



SCENE FROM EDMONTON OPERA SOCIETY'S "MADAME BUTTERFLY"

Critics Acclaim 'Madame Butterfly'

On its first performance in Edmonton on February 17, 1904, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* was condemned resoundingly by critics and public alike. Only after revision and at Toscanini's persuasion, did Puccini allow the opera to be performed again. Ever since—including last weekend's presentation in Edmonton by the Edmonton Professional Opera Society—*Madame Butterfly* has been acclaimed as a work of intense, stirring power, piquant orchestral coloring, and poignant lyric beauty.

Last week's performance in the Jubilee Auditorium maintained that warmth, human feeling, and naturalism, in the tradition of the best of Puccini's operas in the "verismo," or realism, idiom. The cast was well prepared and disciplined; the stage setting ravishing in its Japanese, tamed, prettiness; the costumes were colorful, attractive, and authentic.

MIRACULAR JOB

The singing, what is more, was of good quality. Diane Gibson Nelson, who rendered the soprano role of a geisha girl who married an American naval lieutenant and left her to return three years later with an American wife, did an admirable job in a most difficult and taxing part of heroine. She was delightful, although she may have acted a bit mature for a fifteen-year-old girl of the first act.

The American lieutenant, B. F. Pinkerton, was interpreted by the tenor, Ermanno Mauro. It was most gratifying to see that Mr. Mauro has acquired more of a stage presence than he displayed a year in *Il Trovatore*. His voice was lyric and flexible, and he showed a grasp of his role as a military officer who is on leave and looking for some "action" (which includes getting married in Japanese style, something which he doesn't take very seriously.)

Butterfly's maid, Suzuki, was sung by mezzo-soprano Kathryn West. Her mellifluous voice suited her well, especially in delicate spots with Butterfly like the "Flower Duet" and the Humming Chorus" in the second

WELSH BARITONE

The part of Sharpless, the American consul, was carried by the rich Welsh baritone of Glyn Williams. In depth and emotion—his singing was remarkable (especially in the "Letter Duet") although his part is not as sensitive as those of the above. There were other delightful

moments as well. The famous love duet *O quanti occhi fisi* at the end of the first act (a duet which seems more Italian and Wagner-influenced than the rest of the opera) was sung by Butterfly and Pinkerton with great rapture and ecstatic joy. The aria Butterfly sings to Sharpless in the second act to the background of a sinister, death-symbolizing Asiatic melody, was made memorable by its intimate lyricism and appeal to the heart. Her famous aria, *Un bel di*, in the same act,

was very appealing, while "electrifying" describes the third act's death scene. The only flaw was the somewhat stilted passage for the chorus, as it went off-stage in the first act muttering as a curse Butterfly's Japanese name, Cio-Cio-San.

In summation, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* is a durable work of art full of daring experiment in harmony, tonality, and rhythm, designed to reproduce with inimitable realism an oriental atmosphere.



DIANE NELSON AND ERMANNO MAURO
... geisha girl and lieutenant

Photo by Gene Hattori

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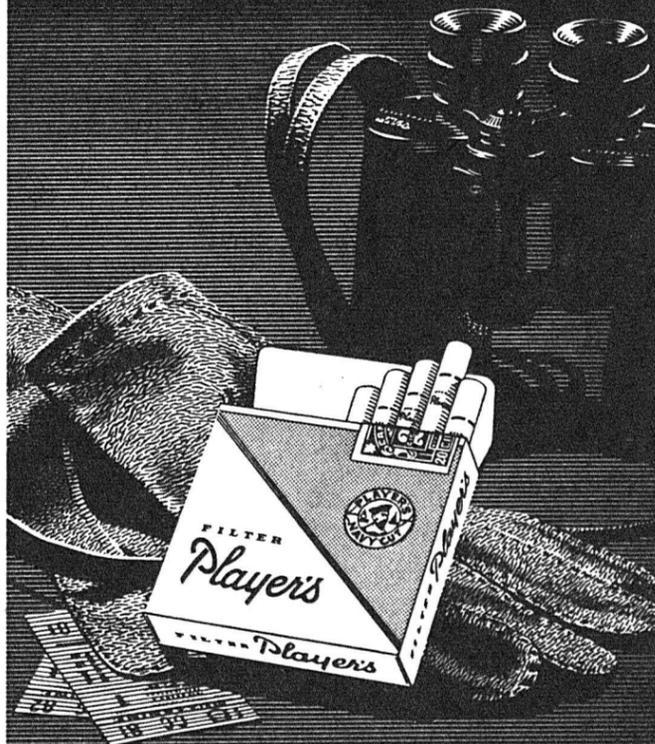


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