Bonze's temple on the upper right. – F: Flat running above, delimiting the open area facing the audience. To the left of the bridge, flowers. To the right of the bridge, greenery and rocks. – G: Flat showing trees. – H: Small flat with greenery and rocks. – I: Elevated platform leading to the Bonze's temple. – J: Platform with broad stairs descending to the first lower level (Platforms I and J meet at a landing at the bridge). – K: Japanese arched bridge. – L: Decorative portico (Japanese *dori*). – M: Butterfly's house (on a platform). – N: Interior in the background (partial representation of the Act 2 interior). O: Veranda on the same level as the interior. – S: Numbered shoji screens on sliding tracks, S⁰ shoji in the back, S¹ S² S³ shojis foreground – S¹ S² S³ shojis in the background.

1: Grassy mounds with rocks and flower pots. – 2: Natural-growth trees – willow, cherry trees, green bamboo, wisteria. – 3: Rustic bench. – 4: Large

stone lantern. – 5: Small wood lantern on a tree trunk. – 6: Rocks. – 7: A group of tree trunks joined together, on which flower pots have been placed. – 8: Set of shelves for vases and plants – dwarf trees in various pots.

A garden designed in Japanese style with flower beds bordered by large rocks on which plants in porcelain pots have been placed. Toward the middle, a garden bench. To the right, a set of shelves holding plants, all in pots. Also to the right, a large stone lantern. To the left, at an oblique angle, the house raised by 40 centimeters. Access is gained by three large rocks that take the place of stairs. The house is surrounded by a narrow veranda. It is closed off by sliding *shojis* (screens made of paper tiles that slide on tracks). *Wisteria* travels along the roof and its flowering tendrils fall over the facade. Beyond the garden, a path rises from left to right. At center stage, a walkable bridge leads into the garden. To the right, a path leads underneath a “*dori*,” a religious portico, to the Bonze’s temple located high above in the wings, stage left.¹ In the background, the city, the port, and Nagasaki’s harbor as seen from the top of the hill.

Props

In the house

A mat, trimmed in black, covering the entire floor of House M. – Four cushions on the mat. – *Kakemono* scroll hanging on the wall N, visible to the audience. – A small Japanese dressing table with mirror. – A square stool, made of bamboo and fairly high. This stool is moved to the middle of the room for the marriage; it is used as a table during the ceremony. The Imperial Commissioner places it in front of himself. The Official Registrar stands to one side and Butterfly kneels in front of it.

1. Carré’s “left” and “right” are from the audience’s point of view. However, when the locutions “stage left” and “stage right” appear, they are meant from the actors’ point of view, as is customary in English (they translate “*coté cour*” and “*coté jardin*” respectively). Therefore, here, for example, the path “to the right” leads to the Bonze’s temple, located “stage left.” (This and all the following footnotes to the manual excerpts are mine. —E. S.)

In the wings, stage right

A full tray of European drinks on which are placed: a bottle of whiskey – two metal tumblers with drinking straws – two carafes filled with punch-glasses, one of which is filled with crushed ice; some spoons; two lemons. – Two small trays with little Japanese cups or bowls for the refreshments the servants carry onstage after the marriage and present to the guests. – Six electric lanterns on bamboo poles for six male relatives who will carry them for the marriage ceremony. – The same kind of electric lantern for Goro. – The same kind of electric lanterns for the three servants. – Ten electric lanterns without bamboo poles for the lighting on the house's facade. – Two lantern-lighters. – A Japanese musical instrument, which is brought into the room when the marriage ceremony takes place.

Stage left

Two electric lanterns for the carriers (two) who precede the Bonze.

For the artists

Butterfly: a parasol, a fan to put in her sleeve, paper tissues; an opium pipe; a belt; a small clip; a mirror; a fan; a small bottle of dye; a sabre or long Japanese knife; *ottokis* (small statuettes of the gods).

Pinkerton: a cigarette case; a box of matches.

