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Madama Butterfly

A glimpse into the Archivio Storico Ricordi

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Cover: *Butterfly*, Act 1,
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Greeting

At an international media company like Bertelsmann, the ideas and creativity of our artists, writers and journalists form the heart of our value creation. They are the ones who constantly reinvent our offers by continuing to tell new stories, every day, that inform, entertain and inspire people. In this brochure, we tell you the story of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and its connection to the treasure trove of the world-famous Ricordi Archive.

Like Puccini, Ricordi is a name of great resonance – in Italy, throughout the music world, and also at Bertelsmann. The Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan, which provides near-complete documentation of the rise of the music publisher Casa Ricordi and today gives us unique insights into the world of opera, is regarded as the most important privately-owned collection of Italian opera history. Bertelsmann acquired Casa Ricordi in 1994, but later relinquished most of the company again. However, the associated Archivio Storico Ricordi remained part of Bertelsmann. For us, the extraordinary scope of the collection and its outstanding importance for the history of Italian opera were more than reason enough to safeguard the many thousands of scores, libretti, letters, and photographs and preserve them for posterity. In Verdi Year 2013, we began to present the documents from the Archivio Storico Ricordi in a new form and make them accessible to all; whether in the form of international exhibitions, publications, or by digitally recording the exhibits. What's more, for several years we have been increasingly involved in other areas of cultural history as well. Bertelsmann was the key sponsor of the digital restoration of the classic silent movies "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (Robert Wiene) and "Destiny" (Fritz Lang), thereby sending a signal for the preservation of cinematic heritage in the digital media age.

We will continue to help shape the future of digital media in the years ahead. Meanwhile, we will also continue our work to preserve the history of media for future generations and make it accessible to as many people as possible.

In this spirit, I am delighted by your interest and wish you an enjoyable read!

Dr. Thomas Rabe
Chairman and CEO of Bertelsmann



Madama Butterfly
libretto, cover by Montali,
first printed edition, 1904

Madama Butterfly 1904: A Perfect Perception of Theatre

Conversation with Riccardo Chailly

We asked Riccardo Chailly, who has conducted Madama Butterfly for more than forty years, how his personal and professional rapport with this score has evolved, and how he came to the decision to revive the first version of the opera.

My American opera debut was at the age of 21 with *Butterfly*, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. When around fifteen years ago I proposed recuperating several passages from the original version for a production of *Butterfly* at La Scala, I met with some difficulty because the stage director, who was working with the theatre's famous staging by Keita Asari, was unfamiliar with the music to be inserted. Fortunately, the artistic director at the time, Roman Vlad, organized a reading at the piano to analyze the insertions and found that they contributed important dramaturgical value. Since then I have continued to study this opera, even more intensely in recent years to prepare for the "return" of the first version in the theatre in which it was born. When we look at the original profile of the opera in two acts, we can see how the great block of music of the second act had its own internal, inexorable sense of continuity; but above all, the first version involves several hundred additional pages of score, all of them waiting to be rediscovered. I am convinced it is a privilege for us today to be able to compare the original version, in an edition reconstructed by Casa Ricordi, to the opera as we have come to know it. The result is something that can stand alongside the version normally performed, not to replace it but to broaden our knowledge of the composer. I think this enables us to dig even more deeply into the enormous power of Puccini's theatre.

In what way or ways does the first version have "something more" than the second?

Puccini understood he had created a kind of theatre that was absolutely new for 1904, perhaps

too complicated for audiences of the day, so he went back to remove many pages and attenuate a good bit of the more discordant harmonies and strident timbres (suffice it to say that among the more recherché orchestral effects in the first version he even called for a Hungarian cimbalom!), modifying both the overall structure and the contour of many melodic lines. Consider for example *Butterfly's* entrance, where in the first version the melody moves downward rather than upward as it does in the second version; or her final monologue, which lies within a more central tessitura in the first version. The immediate impact may not be as dramatic, but it contributes more depth to *Butterfly's* humanity, more of her sense of suffering. Then too there is that entire scene of the relatives in the first act, with Yakusidè's tune to add a particular touch of color; the way that scene is conceived is perfectly theatrical, a choreography of emotions all magnificently managed and steadily intensified up to the entrance of the Bonze and his curse. Even the love duet in the first version has many phrases that cast a shadow around the character of Cio-Cio-San, gloomy references to her painful past, to her solitude, essentially setting the stage for the tragedy that is to come. Then too, in the first version Kate Pinkerton emblematically reflects the meaning of that looming tragedy. This is how I perceived her character when I heard the 1904 version in the theatre several years ago. And the importance of her role makes the last scene of the opera even more dramatic.

Beyond the "couleur locale", how much of Puccini's score was influenced by Japanese aesthetics?

Just a few days back I read an interview from 1910 with Puccini in New York, in which he was asked how he had been able to describe the America of *La fanciulla del West* without ever having seen it. Puccini, with that ironic tone of his, responded (in French!) that before the America of *Fanciulla*

there was the Japan of *Butterfly*, the Japan where he had never been but which he studied to the core, drawing material from various folk music sources but also researching the iconography of Japanese types and characters. And interpersonal dramas, Puccini explicitly stated, are always the same the world over. It is also true that every time I visit Japan I find myself in the heart of an absolutely unique culture, the same one that Puccini had quite clearly in mind in his own day: on the one hand, the imprint of an ancient, extremely remote past, of that fading historic memory the world is ever less able to recall; on the other, the desire to be continually up to date, both culturally and technologically. The importance of silence, which in Noh theatre becomes something physical, almost violent, fascinates me very much; the importance of absence, of emptiness, of a way of experiencing time that I have encountered, for example, in the music of Takemitsu, where one is submerged within a kind of "legato" that seems infinite and eternal.

Giacomo Puccini on the Brooklyn Bridge, New York, 1910



With Puccini the visual reference was directly involved in his creative process. How important is the visual dimension for you when you conduct an opera?

Immersing myself in the visual dimension is fundamental for me, and it has to be closely connected to the way I think of the music. Sometimes I find it necessary to experience visual emotions so that they can stimulate an immediate, simultaneous suggestion of how to interpret the music.

(V.C.M.)



Butterfly meets Lady Pinkerton, watercolor for a series of postcards by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904

Following pages:
A hill near Nagasaki, Act 1, set design by Vittorio Rota, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904



Madama Butterfly Act. I.



*Butterfly with son
and Suzuki, watercolor by
Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904*

Madama Butterfly in the Archivio Storico Ricordi

by Maria Pia Ferraris

Thanks to the treasures preserved in the Archivio Storico Ricordi it is possible to examine and more deeply understand the overall context of *Madama Butterfly*, and to trace the process of its creation and publication history.

On 15 February 1904, two days before the opera's historic premiere (and fiasco) at La Scala, the librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa decide, together with the composer Giacomo Puccini, to change the title from *Butterfly* to *Madama Butterfly*. This decision is formalized in a contract now housed in the Archive, along with those regarding the rights to the musical score and the libretto.

