

Fort Worth Opera Closes Historic 80th Anniversary Season with Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly

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[Worth Opera](#) (FWOpera) closes its landmark 80th Anniversary Season with Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly, presented on Friday, April 10, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 12, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at Bass Performance Hall.

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Angela Turner Wilson, General and Artistic Director

A touchstone of the company's inaugural 1946–1947 season, Madama Butterfly returns for the first time since 2007. Now in its 13th staging in company history, this stunning production bridges past and present, honoring a work that has shaped Fort Worth Opera's artistic identity for nearly eight decades while inviting a new generation of audiences to experience its timeless power.

“Madama Butterfly asks everything of its artists—vocally, dramatically, and emotionally,” said General and Artistic Director Angela Turner Wilson. “As one of the great masterpieces of the repertoire, it demands fearless

artistry, and closing our 80th Anniversary Season with this work underscores our commitment to ambitious storytelling and musical excellence.”

Set in Nagasaki at the turn of the twentieth century, Madama Butterfly tells the tragic story of Cio-Cio-San, a young Japanese woman who renounces her faith and family to marry American naval officer Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton. Driven by a transformative love, she places her entire future in his hands, certain their union is everlasting.

Pinkerton's commitment, however, is fleeting. Shortly after their wedding, he returns to America, leaving Butterfly to wait three long years in isolation. Clinging to the promise of his return while raising their son, her youthful certainty eventually collapses under the weight of a devastating revelation: his devotion was nothing but an illusion.

Puccini's iconic score masterfully captures these profound contrasts: love and abandonment,

innocence and betrayal, devotion and consequence. Nowhere is this more evident than in the transcendent centerpiece, "Un bel dì vedremo," famously heard in films, television, and across pop culture—one of the most recognized arias in all of opera—a moment of aching expectation that epitomizes Butterfly's enduring, yet tragic, hope.

Rising Japanese soprano Miho Sakoda makes her Fort Worth Opera debut in the title role, undertaking what many call a soprano's "Everest"—one of the most vocally and dramatically demanding roles in the repertoire. Acclaimed in Japan for her nuanced portrayal of Madama Butterfly, she has recently appeared as Donna Anna in

Don Giovanni and in the world premiere of Harumi Fuuki's new opera Mizuchi. Celebrated tenor Zach Borichevsky makes his FWOpera debut as Lieutenant Pinkerton. Known for his bright, expressive voice and compelling stage presence, he has earned critical praise for leading roles at the Metropolitan Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and English National Opera.

Internationally acclaimed conductor Christian Capocaccia, Artistic and Music Director of Syracuse Opera, returns to lead the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra following his widely praised *La Cenerentola* during the company's 2024-2025 season. Admired for his expressive precision and authoritative musical leadership, Capocaccia brings both structural clarity and lyrical expansiveness to Puccini's poignant masterwork.

The production marks the company debut of highly sought after director Frances Rabalais, whose work is known for its striking theatrical imagination, narrative precision, and unflinching psychological depth. Rabalais brings a contemporary sensitivity to this classic score, ensuring the work strikes a careful balance between cultural authenticity and contemporary resonance. Her staging evokes the atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Japan through historically inspired design elements—from traditional architectural details and sculptural silhouettes to kimonos, lanterns, and cherry blossoms—creating an opera experience at its most cinematic and richly textured.

Madama Butterfly's distinguished ensemble also features internationally renowned baritone Weston Hurt as Sharpless, a leading presence at many of America's major opera companies who recently made his UK debut in the title role of *Rigoletto* with English National Opera. The cast is joined by commanding bass Kevin Thompson as the Bonze, whose career includes appearances



with The Dallas Opera, Washington National Opera, and opera houses and concert venues around the world.

Dynamic mezzo-soprano Kayla Nanto—a former FWOpera Hattie Mae Lesley Resident Artist—stars as Suzuki, a competition winner with notable appearances at Opera San José, the Santa Fe Opera, and as a Laffont Vocal Competition prizewinner; and acclaimed tenor and educator Corey Trahan, Director of the TCU Opera Studio and a versatile performer with more than 85 roles across opera, operetta, and music theatre, as Goro.

Set against the backdrop of U.S. imperialism in Japan, *Madama Butterfly* continues to spark conversation around power, cultural collision, and gender inequity. More than a century after its 1904 premiere at La Scala in Milan, Italy, the opera remains as socially provocative as it is musically transcendent. Its influence endures—reaching into modern musical theater through works such as *Miss Saigon*—underscoring why this masterpiece remains central to Fort Worth Opera's artistic legacy nearly eighty years after the company first presented it.

On Sunday, April 12, patrons are invited to the elegant Butterfly Brunch, held in Van Cliburn Recital Hall, directly across from Bass Performance Hall, prior to the matinee. Limited to just 100 guests, the brunch features a thoughtfully curated Japanese-inspired menu in partnership with Tokyo Café, including edamame salad, gyoza, tamago sando, chicken karaage yakitori skewers, chilled soba with ponzu, and an assortment of sushi rolls. The experience concludes with handmade mochi donuts from Golden Crown Cookies & Mochi Donuts, offering a refined and festive culinary prelude to the afternoon's performance.

Tickets range from \$30 to \$210 and may be purchased by contacting the Fort Worth Opera Box Office at 817.731.0726 or boxoffice@fwopera.org, or online at FWOpera.org. Butterfly Brunch tickets are available by contacting the Fort Worth Opera Box Office at 817.731.0726 or by visiting FWOpera.org/butterfly-brunch.

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