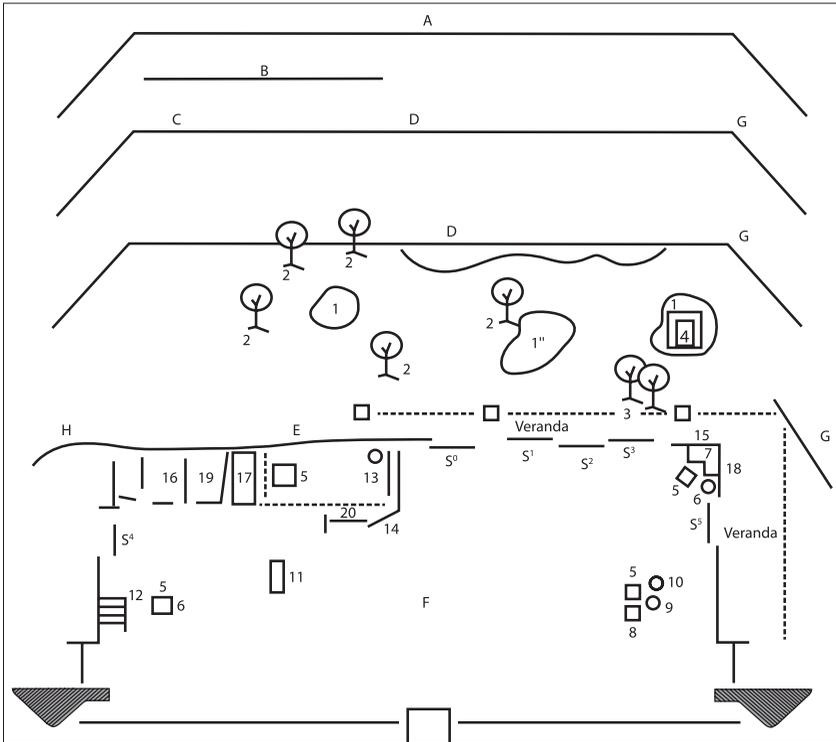
Sharpless: A European umbrella (bright color).

Registry Officer: an inkpot, with pen and accessories. A role of parchment for the contract.

Geishas, Relatives, and Friends: 14 parasols; 22 fans.

Two Japanese children (Guests): For each a bamboo pole on which trinkets are fastened; small balloons; dolls; flags, etc. . . . a cardboard baby doll that a young Japanese girl carries on her back.

Act II



A: Backdrop showing Nagasaki, its harbor, and the sea. – B: City views. – C: Flat representing the city. – D: Low flower beds. – E: Alcove containing a family altar to Buddha. F: The interior of the house on a platform 40 centimeters high. – G: Flats with trees. – H: Back of the interior. S⁰ S¹ S² S³ shojis, sliding screens that open on the garden. – S⁴ shoji opening into Butterfly's bedroom. – S⁵ shoji on the right opening to the exterior.

1 and 1": Grassy mounds with rocks and pots of flowers. – 2: Natural-growth trees. – 3: A cherry tree with two spreading branches between which Butterfly sits. – 4: Large stone lantern. – 5: Small mats. – 6: Vases containing wilted flowers. – 7: Wooden shelves in a corner cupboard holding three vases containing slightly wilted flowers. 8: A Japanese makeup mirror on a stand to which a small hand mirror for Butterfly is attached with a string. – 9: Japanese vase shaped like a bamboo stalk containing flowers. – 10: Makeup kit containing a brush, rouge, a comb, and some

hairpins. – 11: Japanese headrest. – 12: A *hibachi*, a kind of brazier, to heat tea. – 13: Round Japanese stool, made of straw. – 14: Screen. – 15: Sailor's telescope attached to doorframe. – 16: A set of shelves with closed compartments, containing the following objects:² in the lowest compartment, closed by no. 8, the white veil and a Japanese money box; above: no. 1, a little Japanese wicker basket; no. 2, a Japanese box; no. 3, a smoker's supply box, containing an opium pipe, a box of matches, tobacco containers; no. 4, a bronze vase; no. 5, a picture of Pinkerton; no. 6, a smoker's supply box; no. 7, a carton of American cigarettes. – 17: An altar to Buddha with the following objects:³ no. 1, two Japanese electric lanterns lit like nightlights; no. 2, two Japanese vases with flowers; no. 3, a small wooden bell with stick to call upon the gods; no. 4, Buddha; no. 5, short sabre. – 18: A small extravagant Japanese basket attached to the wall. – 19: *Kakemono* scroll attached to the wall above the Buddha. – 20: Butterfly's dress hung in the alcove behind the sliding screen. A Japanese mat bordered with black bands producing a frame around the middle covers the entire floor of the house.