These documents, formal but nonetheless fundamental, assign to the publisher Ricordi the rights to a work that has become one of the most performed operas throughout the world. Giulio Ricordi and his son Tito II would be closely involved with the preparation of the score, the theatrical production of the world premiere, and the subsequent production of the revised version at Brescia on 28 May of that same year.

The documents preserved in the Archive allow one to follow the creative process beginning with the libretto: from the acquisition of the rights to the story by John Luther Long, to those of David Belasco's play, through the various versions of the libretto (both manuscript or autograph, by the librettists and the composer), to the printed editions of the vocal scores prepared on occasion of the La Scala premiere (with Rosina Storchio as Cio-Cio-San) and then for the new production at Brescia, where the publisher can finally pen the handwritten comment "Excellent outcome". In addition, there are the versions in English, French, Spanish, and German up through the more recent editions of the 1960s with the unmistakable graphic design of Peter Hoffer on the cover.

The rich collection of correspondence preserved in the Archive includes dozens of letters about *Madama Butterfly*, including the one in which Puccini announces to "Dear Signor Giulio"

that "The work is completed and we are pleased, indeed enthusiastic. It has come out brilliantly, and flows so well and smoothly that it is a joy".

The autograph full score, recently restored, is divided into three parts according to the revised version prepared for Brescia and written on oversize staff paper notated with Puccini's unmistakable handwriting. Among these pages we can find famous arias like *Addio fiorito asil, Un bel di vedremo* or the "humming chorus", but also a blank page, crossed through, over which the Maestro jokingly wrote "the most beautiful piece of the opera! Puccini".

The cover of the published vocal score reproduces the famous poster for the opera by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, who also created the delicate portrait of Butterfly which was hand painted onto copies of a special limited edition of the score. This is the portrait and the colors we find again in the watercolors prepared as souvenir postcards, alongside the beautiful chromatic palette of the kimonos in Giuseppe Palanti's original costume designs. There are also the beautifully hand-colored copies of costume designs prepared for theatres that rented the music for performance, and illustrated boards with cloth swatches attached and detailed instructions for the tailoring, makeup, and wigs.

Butterfly, Suzuki, Pinkerton, and Sharpless move among the stage wings and flats we see in the original set designs by Vittorio Rota and Carlo Songa, which were inspired by original photographs of Nagasaki acquired by Ricordi and now part of the Archive's photographic collection. In these we can admire the singers in their stage costumes, Puccini with a self-satisfied smile sitting on the stage of the theatre of Budapest for the premiere of the Hungarian-language version of *Madama Butterfly*, and in a boat named Cio-Cio-San sailing toward the island of Gorgona.

Two Distinct Butterflies

by Gabriele Dotto



Giacomo Puccini and the soprano Elsa Szamosi on the stage of the Royal Opera Theatre in Budapest, after the Hungarian premiere of *Madama Butterfly*, 12 May 1906, photograph by Kossak

To understand the nature of the revisions to *Madama Butterfly*, we need to understand the nature of its composer. Giacomo Puccini was a habitual, sometimes incessant reviser of his operas; with the sole exception of the posthumously performed *Turandot* (left unfinished at his death) he retouched every one of his works for the theatre, to greater or lesser extent, sometimes in multiple phases. His two initial stage works were expanded from one act to two (*Villi*) or reduced from four to three (*Edgar*), arias were cut (*Suor Angelica*) or added (*Tabarro*), or myriad changes, large and small, were made from rehearsals to performance to published score (*Fanciulla*) or from production to production (*Manon Lescaut*), sometimes not even leaving a decisive “final” version (*Rondine*). Puccini, however, was not the only composer of Italian opera to have done this – the theatre is a volatile proving ground, and more than any other musical form it involves multiple collaborators in its creation and considerable investment in order to be produced and performed. Without box-office success (something repugnant to the musical purists of the Late Romantic era, but an unavoidable reality nonetheless) an opera’s career simply does not exist in any viable sense. Thus, revised (or at times “alternate”) versions of works, whether to appease local demands or to relaunch a stalled performance career, were standard operating procedure. Often, both the composers, and we modern spectators, have regarded such revisions as a sort of evolutionary development toward an ideal, final version of a work. But a case such as *Butterfly* – which has the most complex history of revision among Puccini operas – falls instead among those great works (like, for instance, Verdi’s *Don Carlos*) for which, perhaps, an “optimal” version cannot really be identified.

The fiasco of *Madama Butterfly* at Milan’s La Scala on 17 February 1904 is among the more famous crash-and-burns in the history of opera, all the more so because its composer’s career was by

then solidly launched and, frankly, no one expected such a disaster. That a revised version of the opera should then gain a triumphant reception just a few months later, and go on to become an enduring member among the elite club of “most performed operas” for the subsequent one hundred years (and counting...) is equally remarkable – and by reflection, it makes the initial fiasco all the more historic.

One wonders if, had circumstances been different, Puccini would have simply insisted that the opera be given a second chance, as it stood, rather than undertaking revisions. After all, immediately after the debacle of the premiere Puccini wrote to a friend, with indignation and fierce artistic pride, “With a heavy heart but with the strength of my convictions I tell you that the reception was nothing short of a lynching [...] But my *Butterfly* remains what it is: the most deeply felt and expressive opera I have ever written.” So, for instance, what if there had been a more fiercely commanding personality wielding the baton on the podium that night? There is no small irony in the fact that, had history taken a slightly different turn, the conductor for the premiere of *Butterfly* certainly would have been Arturo Toscanini. It is unimaginable that a man of Toscanini’s famously fiery temperament would have suffered even the slightest part of the howls and interruptions that accompanied the reception of that first night, without severely chiding the audience to stop (he had been known to have done much worse, such as snapping his baton in pieces, then turning and flinging it into the first rows of a “shouting mob” of an audience),¹ or even storming off the podium if they did not – thus perhaps ending the performance so that it might be tried anew a later night. But Toscanini, who had been music director at the Milanese theater since 1898, quit abruptly at the end of the 1903 season after refusing to acquiesce to demands for encores.² Another factor to consider: Puccini may have been in a particularly vulnerable state of

mind. In 1903 he was involved in a dramatic automobile accident that left him with a broken leg requiring a long convalescence, during which doctors also discovered a form of diabetes. He fell into depression for a time, writing to his librettist Illica "Goodbye to everything, goodbye to *Butterfly*, goodbye to life itself!" In addition, we must recall that Puccini, at the impressionable beginnings of his illustrious career, had been involved with significant revisions of his first two operas after their initial failures – the above-mentioned *Villi* and *Edgar*. Even after the career-launching success of *Manon* (1893) and the consolidated fame gained by *Bohème* (1896) and *Tosca* (1900), he would nonetheless be susceptible to audience reaction.

So revise he did, and although the various stages of modification were numerous and spread out over nearly three years, two of the changes he made straight away for the Brescia production were the most significant: splitting the long second act into two, and adding an *aria di congedo* for the tenor Pinkerton, "Addio, fiorito asil". But why did he focus on those two elements?

