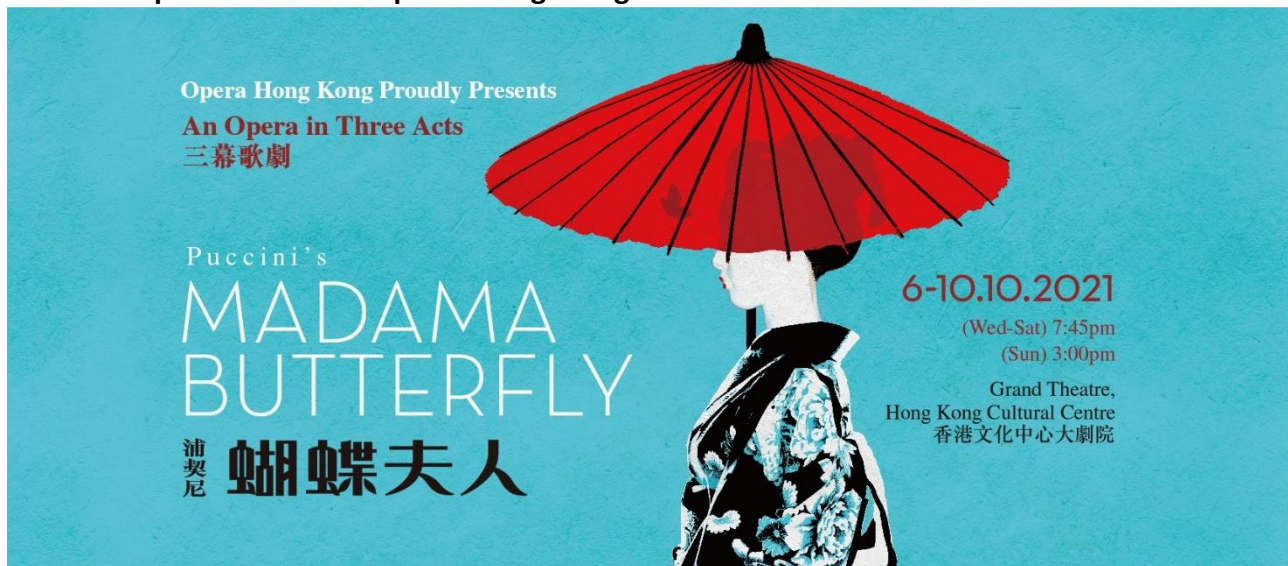


## Press Release

**Opera Hong Kong announces to stage  
 Puccini's *Madama Butterfly***
**A co-production of Opera Hong Kong and Slovene National Theatre Maribor**


(25 August 2021, Hong Kong) Opera Hong Kong is proud to stage the grand production of **Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*** in the fall of 2021. World premiered on 17 February 1904, ***Madama Butterfly*** is one of the most popular operas ever performed in theatres worldwide. A co-production of Opera Hong Kong and Slovene National Theatre Maribor, ***Madama Butterfly*** will become the cultural limelight held at Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre between **6 October** and **10 October, 2021**.

Regarded as Puccini's most melodious opera, ***Madama Butterfly*** is a perfect amalgam of eastern culture and traditional western opera. Coincidentally, this magnificent production of the heart-wrenching love story will be performed by fantastic artists from Asia and Europe, the production, in a traditional setting, will turn the entire stage into **Cio-Cio-san's** (Butterfly) house in Nagasaki with scenes created by spectacular modern visual effect. Director **Pier Francesco Maestrini** sets the happenings few decades earlier from what is told in the original play: 1860.

The opera opens when American navy lieutenant **B. F. Pinkerton** arrives in Japan to take up his duties on a ship docked in Nagasaki. To amuse himself, he gets a house and a young geisha wife, **Cio-Cio-san**. The American Consul **Sharpless** tries to warn him that the girl is taking it all completely seriously. **Cio-Cio-san** gives up everything including her family, religion and her own life to please **Pinkerton**. What she doesn't know is, **Pinkerton** has no intention of continuing the relationship. One day he will have a "proper wedding" to a "real American wife".