Butterfly's House

The floor is raised about 40 centimeters over the stage. A room with little depth. To the rear left, taking up about half the width, a kind of alcove containing the family altar. In this recess, to the left, a statue of Buddha. On the altar, two Japanese lamps that can be switched on. Small wood bells to attract the gods' attention. Two flower vases. A short sabre suspended by a string on the left corner of the altar. On the rear wall of the alcove *kakemono* scrolls painted in very soft hues. To the right, set apart near the alcove, a sliding screen. To the left, built into a partition, a small set of shelves the lower part of which can be closed by panels on sliding tracks. Some Japanese boxes, and the white veil that Butterfly uses in Act 3, are kept inside, behind the panels. On the shelves, a smoker's supply box, the opium pipe, carton of cigarettes, matches. Little Japanese knickknacks, the framed picture of Pinkerton. On the right in the rear, sliding *shojis* open, acting as a large picture window onto the garden. – In the garden to the right, near the house, a large flowering cherry tree.

2. A small drawing of the set of shelves shows exactly where the objects must be placed; the numbers in the text refer to this drawing.

3. A small drawing of the altar shows exactly where the objects must be placed; the numbers in the text refer to this drawing.

In the background, a view of Nagasaki and the shore. – Shoji or sliding door on the left leading to the bedroom. – To the right a sliding door leading outside. To the left, in the foreground, on the ground against the partition, a small brazier to heat tea. – Downstage left, a Japanese headrest. To the right, a small Japanese makeup table with mirror. In the rear right corner, positioned at an angle, a set of shelves with vases and flowers. On the frame of the open doors to the rear, on the right, a sailor's telescope hangs from a nail. The floor is entirely covered with mats bordered in black. All shoji doors are on tracks. Wall decorations are very plain.

Props

In the wings

Two interior lamps, lit with matches. A kind of wood cube on a pedestal, open on the top with a fixed handle and paper tiles.⁴ – A tray used for cups and tea service. – Three large sprays of flowers: one in the wings, stage left, another in the wings, stage right, and the third spread behind the flower pots placed on the grassy knoll 1" in the middle of the garden.

Stage left

Prince Yamadori's litter or sedan chair. A certain number of cut cherry blossoms that will be thrown at Butterfly when she sits on tree no. 3. These flowers are to appear as if they fall from the tree when it is shaken.

For the artists

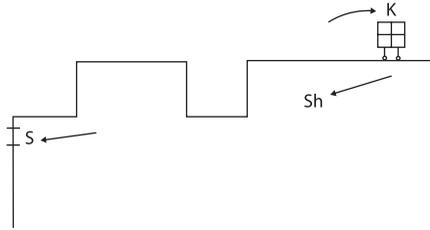
For *Sharpless*, a letter; for *Butterfly's child*, a Japanese puppet (toy).

4. A small drawing of the wood cube shows exactly what is meant here.

Act III

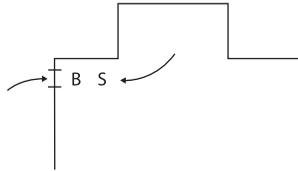
“Suzuki! Where are you?”⁵ [*Suzuki! Dove sei?*]

Sharpless motions to Kate to hide in the garden. Kate stays behind a stone lantern. Suzuki goes to the left, toward the bedroom.



“I was praying and putting things back.” [*Pregavo e rimettevo a posto.*]

At the orchestra measure that follows, Butterfly opens the shoji of the bedroom and appears at the door on the left. She wants to come in. Suzuki stops her and wants to prevent her from entering.

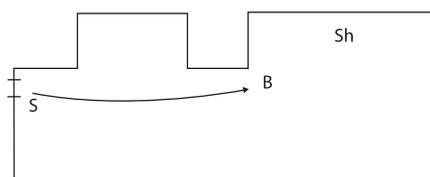


“He’s here, he’s here.” [*È qui, è qui.*]

Butterfly pushes Suzuki aside and comes onstage.

“He’s here, he’s here.” [*È qui, è qui.*]

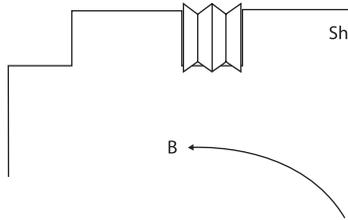
Butterfly moves to the right upstage from Suzuki and finds herself face to face with Sharpless. She stops in her tracks, surprised. The Consul bows.



5. As explained in the introduction, we reproduce here the portion of Act 3 from Butterfly’s entrance to the end of the opera.

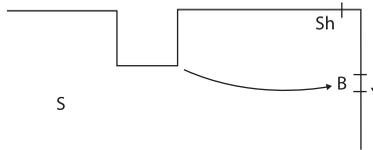
“And where? where?” [*e dove? dove?*]

Uneasy, she goes to look behind the screen.