Among the many opinions about the causes of the opening-night failure were: A claque organized by friends of the composer Franchetti who felt he was snubbed by Ricordi in favor of Puccini; or a claque organized by music critics, furious at having been excluded from the closed rehearsals ordered by the Ricordis; or again, a claque run by coteries of admirers of Mascagni and Leoncavallo who felt that Puccini, in comparison to their heroes, was overrated.³ Conspiracy theories also abound, and one of the more credible of these hints at the surreptitious hand of Ricordi's chief rival publisher, Sonzogno: one of the most scathing reviews to appear after the fiasco, in *Il secolo*, unequivocally declared that "the opera is dead"; the proprietor of *Il secolo* was none other than Edoardo Sonzogno.⁴

The presence of organized clagues alone, however, cannot account entirely for the inten-

sity of that disastrous first-night reception, and perhaps the most persuasive argument for fundamental dissatisfaction remains the question of the original, overly long second act, with its extensive "scene of the vigil" and which, in its original form, ran nearly an hour and a half. According to one author,⁵ Arturo Toscanini (of whom Puccini had asked an opinion about the score before the premiere) played the score through at the piano and privately felt that the two-act structure was a serious error, that the length of the second act was just "impossible". "That's fine for Wagner, but not for Puccini" he was reported to have said years later; nonetheless Toscanini said nothing at the time, so as not to upset the composer. Not all critics would have agreed, however, with the advisability of breaking up the "scene of the vigil". In a booklet published on occasion of the premiere (and reissued after the revised score was performed at Brescia) Alfred Brüggenmann – a composer and friend to Puccini, who would later translate *Madama Butterfly* for the German-language vocal score – admiringly described the "scene of the vigil" as follows:

"The spectre of vain expectancy returns as the three abandoned persons – Butterfly, Suzuki and the small child "Dolore" (Trouble) – stare intently toward the city and the harbor through three little holes especially cut into the thick curtains of the three windows at the back of the room, which has been filled with scattered irises and verbenas. Once He returns, Dolore will be renamed "Joy". They stare, because his ship returned at sunset and they now expect him to ascend the hill and come to them... He should come at any moment; surely, he will not delay, he must be close... and yet the night grows darker, the hours creep past one after another, the deepening gloom advances, then shows a hint of the rays of the coming dawn, and following these rays, comes the sunlight in its full splendor. Yet He.... does not appear! And here again the orchestra returns to fill us with

*the infinite anxiety of this endless, almost spasmodic vigil, after the three long years of waiting that have already passed. Butterfly, alone, keeps the watch and stays awake, straight-backed, throughout the night, and the orchestra transmits to us the feeling that everything agitating her childlike soul has now transformed her into bride and mother; marvelously, the orchestra reveals, ever so slowly and haltingly, her exhaustion and yearning, through a heavy sense of her oncoming drowsiness. These broad, slowly evolving orchestral thoughts make us understand what she is going through, the musical expression almost gnawing at our soul, so that when at last a cheery fugato underscores the awakening of all of nature at dawn, our spirits are uplifted as though we ourselves had awaited through a long night, not just a few actual minutes of imagined vigil but indeed the sensation of an actual long night almost experienced, felt, lived."*⁶

When Brüggenmann's booklet was reprinted, he added the wistful footnote "In the new edition, which separates this act into two parts, this effect is now lost." One feels he might have been tempted to add the phrase: "sad to say". Clearly, Brüggenmann would seem to have preferred the earlier version. Indeed, the idea of the extensive on-stage representation of the "long vigil" was not an invention of Puccini and his librettists, but rather a key feature of David Belasco's play (one of the sources for the opera's libretto), where the scene (lasting more than ten minutes) was accompanied by a state-of-the-art set-lighting effect of transition from evening, to dusk, to dawn that drew admiration and applause. But on the other hand Belasco's play covers only that part of the story that would appear in act 2 (now acts 2 and 3) of Puccini's opera; in the original version of the opera, the effect arrives after having heard a long first act as well. In any event, the division of this second act would be Puccini's principal sacrifice in his first-level revisions for Brescia. After

the end of the Humming Chorus a handful of bars were excised, and the remainder of the instrumental interlude became a Prelude to the next act.

The second important change made for Brescia was the beginning of a distinctive transformation of the character of Lieutenant Pinkerton. Pinkerton, as depicted in John Luther Long's *Madame Butterfly* of 1898 through David Belasco's homonymous play of 1900 and ultimately by Puccini's librettists Illica and Giacosa in the opera's first version, is a selfish, arrogant and even somewhat unthinkingly cruel figure, a character who does not, as one modern critic has pointed out, "suggest the conventional heroic role that Italian operatic tenors are expected, and expect, to fill."⁷ It is an unforgiving portrait, possibly intended as a metaphor for the cultural arrogance of dominance of the Western colonial powers of that era.⁸ In the first version of the opera, Pinkerton is not only insensitive but also cowardly, avoiding a face-to-face encounter with *Butterfly* and instead giving the gentlemanly consul, Sharpless, some money to pass along to her, declaring he cannot bear to see her and then quickly departing. In the Brescia revision, with the addition of the now-famous aria "Addio, fiorito asil", Puccini and his librettists began a process of amelioration of Pinkerton's character, albeit with the compromise of adding a somewhat sentimental arietta. And as more revisions followed, leading to the "established" version familiar to audiences today – in which Pinkerton's insulting remarks about the servants, the food and Japanese culture were also removed – he was ultimately depicted (to quote Smith) "as a much more winning character, a less unworthy representative of the US Navy, and a more conventional type of leading operatic tenor." These revisions toward the more conventional, even the sentimental, should not be taken to imply that the changes are not, in some cases, actual improvements. As the scholar William Ashbrook observed, "If [Pinkerton] is made totally crass, completely selfish, then *Butterfly's*

devotion [to him] becomes incomprehensible".⁹

The splitting of the original second act — effectively curtailing the full effect of the “scene of the vigil” — and the shift in characterization of the lead tenor role make of these revisions a profound alteration; but how necessary were they? Were they more audience-driven than composer-driven? In addressing the revisions to *Butterfly* following the opening night fiasco (in several stages, over the ensuing three years), did Puccini perhaps overreact? To be sure, some purely practical matters needed to be addressed — in the opera’s first form, for instance, the small child playing Butterfly’s son had to remain on stage for nearly an hour; changes Puccini made for Brescia readjusted the entrances and exits, considerably improving the stage action. But one is led to speculate whether the composer, with respect to his “original artistic intent”, treated the original version too severely. Indeed, a comparison of the two antipodes — the first version of *Butterfly* and the last — reveals that we are looking at two works of art with distinctly different “shadings”. In the opinion of one critic, “The original *Butterfly* was a daring opera, unconventional in its structure, and unsparing in its delivery of what for its time was an unusually pointed moral and social message. The Milan audience of 1904 rejected the former, and [the final revisions of 1907] successfully diluted the latter.”¹⁰

Puccini would make many more changes to the score of *Butterfly* up through 1907 — we have mentioned just two of the more striking here — and in the end, the final revised version of the opera has successfully held the stage for over a century. But as the historian Arthur Groos¹¹ and others have pointed out, the comparison between the 1904 premiere version of the opera and the last published version (the one most known to audiences today) is not a comparison between a lesser and better product, not a matter of positivist evolution toward a superior text. They rep-

resent, in more or less subtle ways, different approaches to the opera. Thus, the opportunity to see the first version staged, to experience it as a full spectacle — not with the idea of replacing the current version but (as Riccardo Chailly says elsewhere in this publication) to broaden our knowledge of Puccini’s art — is an exciting opportunity to compare two distinctly different stages of the composer’s concept.