His ship leaves and **Cio-Cio-san** passively waits for the day when her husband returns... with a small, blond son of whom Pinkerton is ignorant. Pinkerton, of course, does return, three years later, with his American wife, leading to what may be the most heart-rending ending in musical theatre.

Renowned Italian Director **Pier Francesco Maestrini** will direct this three-act opera. He shared, "The concept of honor in the Samurai mentality is what I wanted to stand out alongside the lack of respect for ancient traditions shown by the foreigners while approaching a different culture. I wanted to portray and underscore the proudness of Cio Cio-san, the burden she is carrying since her father's Seppuku and her sense of loyalty, in a world that was facing radical changes and losing its roots."

**Pier Francesco Maestrini** has staged over 100 opera productions, delighting audiences worldwide. Hong Kong

audience might find him familiar as he has directed another production **Rigoletto** for Opera Hong Kong in 2019. He just staged the same production of **Madama Butterfly** at Slovene National Theatre Maribor SNG in June 2021, and closed the prestigious Ljubljana Festival 2021 with great success and recognition. Audience in Hong Kong will have the privilege to see how he turns the stage into Cio-Cio-san's house in Nagasaki.

This production will be conducted by the celebrated Canadian Conductor **Yves Abel**, another co-operation with Opera Hong Kong after he made his debut conducting **Carmen** in 2018. Since 2015, he has been the Chief Conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie (Herford, Germany).

Korean soprano **Sae-Kyung Rim** sings the title role. Despite her first debut with Opera Hong Kong, she already has the role in her blood. Her debut performance role was **Cio-Cio-san** at the Teatro Coccia of Novara; then she has been performing the same role at Teatro Valli in Reggio Emilia, Budapest, Las Palmas, Wiener Staatsoper, Bergen, Trondheim, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Oper Leipzig, Arena di Verona and Greek National Opera. **Sae-Kyung Rim** has won several international competitions in singing, including the Gian Battista Viotti in Vercelli.

**Bing Bing Wang**, a young Chinese soprano who actively singing in Europe, will share the role of **Cio-Cio-san**. She is the first Chinese graduated with a master degree from Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Music in Milan. While in Europe she has sung many roles such as Liu in *Turandot*, Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, in opera houses in Italy, France, Australia, United States, Israel, Latvian, Slovenia, Romania, Serbian etc.. In 2019, Sony Classic Label has signed on **Bing Bing Wang** to release her first Italian Arias Album, first Chinese soprano signing on Sony to release the CD.

Singing **B. F. Pinkerton** will be the renowned tenors **Mykhailo Malafii** and **Khachatur Badalyan**. Tenor from Ukraine, **Mykhailo Malafi** was the 1st Prize Winner of the 2017 Competizione dell'Opera, Frist Prize in the IV John Edward and Josephine Reszkow Vocal Competition, Poland, 2015; Frist Place in 48th International Antonin Dvorak Singing Competition, Karlovy Vary; Frist Place in the 2nd Minsk International Christmas Singing Competition. **Khachatur Badalyan**, tenor from Vladikavkaz, Russia, made his debut at Novaya Opera Theater in Moscow, where he received critical and public acclaim. From 2007 to 2011, the tenor was a soloist of the Novaya Opera in Moscow. He cooperated with many prominent conductors as Michael Pletney, Antonello Allemandi, Keri-Lynn Wilson, etc.

Baritone **Marcin Bronikowski** and **Christian Federici** will play the same role as Sharpless whereas Japanese Mezzo-soprano **Yayoi Toriki** will be singing the role of **Suzuki**, the maid of Cio-Cio-san. Together with our local young talents, this grand production promises to be a magnificent operatic experience not to be missed.