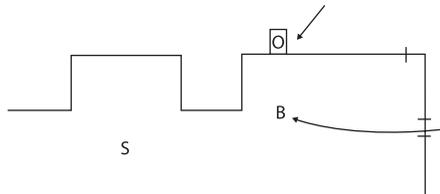
During the orchestra measures that follow

Butterfly goes to look out the door on the right. She opens the shoji, does not see anyone, and closes it again.



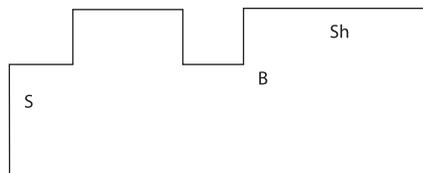
“He’s not here!” [*Non c’è!*]

In the following orchestra measures, Butterfly returns to the left of the window, near the screen, opens shoji no. 0 that looks into the garden. She sees Kate.



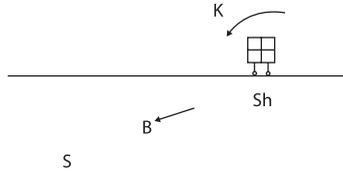
“That woman?” [*Quella donna?*]

Butterfly addresses Sharpless with concern. Suzuki at left, turning her back to Butterfly, weeps.



“What does she want from me?” [*Che vuol da me?*]

Kate reveals herself a bit in the garden. Butterfly steps back, anxious and surprised.



“No one speaks!” [*Niuno parla!*]

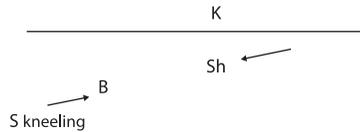
Butterfly looks at Sharpless and Suzuki who remain motionless. Butterfly goes over to Suzuki.



“Why are you crying?” [*Perché piangete?*]

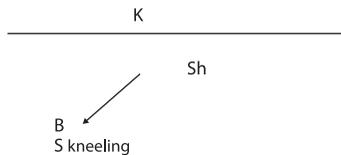
Butterfly spins Suzuki around, pulling violently on her arm. Suzuki falls to her knees and weeps, holding her head in her hands. Sharpless advances toward Butterfly to speak to her. Butterfly turns around, and seeing Sharpless approach lets go of Suzuki and gestures to Sharpless to stop . . . she fears the truth and says:

“No! tell me nothing!” [*No: non ditemi nulla!*]



“You, Suzuki.” [*Tu, Suzuki.*]

Butterfly goes toward Suzuki and kneels by her, affectionately takes her by the arms and questions her in a feverish manner.



“He’ll come no more. They have told you!” [*Ma non viene più. Te l’han detto!*]

Suzuki turns her head away to the right, not daring to answer.

At measure 12, page 233⁶

Butterfly lifts Suzuki’s head, turns it toward her and tries to read the truth in her face. Suzuki turns away and lowers her head without answering.

“Wasp! I want you to reply!” [*Vespa! voglio che tu risponda!*]

Butterfly, irritated by Suzuki’s silence, lifts her head again with both hands and shakes it violently. In the garden, Kate has come forward to listen.

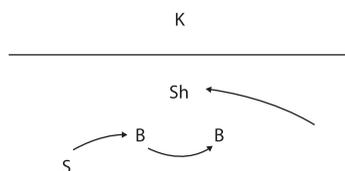
“He arrived yesterday? – Yes.” [*Ma è giunto ieri? – Sì.*]

Butterfly remains dumbfounded.

“Ah! That woman terrifies me!” page 234 [*Ah ! quella donna mi fa tanta paura!*]

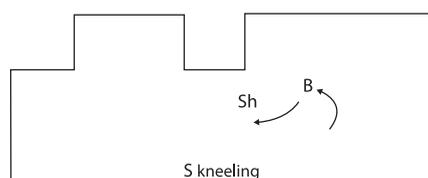
Butterfly gets up quickly, and runs in Kate’s direction, crossing to the right, her back to the audience, looking toward the garden. Kate listens and watches the whole scene. Sharpless, seeing Butterfly’s actions, approaches and takes her in his arms, stopping her.

Butterfly, restrained by Sharpless, turns before him.