Notes

- 1** Howard Taubman *The Maestro: The Life of Arturo Toscanini* (New York, 1951) p. 101
- 2** See, among others, Harvey Sachs, *Toscanini* (New York, 1978), pp. 84-85. Sachs also points out that, while the lengthy diatribe over encores was often cited as a principal reason for his rupture with the La Scala management, a disagreement over an increase in his salary may also have been at the heart of it: see Sachs, p. 84.
- 3** Stanley Jackson, *Monsieur Butterfly* (London, 1974), pp. 119-121.
- 4** See Julian Budden, *Puccini, His Life and Works* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 240-242. A panorama of contemporary reviews can be found in *Madama Butterfly, fonti e documenti della genesi*, Arthur Groos, ed. (Lucca, 2005), pp. 455-482. A good summary of the intensity of the reactions is offered in the chapter titled “The Howl of Fiasco” in George R. Marek, *Puccini, A Biography* (New York, 1951), pp. 217-226.
- 5** Jackson, *cit.*, p. 117.
- 6** Alfred Brüggenmann, “*Madama Butterfly*” e *l’arte di Giacomo Puccini: Pensieri d’un musicista* (Milan, 1904, 2d ed.), pp. 4-5.
- 7** Julian Smith, “A Metamorphic Tragedy”, in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 106 (1979-1980), pp. 105-114; p. 106.

- 8** When Long published reprints of his story he “mentioned in his Preface that he had received savage letters from American sailors objecting to his portrayal of the naval officer.” (Smith, *cit.*, p. 106) But in the original source that served as the base model for Long’s 1898 story — *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti, of 1887 — the reprehensible naval officer was, in fact, French. The sailor’s country of origin here is irrelevant; the officer could have been English, French, Dutch or a representative of any of the other countries that were vying for an economic and strategic foothold in the Far East in those decades. What matters is the individual character’s depiction, and Pinkerton was “positively offensive in his arrogance” (Mosco Carner, *Puccini; A Critical Biography* [2d ed., London, 1974], p. 398).
- 9** William Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini* (new edition Ithaca, 1985), p. 117.
- 10** Smith, *cit.*, p. 113.
- 11** Arthur Groos, “Lieutenant F.B. Pinkerton: Problems in the Genesis and Performance of *Madama Butterfly*” in *The Puccini Companion*, William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini eds. (New York, 1994), pp. 200-201.

Sharpless and Pinkerton, watercolor by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904

Following pages:
A hill near Nagasaki, Act 1,
 set design by Alexandre Bailly
 and Michel Jambon, Paris,
 Théâtre National de l’Opéra-
 Comique, 28 December 1906





One-way Trip to Japan

by Vittoria Crespi Morbio



Butterfly, Act 2,
costume design by Giuseppe
Palanti, world premiere,
La Scala, 17 February 1904

"Grumbles, grouses, growls, gibes, bellows, sneers"¹ would not bury poor Cio-Cio-San, as a matter of fact gloriously reborn after the disaster of the first performance at La Scala on 17 February 1904. However, it did put an end to a certain opera production system created and organised by Casa Ricordi, perfected by Signor Giulio and become extinct in the hands of Tito II, his son, who was directly responsible for the visual, organisational, and promotional machinery backing up *Madama Butterfly*.

No one in Casa Ricordi was prepared for the dramatic outcome of the premiere, after which the score was withdrawn.² Neither Puccini, "at peace" in his own "artist's conscience"³, nor Giulio Ricordi, who had always believed in *Butterfly*: "It is a masterpiece"⁴. Signor Giulio had done everything to make sure that rehearsals would proceed with the greatest tranquillity and privacy. In the letter in which he announced to the Scala management that "Maestro Puccini has completed the opera *Madama Butterfly*", he recommended that the Theatre be more vigilant than ever: "We cannot refrain from saying that we are extremely struck by what happened at the general rehearsals and the ones preceding the last dress rehearsal, having observed that persons not belonging to the theatre were present."⁵

One of the strengths that Ricordi counted on was the opera's set design, to which endless care had been devoted during the gestation of the score and that contributed to its publicity. Even in the unsigned article in *Musica e musicisti*, the publisher's press medium, in which the failure was reviewed,

Ricordi especially insisted on the extraordinary quality of the visual part of the spectacle. The set design sketches were published, illustrating once again the philological criteria with which the Nipponese context was truthfully recreated, thanks to photographs "reproduced with the greatest care", including the "large coloured photograph" showing the Nagasaki bay and city. He pointed out that the costumes were "admirable for the richness of the embroideries and the beauty of the fabrics".⁶ Had the audience not noticed? It is true however that in the chaos of the one performance at La Scala the spectators had other things to draw their attention.



Portraits of Giulio Ricordi and his son Tito II, photographs by Varischi & Artico, Milan and by Studio Bertieri, Turin

Something, or much more, had gone wrong. And this something was not only the quality of Puccini's music, but involved the publishing firm's entire production system. For the first time it unexpectedly collapsed, especially if we are aware that Puccini was "the" composer

of Casa Ricordi, as Verdi had been before him. A Puccini fiasco, and at La Scala, was something that should not happen, *that could not have happened*.

To understand this failure, we should take a step backwards and return to the time when Tito II took in hand the production of *Butterfly*, which had begun to exist in Puccini's mind on the evening of 21 June 1900 when, at the Duke of York's Theatre in London, the composer saw the performance of David Belasco's play *Madama Butterfly. A Tragedy of Japan*.

At the time Casa Ricordi's paint brush was Adolf Hohenstein, the great scenographer, costume designer, poster designer, author of book covers and postcards, whose fresh and attractive

line, free of intellectual excesses, had established the characters of the operas in the popular imagination, conferring a uniform style on the Casa productions. Hohenstein, born in St Petersburg in 1854 of German parents, trained in Vienna, was not only endowed with the imaginative versatility of his creative temperament, backed up by an extraordinary skill in dosing lights and organising spaces, but also an unfailingly spirited line. And he was again the artist who, in drawing several secondary figures of *La Bohème*, had given them the features of Puccini, Illica and Giacosa.⁷

The first problem that Tito Il Ricordi faced when he took over the *Butterfly Affair*, is the fact that Hohenstein, a Prussian citizen since



Adolf Hohenstein and his wife Katharina in his studio in Bonn, 1905

1903, and the same year become the husband of a German widow with three children to support, left for Germany. For a while the artist commuted between Milan and Bonn, but then settled permanently in Beethoven's city.⁸

