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 Malafii 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 Urbix 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
This release is published by Dynamic Network Alliances PR. For media enquiry, please contact:

Kiwi Fong       Tel: (852) 3792-0944 / 9663-6077     Email: kiwi.fong@dnahk.net
Tracy Chan      Tel: (852) 3792-0943 / 9735-2215     Email: tracy.chan@dnahk.net
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
Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/OperaHongKongLimited
Instagram: www.instagram.com/operahongkong
YouTube: www.youtube.com/operahongkong