“Ah! she’s his wife!” last line, page 234 [*Ah! è sua moglie!*]

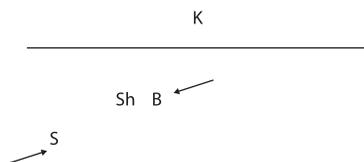
Extremely agitated, Butterfly addresses Sharpless and pushes him roughly and nervously to the left. He backs up somewhat. Then Butterfly stops cold.



6. This page number refers to the piano-vocal score, as do the others below.

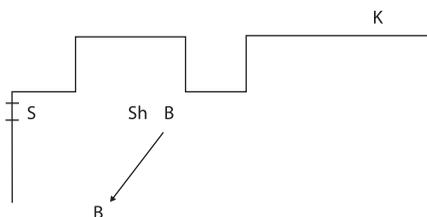
“Everything is over!” page 235 [*tutto è finito!*]

Butterfly collapses, arms stretched forward, into Sharpless’s arms, and he holds and supports her in a paternal manner. Suzuki rises and makes a movement toward Butterfly to help her.



“To take everything from me! My child!” [*Prendermi tutto! il figlio mio!*]

Butterfly anxiously questions Sharpless, who turns his head away and dares not answer. Suzuki runs to the door of the bedroom, to the left, closes the sliding screen, and crouches in front of it on her knees as if to bar entry.

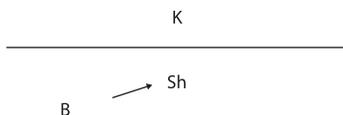


“Make this sacrifice for him.” page 236, first line [Sharpless:⁷ *Fatelo pel suo bene il sacrificio.*]

Butterfly questions Sharpless with hopeless despair.

“Ah! Sad mother!” [*Ah! triste madre!*]

Kate moves toward the house.



7. When it is not clear from the text of the staging manual we have added the name of the character singing the line.

“Abandon my child!” [*Abbandonar mio figlio!*]

Butterfly weeps in Sharpless’s arms.

“So be it! I must obey him!” [*E sia! a lui debbo obbedir!*]

Butterfly straightens herself, resigned, and with the greatest sorrow.

“Can you forgive me, Butterfly?” [Kate: *Potete perdonarmi, Butterfly?*]

Kate, in the garden, starts to move toward Butterfly.

“Beneath the great vault of the sky.” [Butterfly: *Sotto il gran ponte del cielo.*]

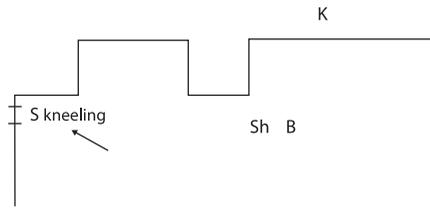
Supported by Sharpless, Butterfly remains facing the audience, immobile, not looking at Kate.

“But I would like that he be told.”⁸

Butterfly addresses Sharpless, beseeching him.

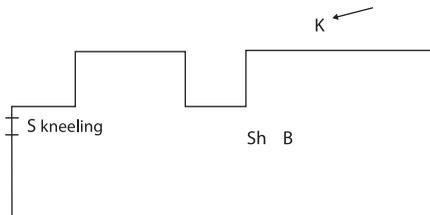
“Mercy! Not that!” last measure, page 237

Butterfly crosses left, passing in front of Sharpless with a pronounced gesture of refusal.



“Poor little one!” [Kate: *Povera piccina!*]

Sharpless returns to Kate upstage.



8. This line and the following one were cut from the final Italian version; the French text reads: “Mais je voudrais pourtant qu’on le lui dise”; “Par grâce! pas cela!”

“I will give him his son.” [*A lui lo potrò dare.*]

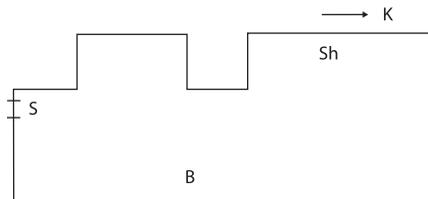
Butterfly delivers this whole phrase facing the audience, looking neither at Kate nor Sharpless.

“If he comes to fetch him.” [*se lo verrà a cercare.*]

Suzuki, in front of the bedroom door on the left, half rises.

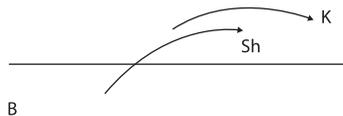
At the last measure of page 238

Sharpless gestures to Kate to leave. Kate begins to return upstage in order to exit on the right. Suzuki rises completely to stand before the bedroom door and stretches her arms against the partition as if to prevent entry.