For Ricordi the blow was not an easy one to absorb. Hohenstein had been "Puccini's" painter and scenographer. He had started with *Le Villi* (Turin, Teatro Regio, 1884), then had given a countenance to *Edgar* (Teatro alla Scala, 1889). Over the years he had followed the composer at every step. In a dazzling vortex of colour, variety, and vitality, he had given dramatic intensity to the 18th century of *Manon Lescaut* (Turin, Teatro Regio, 1893), enlivened the Paris of *La Bohème* (Turin, Teatro Regio, 1896), admirably recreated the Papal Rome of *Tosca* (Rome, Teatro Costanzi, 1900). Now, at the age of fifty, he decided to leave the frenzied Milanese world, the amusing hysteria of publicity operations, the unknown factor of performances to launch. He settled down in Germany, reducing his production for new and certainly less demanding commissions on the other side of the Alps. Before departing he left for Puccini an immensely striking poster in his typical style, with Cio-Cio-San in her death throes, outstretched towards the child lit by a sharp ray of light (1903).⁹

Hohenstein was Giulio Ricordi's creation, he had discovered and launched him, appointing him the company's first artistic director. Faced with the vacuum he left, Tito Il made the only possible choice: he decided to divide up the work, selecting a team of personalities chosen for their specific competencies. In doing so he became in charge of leading the group, coordinating it, becoming the head, the director, the inspirer of the entire work, and instigator of a change in the Casa's editorial line, its strength always having been to be able to look beyond and anticipate the times. The opera with which he measured himself, the most personal creation of his life, was *Madama Butterfly*.

Tito Il seized the reins, decided, did and undid,

and was even able to hold Puccini at arm's length, while keeping him up to date on the developments of the staging. When the composer suggested involving his painter friend Plinio Nomellini for a *Madama Butterfly* poster, Tito Il, backed up by his father, did not give in. His candidate was Leopoldo Metlicovitz: "I spoke to papà [sic] about the idea of Nomellini – and he is not very inclined to it, all the more so that our Sigr Metlicowitz [sic] has already presented a sketch."¹⁰ On the other hand, it was not until many years later, with *Il Trittico* and *Turandot*, that Puccini would be able to have a say in the stage design of his works.

The first concern of Tito Il in forming the team for *Butterfly* was to get rid of the personalities difficult to manage, first of all Alfredo Edel. A brilliant costume designer discovered by Giulio Ricordi, able to express in colour the dramatic intensity of Verdi's works, Edel was active all over Europe and signed the most talked about variety shows in Paris and London, but he had a direct line with the publishing firm and forced them to respect him. Verdi was even afraid that his costumes had too much personality and would end up by distracting the public.¹¹ Last, Edel had yielded to his true nature, exuberant and dispersive, with a series of stunning designs not for opera but for the great ballets put to music by Romualdo Marenco at La Scala, *Excelsior* (1881), *Amor* (1886), *Sport* (1897): the charming ballerinas he dressed and above all undressed were too strong a temptation for him. He was not the right man for Cio-Cio-San's tragedy.

The other name that Tito Il eliminated was Caramba (*alias* Luigi Sapelli), who would reign over La Scala in the next decades. In 1903 Caramba had already proved to be a strong, energetic personality, endowed with an instinctive, infallible sense of the theatre; he was also a lively artist, used to operetta companies but unknown to the Scala stage. He had been successfully tried out by Ricordi to draw the costume plates for



The soprano Silvia Gordini Marchetti in the operetta *La Geisha*, photograph by Alfredo Pesce, Naples, 1904

budding authors like Nicola Spinelli (*A basso porto*, 1894) or Edoardo Mascheroni (*Lorenza*, 1902). Tito Il did not deem him worthy of a Puccini premiere at La Scala.

Had Casa Ricordi's heir made a mistake? It is a fact that the very year of the disaster of *Butterfly* both Edel and Caramba had two huge successes. Edel triumphed with the ballet *Baccus e Gambrinus*, whose dancers "ended up communicating the same intoxication as what constitutes

the essence of the two stars"¹² (Teatro alla Scala, 14 January 1904). And Caramba enchanted the Milanese audience with the staging of a Japanese subject, obtaining "a grandiose success for the lavishness, to which we are not accustomed, of the sets and costumes,"¹³ with Sidney Jones' delightful operetta *The Geisha* (Teatro Olimpia, 26 October 1904).

It is true though that the genres of ballet and operetta left a greater creative freedom than the standard chosen by Tito II (backed by his father) for the staging of *Butterfly*. The opera was supposed to adopt a criterion of absolute verisimilitude of the place and the time when the action took place. If the libretto bore the mention "At Nagasaki – Present time", the Nagasaki of the present time had to be seen on the stage. For Caramba such an intention would have been Procrustean: his imagination was too lively, too fanciful, too free of the need to reproduce reality down to the slightest detail. In this respect Tito II was exactly a son of his time. He may have sinned out of too much caution, failing to discern in Caramba the man of the future he would become. In the air there was a "flavour" of Japan that he believed should be effectively captured. There had been the 1st International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Arts in Turin in 1902 with a wealth of Japanese books and prints. With *Madama Butterfly* another window should be opened onto that world.

To play safe Casa Ricordi involved in the project the trustworthy Lucien Jusseaume, the Parisian scenographer whose contribution had been very useful, providing atmosphere and the first sets for *La Bohème*, then developed by Hohenstein.

Jusseaume was a favourite of the Parisian public, that never failed to applaud him on the proscenium of the Comédie Française, then at the Opéra Comique. His task was to translate visually the exact indications and the "Leonardesque

sketches"¹⁴ sent him by Tito II early in November 1903. In the publishing company the generic structure had already been set up for a staging à deux, Ricordi father and son,¹⁵ confirmed by Puccini. The byword was verisimilitude, and if necessary assisted by a photograph that the Ricordis had obtained from the Royal Navy:¹⁶ the location of Cio-Cio-San's house, the path going down to expand the vision of the Bay of Nagasaki were faithfully reproduced. Jusseaume was given the freedom of something to fill in beside the path, a rock or so, some dwarfed tree, eventually a little bridge, and in brief "anything Japanese you may wish."¹⁷

At the end of November Jusseaume's maquettes were sent to Milan,¹⁸ where the trustworthy Vittorio Rota, Tito II's favourite among the Scala scenographers, awaited them to give a final shape to the sketch of the first Act.

Up to then there had been six authors of the visual *Butterfly*: Hohenstein with the first poster, Giulio Ricordi, Tito II Ricordi who coordinated everything, Lucien Jusseaume, Vittorio Rota, and Puccini who tried to hold his own rather on the side, also absorbed by health and sentimental problems.¹⁹ But this was still just the First Act. The solution for the second was more of a muddle. The scenographer Carlo Songa (the seventh to join in the undertaking) was engaged to reproduce the interior of the Japanese house, exactly as David Velasco had represented it in his own one-act play, *Madama Butterfly. A Tragedy of Japan*, successfully performed at the Herald Square Theater of New York on 5 March 1900, starring Blanche Bates. Puccini had seen the same staging in the London revival and been thunderstruck: "I hardly understand English [...] and yet I understood everything."²⁰ The star Evelyn Millard ("a most beautiful creature")²¹ had conquered him.