Special thanks to the continuous support from the Art Development Matching Grants Scheme of the Government of the HKSAR, Hong Kong Arts Development Council and Leisure and Cultural Services Department, as well as our title sponsor of 9 October performance, Prince Jewellery & Watch and official hotel, The Langham, Hong Kong.

### **Programme Details**

Date and time: 6-9 October (Wed to Sat) 7:45pm, 10 October (Sun) 3:00pm  
 Venue: Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre  
 Ticket price: \$1,080, \$920, \$720, \$620, \$420, \$180  
 Tickets available at Urbitx from 25 Aug 2021  
 Performed in Italian with Chinese and English Surtitles.

Please visit <http://operahongkong.org> for more details.

### **Production team**

Producer	Warren Mok, BBS, MH
Conductor	Yves Abel
Director	Pier Francesco Maestrini
Set Designer	Nicolás Boni
Costumes Designer	Luca Dall'Alpi
Lighting Designer	Bruno Ciulli
Assistant Director	Tim Ribič
Chorus Director	Alex Tam

### **Performers**

Cio-Cio-san	Sae-Kyung Rim (6, 8 Oct 7:45pm & 10 Oct 3:00pm) / Bing Bing Wang (7 & 9 Oct 7:45pm)
Suzuki	Yayoi Toriki
B. F. Pinkerton	Mykhailo Malafii (6, 8 Oct 7:45pm & 10 Oct 3:00pm) / Khachatur Badalyan (7 & 9 Oct 7:45pm)
Sharpless	Marcin Bronikowski (6, 8 Oct 7:45pm & 10 Oct 3:00pm) / Christian Federici (7 & 9 Oct 7:45pm)
Goro	Chen Yong (6, 8 Oct 7:45pm & 10 Oct 3:00pm) / Henry Ngan (7 & 9 Oct 7:45pm)
Prince Yamadori	Sammy Chien
Yakuside	Lam Kwok Ho
The Bonze	Apollo Wong
The Commissioner	Frankie Fung
The Official Registrar	Charles Tsang
Kate Pinkerton	Michelle Lange
Cio-Cio-san's mother	Rachel Kwok
The cousin	Candice Chung
The aunt	Gladys Ho

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra —With the kind support of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra  
 Opera Hong Kong Chorus

High resolution photos can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/3rPsWgU>

**-END-**

### **Media Enquiry**

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### **About Opera Hong Kong**

Founded in 2003 Opera Hong Kong (OHK) is Hong Kong's first professional opera company. Over the years, the company has gone from strength to strength under the Artistic Director Warren Mok, the internationally acclaimed Hong Kong tenor. OHK has elevated opera in the Asia's world city, with many world-class productions covering all major works in the operatic canon and has collaborated with opera houses and festivals including Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Taormina Opera Festival, Theater Erfurt, Opéra de Nice, National Centre for the Performing Arts and Shanghai Opera House.

In 2019, OHK was selected by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council as one of the three recipients of the coveted "Eminent Arts Group Scheme". The Scheme's consecutive 5-year funding has become a boost to further the company's development.

OHK is committed to promoting the city's brightest, young opera singers. In 2015, OHK launched the Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development and Education Programme (the Programme), a three-year opera training programme designed to nurture ten young local artists. The success of the Programme led to its renewal by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for another three years from 2019 to 2022, providing intensive training to 12 local artists.

OHK also places a strong emphasis on its education and community activities. Opera school tours, summer schools and master classes are held regularly to reach young audiences. The music centre in Wanchai provides a wide range of courses for early age children to adult in addition to Children Chorus classes. The OHK Chorus and the OHK Children Chorus were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognised contributors on the local choral scene.

The recent development of the Greater Bay Area has created an environment for OHK to initiate more collaborations and bring the art of opera to a wider audience.

Official website: [www.operahongkong.org](http://www.operahongkong.org)

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited](https://www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/operahongkong](https://www.instagram.com/operahongkong)

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