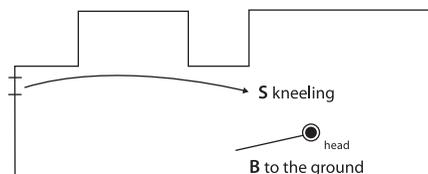
“Climb the hill in half an hour.” [*Butterfly: Fra mezz'ora salite la collina.*]

Kate exits the garden to the right. Sharpless follows her. After having followed all of Butterfly's gestures, he leaves very concerned and resolved to take action with Pinkerton because he has guessed Butterfly's thoughts and intentions.



The 2/4 allegro that follows begins only after the departure of Kate and Sharpless

On the first chord, Butterfly, who remains still and restrained until then, suddenly collapses and falls outstretched, her face to the ground. Suzuki goes to help Butterfly and kneels to console her.

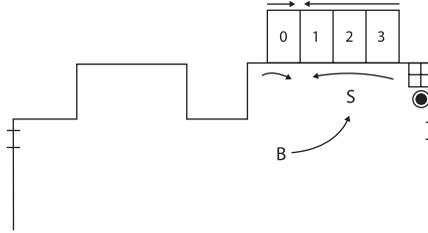


“Too much light shines outside.” [Butterfly: *Troppa luce è di fuor.*]

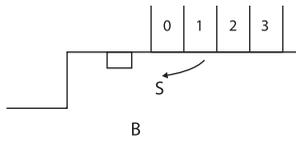
Butterfly, recovering somewhat, raises herself.

“Close it!” [*Chiudi.*]

During the orchestra measures that follow, Suzuki rises to close the shojis at the rear right. She begins by pushing shojis nos. 1, 2, and 3 from right to left, and the little shoji no. 0 from left to right. The view is thus closed.

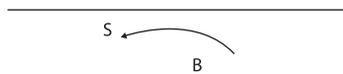


Suzuki then returns to Butterfly, still prostrate.



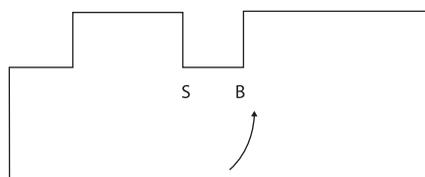
“He is playing . . . Shall I call him?” [*Giuoca . . . lo chiamo?*]

Suzuki passes behind Butterfly, moving to the bedroom on the left.



“Let him play . . . go and keep him company,” [*Lascialo giuocar . . . va a fargli compagnia.*]

Butterfly gets up quickly and goes to Suzuki, pushing her toward the bedroom.



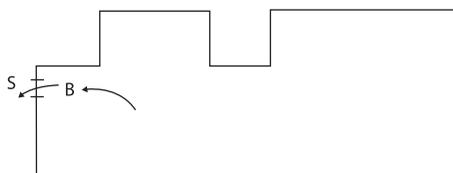
Suzuki, staring at Butterfly and understanding her intentions, stops and firmly decides not to leave. She falls to her knees at Butterfly's feet, implores, begs her to let her stay.

"Go, go. I order it." [*Va, va. Te lo comando.*]

Butterfly goes to Suzuki, highly agitated, and forces her to go into the bedroom by pushing and shoving her. Violent skirmish. Suzuki drags herself on her knees behind Butterfly, who keeps pushing her away. Screams and tears, Suzuki's supplications.

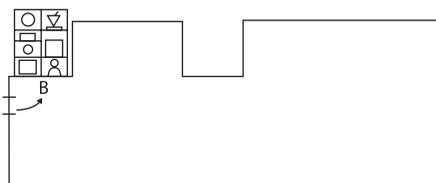
Toward measure 10 on page 242

Suzuki is pushed back into the bedroom. Butterfly closes the sliding door on her. We hear Suzuki weep and beg in the bedroom. The sobbing weakens little by little.



At measure 13 of the orchestral passage (*Meno*) on page 242

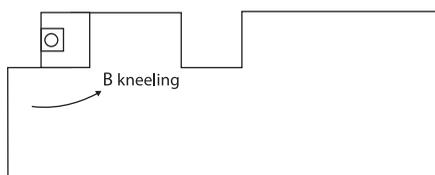
Butterfly goes to the little piece of furniture to the left of Buddha and takes the white veil from a lower compartment, which is closed by panel no. 8.



She takes from an open compartment of the same piece of furniture the portrait of Pinkerton, which she kisses. She then goes toward the altar.