The eighth man to join the composite *Butterfly Affair* developing between Milan, Nagasaki, Paris, New York, and London was the great Leopoldo Metlicovitz, who used his own delicate nuanc-

es and characteristic gracious line to capture in a poster, later become a legend, the dramatic centre of the opera: the sense of expectancy. Butterfly's face is concealed, her pose unmoving: the work comes directly from a Japanese source, an engraving provided by Ricordi,²² but it is the use of colour and light that confers on this moment, where nothing happens because everything that happens is in the future, an aura of grief. Grief at being abandoned, hope, the illusion of a renewed life can all be read therein.

Metlicovitz also signed a series of postcards to be distributed in theatres,²³ and the reference image is the serene face of Rosina Storchio, who then heroically played Cio-Cio-San at La Scala, succeeding in reaching the end of the performance in one piece after an agony of insults "for a slightly strident note"²⁴ and jokes about the accidental bulge in her clothing ("Butterfly is pregnant!")²⁵. The press was on her side, as well as Ricordi and Puccini himself ("I think that *Butterfly* without Rosina Storchio becomes a thing without a soul").²⁶ Metlicovitz turned her into an icon, made her coincide with the Japanese heroine. She would forever be the one to give a face to the seduced and abandoned geisha, even when she was not on the stage singing. Casa Ricordi had her photographed for publicity by the Varischi, Artico & C, studio.²⁷ It would still be Rosina Storchio who introduced Cio-Cio-San abroad for the first time in the course of a tour in Buenos Aires conducted by Arturo Toscanini (Teatro de la Opera, 2 July 1904).²⁸ And it was precisely with *Madama Butterfly* in December 1922 that Storchio said farewell to the stage²⁹ with an unforgettable performance in Barcelona.

Let us go back a few steps. With Metlicovitz the authors of the staging of *Butterfly* had become eight. A ninth was needed to do the costumes, and Tito II Ricordi was once again responsible for the choice. The first costume plate designer he thought of was Attilio Comelli, a sound, trust-

worthy artist, quick, curious investigator of historic periods, as he had already shown at La Scala (1 March 1903) for the ballet *Nel Giappone* with choreography by Carlo Coppi and music by Louis-Gustave Ganne. His amazing costumes had been admired. But maybe he was called on too late, in December 1903, only two months before going on-stage. Comelli, who lived in London, was too busy to produce fifty designs in record time and did not accept the burden of coming to Milan immediately to be put up to date on the project and work with the wardrobe department, the technical staff, the ones responsible for hair styles and shoes.³⁰

A youth, another of the Ricordi's finds, was on hand: Giuseppe Palanti. Palanti was the perfect problem solver: available, sociable, instinctively bound to satisfy the patron. He had risen from the ranks as a textile designer for the Scotti firm, and won Casa Ricordi's trust with the costume plates for Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, performed at La Scala in 1903, then for Franchetti's *Asrael*, and *Un ballo in maschera* again by Verdi.

In *Butterfly* Palanti proved himself entirely up to the challenge. His costumes, inspired by Japanese prints or the photographs taken in Japan by Felice Beato, offered a refined colour harmony, sophisticated and varied: they lavished on the kimonos the springtime flowering of roses, daisies, forget-me-nots, and the autumn one of chrysanthemums, combining naturalistic suggestiveness with efficient geometric insets. Palanti brought out of the archives Hohenstein's old designs for Mascagni's *Iris* (Rome, Teatro Costanzi, 1898), literally reproduced. For the table lamps the reference was the famous Gallé vases.

We all know how it ended. What perhaps played a role in the failure that befell *Butterfly* may have been the sum of influences and contaminations that drowned Tito II's original idea, based on philological truth. Too many hands were involved, too many contributions, too many tos and fros of attempts. At the Scala premiere the audience saw

a Japan “in style”, the outcome of too many compromises: and yet it was the same Japan that the Brescia public³¹ saw in the new, three-act version with the same sets by Rota and Songa and costumes by Palanti, that marked the beginning of the opera’s triumphal course. It may be true that works, once set on their course, lead their own life, part chance and part fate, which over the years shapes their physiognomy in unexpected ways.

Abroad, chance and fate would lead *Butterfly* through many passages in the popular imagination, even the most paradoxical. In Buenos Aires in 1905, in the presence of Puccini, Antonio Rovescalli supervised the production signed by two Scala colleagues.³² Puccini appreciated Rovescalli’s work and had him stage *Il Tabarro*. In London, again in 1905, Comelli was forgiven for not having been available for the world premiere, and signed brilliant costumes for the sets by Rota and Sogna.³³ From Milan the scale model for the set of the Second Act, paid in advance sixty pounds³⁴, arrived at Covent Garden. And even the first performance in English at the Lyric Theatre of London in 1907 would again use the sets by Rota and Sogna.

It was actually from London that the real success of *Butterfly* gathered momentum. It was there that an incomparable international popularisation began, involving everyone having to do with the show world, impresarios and experimenters. Two personalities, that could not be more opposed in training, character and taste, became especially enamoured of Cio-Cio-San. On the one hand the American Henry W. Savage, a former army colonel, businessman, owner of a dozen opera, operetta, ballet, and comedy companies; on the other Albert Carré, the powerful director of the Paris Opéra-Comique. They both recognised the greatness of the score, but above all they both wanted to appropriate it so as to reinterpret it in their own way.

Savage scented the business deal, obtained

Puccini’s agreement³⁵ and that of Casa Ricordi, and in 1906 organised an American tour that on paper looks like sheer madness. Six months of performances devoted solely to *Butterfly*, in English, “eight times a week”.³⁶ All transported by special train, with the artists and the sets adaptable to every possible type of stage: from Washington (in October) to Baltimore; from New York (November) up to the Canadian border and beyond. All with the guarantee of a staging based on the original Japanese sources: more realist than the king (Tito II), Savage discarded the contribution of the “Columbia University professors as impure”.³⁷

On the other hand Carré focused on the essence of the drama, and in Paris (1906)³⁸ intervened in the Scala production for an independent revisiting observed by Puccini who, during the two months he spent in France to attend rehearsals, was first sceptical and bored, then depressed because he missed his Tuscan marshes, and finally enthusiastic.³⁹ This time Tito II was unable to control Carré’s initiatives (for the Parisian premiere of *Tosca* he had sent him a memoir with detailed indications on the directing).⁴⁰ And Carré changed a few stage elements, not to satisfy a decorator’s whim but to grasp the dramatic substance of the score with greater depth. He focused on the character and had her no longer appear from the hollow of a path but on an arched bridge, as if it were her initiation rite.

In the Second Act Cio-Cio-San’s cottage was raised forty centimetres above the ground. It became a nest, sheltered and at the same time apart from the outside world: the elect place of a private tragedy. At the time of the conception of the libretto, Illica had sketched a few Indian ink designs,⁴¹ imagining Butterfly’s home surmounted by a vast opening onto a moonless sky. Now, the same home was closed upon itself, like a laboratory for producing dreams, a theatre within the theatre of Japanese or Western masks framing the character’s tragedy.