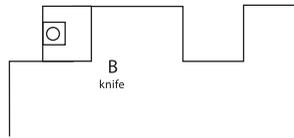
First measure, page 243

Butterfly kneels in the recess of the altar, places Pinkerton's portrait in front of her and prays.



At measure 11, page 243

Butterfly seizes the Japanese knife suspended on the left corner of the Buddha altar.



“He dies honorably” etc. [*Con onor muore*]

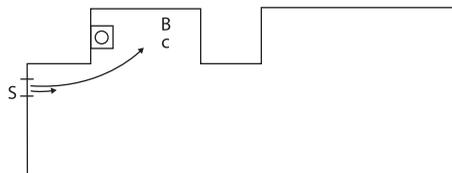
Butterfly on her knees, holding the knife handle in her right hand reads the words engraved on the blade in a religious manner.

“Survives with honor” [*serbar vita con onore*]

During the four orchestra measures that follow, Butterfly covers her hand holding the knife with the veil.

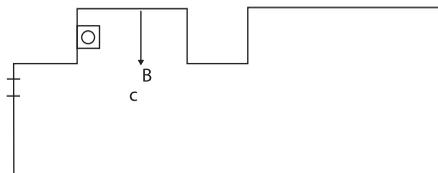
At the orchestra measures of the first line, page 244

The sliding door of the bedroom opens and on measure 6 (second line), the child, pushed by Suzuki, comes onstage and runs to Butterfly, arms outstretched. Suzuki’s arm is seen passing through the door, pushing the child (c) toward his mother. Butterfly quickly hides the knife in the ground near the screen.



“You? You?” [*Tu? tu?*]

Butterfly takes her child in her arms and drags herself forward on her knees.



“You must never know it.” [*Non saperlo mai.*]

Butterfly, kneeling, holds the child in her arms. He stands before her, a little to the left and his back to the audience, facing his mother.

“Sent to me from the throne.” [*O a me, sceso dal trono.*]

Butterfly caresses the child.

“Look carefully! Farewell, beloved!” [*guarda ben! Amore addio!*]

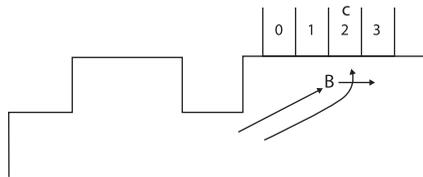
Butterfly takes the head of the child in her hands.

“Farewell, my little love!” [*addio! piccolo amor!*]

Butterfly gives a long kiss to her child with all her soul.

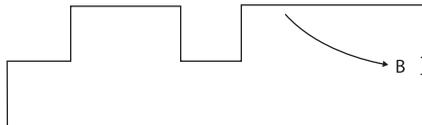
“Go! Play! play!” [*Va. Gioca, gioca!*]

Butterfly rises and guides the child toward the shoji screens at the rear right. She opens shoji no. 2 and gently pushes the child into the garden, and then closes it.



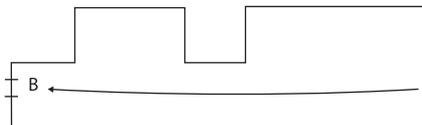
At measure 5, page 247

Butterfly goes to the door on the right and positions a small peg with a chain to take the place of a bolt.



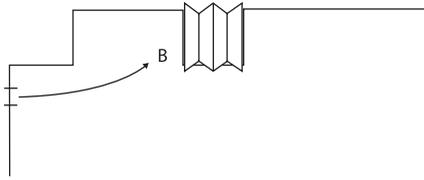
At measure 8, page 247

Butterfly crosses the stage to the bedroom where she also positions a peg, and thereby locks the house.



At measure 9

Butterfly goes to the altar and kneels near the screen.



At measure 12

Butterfly takes the knife, covers it with the white veil and prepares to strike herself. She goes behind the screen.

At the beginning of the last measure, page 247

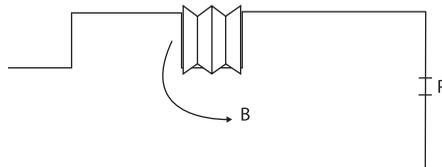
Butterfly strikes. The knife is heard falling from behind the screen.

After the first “Butterfly!”

Pinkerton calls from the wings, stage left. Butterfly, her neck enveloped in the veil to hide her wound, appears on her knees from behind the screen.