Madama Butterfly’s house, interior, David Belasco’s original play, photograph by Byron, New York, 5 March 1900



Madama Butterfly’s house, interior, Act 2, set design by Carlo Songa, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904



The park at Boulogne-Billancourt that belonged to the philanthropist banker Albert Kahn, packed with *japonaiseries* - the wooden bridge, the bamboo house with rush mats and sliding paper windows, the lanterns - became a convenient source of inspiration.⁴² The theatre scenographers, Marcel Jambon and Marcel Bailly, used them to make their sketches. The Parisian production looked ahead and opened a new path in the stage representation, leaving behind the criterion of historical verisimilitude that for Tito II was the only possible horizon. The final judgement was given by the critics who explained: "Il suffit de dire que M. Albert Carré a passé par là",⁴³ while Illica defined the Parisian version "logical, practical, and poetic".⁴⁴ And what about Puccini? In his words: "Carré changed almost everything, and it's fine."⁴⁵

The Parisian success of *Butterfly* was paradoxically a blow for the great productive machine coordinated by Tito II, while it satisfied Puccini's deepest aspirations, as expressed in a letter in the same 1906 to D'Annunzio: "I do not want a realism [...] but something in between that takes possession of the audience through the painful love story".⁴⁶

Only a few years had gone by, and the intentions of Tito II, who wished to control every slightest detail in the visual aspect of the work, were entirely erased. The costume plates, copied in hand-coloured prints diffused in the leading theatres, were neglected, while the singers' demands, the wardrobes, the budgets had to be satisfied. The project of Casa Ricordi's heir actually ended up by being the privilege of those few who had had "the honour of a single performance."⁴⁷ Already in Brescia (28 May 1904) the colour harmony of Palanti's costumes was ruined by the decision of the *prima donna*, the Ukrainian Salomea Krusceniski, to reject the outfit previously worn by Renata Storchio (who could not sing because on tour in South America). The new singer was appreciated, softened a slight stiffness ("she is excellent [...] I see

she is gradually becoming mellow", commented Puccini),⁴⁸ and triumphed, giving many encores. But the costume was no longer what Tito II had decided it should be. He was aggrieved, and in the pages of *Musica e Musicisti* published a picture of the diva wrapped in the "costume that we cannot truly praise as we happily do the performer".⁴⁹

From that evening on the image of *Butterfly* became a contest of divas. At Covent Garden (1905) the singer from Prague Emmy Destinn was applauded for the fluidity of her voice and acting talent,⁵⁰ unlike Angelica Pandolfini who at the Teatro Verme in Milan (1905) seemed to overdo it: "Too artificial, too affected in expressing joy and naiveté, too studied in her gestures. The simple and shy *musmée* should be given simplicity and shyness".⁵¹ Marguerite Carré Giraud, the wife of the Opéra-Comique director, performed in the family theatre after having studied "attitudes, the way to walk, greetings, genuflexions, fan movements" with the Japanese actress Sada-Yoko.⁵² Her commitment did not make up for the weakness of her voice: "She struggles with obvious difficulties in technique and voice",⁵³ according to Illica. At the Metropolitan Opera House of New York (1907)⁵⁴ Puccini was not pleased with Geraldine Farrar ("She sings flat and overdoes it, and her voice does not carry well in the huge receptacle"),⁵⁵ but by then the opera had become distinct from its author and lived its own life: Farrar took over Cio-Cio-San, that "that impossible little thing, outside of lacquer and paint"⁵⁶ as she was defined by John Luther Long in the story *Madame Butterfly*, Puccini's source of inspiration, and made her a person aware of her own film star charisma.

And what about the men? Around the heroine the men represent the obscure side of the opera, associated with the West. They are unable to bear with dignity Cio-Cio-San's fecund and suicidal passion; they live on futilities and empty decorum. And in *Madama Butterfly* the West is scenically afflicted from the very start, as we shall

The uncle, Bonze, Act 1,
costume design and tailor's notes
by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere,
La Scala, 17 February 1904



The uncle, Bonze repudiates
Butterfly, watercolor by
Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904



see, with a Freudian “bungled act” on which the mechanism imagined by Tito II stumbled.

The first to decide to remove the scene set in the American consulate, present in Long’s story, was Puccini himself. It was there that Butterfly should have met Kate Pinkerton: in the reception room crowned with the eagle head, among the busts, the large mirror, the curtains and consoles of a civilisation victim of its own conventions, as Illica imagined it in a first pen sketch. Puccini was peremptory: in November 1902 he rejected the act imagined by Illica and clashed with Giuseppe Giacosa. The “American” scene was deemed dispersive: “I really believe that this little drama should begin and end without an interruption”.⁵⁷ Convinced that “the consulate led me to the fiasco”,⁵⁸ Puccini identified with the geisha’s tragedy and weakened Pinkerton’s role.

The actors who played the male role would suffer from it. The tenor’s role is that of an anti-hero, unpleasant and conceited, dressed in the dull uniform of a Navy officer. The first to prove feeble was the famous Giovanni Zenatello who, in the rehearsals for the debut at La Scala, appeared to Puccini’s eyes “a laxative” (“he claims the role tires him!!!”),⁵⁹ unlike the enthusiastic Rosina Storchio, “excellent!”.⁶⁰ Even Enrico Caruso at Covent Garden in London in 1905 moved about the stage in the First Act looking like a police officer.⁶¹ The Western customs were too commonplace, too accessible to anyone. While readying the world premiere, the focus on Japanese exoticism engulfed everything: the rest was overlooked.

And this was where the “bungled act” of Tito II lay. For the Ricordi heir, the Japan of the debutante *Butterfly* was a crucial moment, the passing of the baton from his father’s hands: but the baton fell to the ground. Tito II was so obsessed by staging a true-to-life Japan that he literally forgot to give a credible aspect to Kate, Butterfly’s colourless rival. At La Scala the “blonde” Kate of the libretto goes onstage as a *brunette*, and when

he realised it, it was too late: “In the theatre there were ears only seeking some reminiscence, and eyes to see that the ‘blonde Kate’, so admired by Butterfly for her beauty, was a brunette and clumsily dressed. Was it too expensive to have a chic tourist’s light suit and a wig with gold highlights? Even this little mistake should not be overlooked. It probably weighed a lot in the disaster.”⁶²