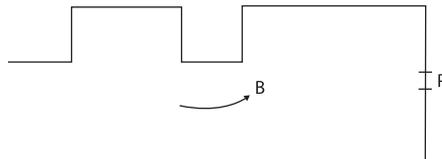
At the second “Butterfly!”

Butterfly comes onstage, dragging herself on the ground and holding her bandaged neck with her hand.



After the third “Butterfly!”

She crawls dragging herself on the ground and goes toward the door, stage left, to open it.



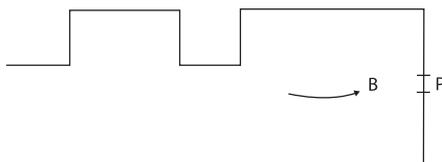
At the 3/4 measure, measure 15, page 248

Exhausted, Butterfly falls to the ground.

At the 4/4 measure, measure 16

She gets up and again starts towards the door, dragging herself.

Pinkerton knocks on the door.

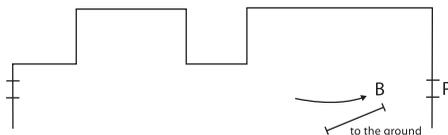


In the orchestra measures that follow

She continues to drag herself toward the door.

At measures 3 and 4 of the last line

Butterfly, still dragging herself, tries to get to the door. With super-human effort she gets up, but then falls dead just before the last measure.



Curtain falls quickly.

The End

NOTES

1. For a thoroughly documented summary of the revisions of *Madama Butterfly*, see Dieter Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Catalogue of the Works* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003), 283–87.

2. The opera was performed in three acts, as was always the case, except at the Milan premiere, which was in two acts. The present introduction is based on the much longer version, titled “Le droghe della scena parigina,” in the critical edition of Carré’s *Livret: “Madama Butterfly,” mise en scène di Albert Carré*, ed. Michele Girardi, *Disposizioni sceniche e livrets de mise en scène*, vol. 4, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Giacomo Puccini 3 (Turin: EDT, 2012), 3–31; for details of the various documents on which the edition is based, see 35–38. References to the text of the staging manual (39–155) will be indicated as MES in text citations.

3. Mercedes Viale Ferrero, “Staging Rossini,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, ed. Emanuele Senici (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 212. Viale Ferrero’s general description also includes costumes, but Carré’s *livrets* do not contain information on them.

4. For the Bologna performances of October 1905, Puccini instructed Toscanini regarding the opera’s final scene, requesting “a violent ray of sunlight, strong, and a wide strip of light within which the final scene will take place.” *Carteggi pucciniani*, ed. Eugenio Gara (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 299.

5. See Arthur Groos, “Lieutenant F. B. Pinkerton: Problems in the Genesis and Performance of *Madama Butterfly*,” in *The Puccini Companion*, ed. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1994), 169–201.

6. In 1893 *Madame Chrysanthème* was adapted for the stage by Georges Hartmann and Alexandre André and set to music by a composer who was very close to Carré, André Messager.

7. Sada Yakko’s fame had risen with the Kawakami Play Company’s Paris *tournée*: she charmed the French public at the Universal Exposition of 1900 by interpreting the female lead in *La Ghèsha et le samourai*.

8. On Albert Kahn (1860–1940), the utopian philanthropist who went bankrupt in the 1929 financial crisis, see *Albert Kahn, réalités d’une utopie (1860–1940)*, ed. Jeanne Beausoleil and Pascal Ory (Boulogne-Billancourt: Musée Albert-Kahn, 1995).

9. It is, however, important to remember that the Japanese bride was a recurrent object in *japoniste* French iconography at the time, and was even more generally featured in visual arts—see, for instance, Vincent van Gogh’s *Pont sous la pluie (d’après Hiroshige)* (1887). My critical edition of Carré’s staging manual contains many images that help contextualize the iconography of the scenes for the Opéra-Comique production, and chart their influence on later productions of *Madama Butterfly*.

10. Giacomo Puccini, *Epistolario*, ed. Giuseppe Adami, 2nd ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1982), 101.

11. See Puccini’s letter of 31 January 1903, in *Carteggi pucciniani*, 232. The draft of the consulate scene can be read both in Illica’s and Giacosa’s versions in Arthur Groos, “Luigi Illica’s Libretto for *Madama Butterfly* (1901),” *Studi pucciniani* 2 (2000): 91–204.

12. See Girardi, “Le droghe della scena parigina,” 28–29.

13. Adami, *Epistolario*, 101.