Notes

- 1** Unsigned article, ‘Le scene dell’opera ‘Madama Butterfly, al Teatro alla Scala di Milano’, in *Musica e Musicisti*, no. 59, 15 March 1904, p. 174. Mos., Il Marzocco, 18 February 1904: “The curtain fell on the heart-breaking death of Butterfly [...] not a single applause was heard but a frigid silence spread”.
- 2** “Puccini, Giacosa, Illica, in agreement with the publisher, withdrew *Madama Butterfly* and reimbursed the sum of the performance rights to the Theatre management”, published in the article ‘Il giro del mondo in un mese’, in *Musica e Musicisti*, no. 59, 15 March 1904, p. 189.
- 3** Note written by Puccini on the evening of 17 February 1904 for a telegram to send to himself at Lucca.
- 4** Letter from Giulio Ricordi to Adolf Hohenstein, Colmantstrasse 24, Bonn/Germany, Milan 25 February 1904: “As for the now famous Butterfly!... what can I say? My opinion from the start, I mean, that it is a masterpiece. As for the revered Sir Public all you need to know is that it began to shout and grumble right away in the middle of the duet between Pinkerton and Sharpless! Why?... A mystery”. Milan, Archivio Storico Ricordi (henceforth: ASR), CLET001828.
- 5** Letter from Giulio Ricordi to the Management of La Scala, Milan, 7 January 1904, ASR, CLET002300. The opera had been completed “on 27 December at 11: 10 at night”, Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, London 1958.
- 6** *Musica e Musicisti*, cit., 15 March 1904, p. 174.
- 7** Giacosa embodied the costume plate of a chubby former salesman of images, Puccini a distinguished bourgeois, Illica a student.
- 8** On 28 November 1903 Adolf Hohenstein married in Bonn Katharina Plaskuda. For a while he commuted between Bonn and Milan; on 25 February 1904 he is documented in Bonn (see note 4).
- 9** Hohenstein designed the poster in 1903. Tito II Ricordi mentions it in a letter to Puccini, 27 November 1903: “Dear Giacomo, I spoke to papà [sic] about the idea of Nomellini – and he is not very partial, all the more so that our Sigr Metlicovitz [sic] has already presented a sketch that with a few slight changes will do perfectly. So I think it is better not to deal with Nomellini. The one by Hohenstein is a real masterpiece!! And seems to me to interpret perfectly what you wanted”, ASR, CLET000969. Giulio Ricordi, in a letter to Hohenstein, Bonn,

25 February 1904: “The announcement is very beautiful, a true work of art, and has made a great impression – Only the long format makes it very difficult to find the right place to affix it”, ASR, CLET001828.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Giulio Ricordi, [Sant’Agata, 3 November 1886], on the subject of *Otello* (Teatro alla Scala, 1887): “If the audience exclaims “Oh the beautiful costume” we’re lost”, in *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1886-1888*, edited by A. Pompilio and M. Ricordi, 2010, letter 128, p.102.

12 *Musica e Musicisti*, no. 59, 15 February 1904, p. 105.

Choreography by Giovanni Pratesi, commissioned by Ricordi.

13 Unsigned article, ‘Teatri’, in *Illustrazione Italiana*, year 31, no. 44, 30 October 1904. The performance was staged with Giulio Marchetti’s Company.

14 Letter from Tito II Ricordi to Monsieur Jusseume, Opéra Comique, Milan, 9 November 1903: “I hope, especially with the help of my Leonardesque sketches, I have been understood - if you have any doubts write me”, ASR, CLET002294.

15 Letter from Tito II Ricordi to Puccini, Milan, 27 November 1903: “With papà we are putting the stage indications on the 2nd Act – as soon as they are ready we shall send them to see if they turn out as we imagined them”, ASR, CLET000969.

16 The colour photograph of the Nagasaki Bay and approved by Puccini to be made into a set design had been taken by the personnel of the corvette “Vettor Pisani”. The original is held at the Archivio Storico Ricordi.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Letter from Tito II Ricordi to Puccini, Milan, 27 November 1903: “The maquettes di Jusseume’s models are on their way and next week I meet with the Scala painters and Illica to set up the plans on the stage”, ASR, CLET000969.

19 In the night between the 25th and 26th of February 1903 Puccini, after a serious automobile accident requiring a long convalescence and bringing on moments of misery that slowed down the production of *Butterfly*, wrote to Illica on 13 March 1903: “While I am asleep I move about and the pain wakes me up. In short my life is terrible”, in Eugenio Gara, *Carteggi pucciniani*, Ricordi, Milan 1958, letter 306, p. 235.

Besides, the sentimental attachment between him and his lover Corinna was over.

20 Puccini in an interview with Carlo Paladini published in the

Giornale d'Italia of 14 September 1902 and recorded in Eduardo Rescigno, 'Il pubblico ne ha avute tante delle lagrime...', in *Madama Butterfly*, programme, Teatro alla Scala, Milan 1985, p. 69.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Cover for *Croquis Japonais par G. Bigot*, Tokyo 1886

23 Metlicovitz's postcards were publicised in Milan (Teatro alla Scala, 17 February 1904, with Rosina Storchio), in Brescia (Teatro Grande, 28 May 1905, with Salomea Krusceniski), Milan (Teatro dal Verme, 12 October 1905, with Angelica Pandolfini, former singer in the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* in Alexandria (Egypt), Teatro Zizinia, 19 December 1904).

24 Mos., *La Tribuna*, 19 February 1904.

25 Mosco Carner, cit., 1961, p. 200.

26 Letter from Puccini to Rosina Storchio, Milan, 22 February 1904, in Gara, cit., letter 353, p. 261.

27 The review appeared in the pages of the review *Musica e Musicisti*, Year 59, 15 May 1904, pp. 288-293.

28 Buenos Aires, Teatro de la Opera, 2 July 1904, conductor Arturo Toscanini. Starring Rosina Storchio (Madama Butterfly), Edoardo Garbin (Pinkerton), Pasquale Amato (Sharpless), Annetta Torreta (Suzuki).

29 Daniele and Walter Rubboli, *Rosina Storchio*, Museo R. Storchio-Dello, 1994, p. 48.

30 Cable from Ricordi to Attilio Comelli in London, Milan, 1st December 1903: "Please telegraph if you can do costume plates for Butterfly approximately fifty plates to be delivered January 1st. If you accept you should immediately come to Milan at our expense for a few days to receive explanations from Ricordi", ASR, CLET002295.

31 Brescia, Teatro Grande, 28 May 1904 (in the presence of Puccini), conductor Cleofonte Campanini. Starring Salomea Krusceniski (Madama Butterfly), Giovanni Zenatello (Pinkerton), Virgilio Bellatti (Sharpless), Giovanna Lucacewska (Suzuki).

32 Buenos Aires, Teatro de la Opera, 19 July 1905 (in the presence of Puccini), conductor Antonio Mugnone. Starring Rosina Storchio (Madama Butterfly), Giovanni Zenatello (Pinkerton), Enrico Nani (Sharpless). Puccini sailed with his wife Elvira on the ocean liner *Savoia* on the 1st of June 1905; he returned in August aboard the ocean liner *Umbria*, after a short stay in Montevideo (9-17 August 1905). He will not

return to South America. The opera was performed at the Teatro Colón on 4 June 1908, conductor Arturo Vigna. Starring Maria Farneti (Madama Butterfly), Amedeo Bassi (Pinkerton), Manuel Sarmiento (Sharpless).

33 London, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 10 July 1905 (Italian version, in the absence of Puccini), conductor Cleofonte Campanini. Starring Emmy Destinn (Madama Butterfly), Enrico Caruso (Pinkerton), Antonio Scotti (Sharpless), Gabrielle Lejeune (Suzuki). Puccini will attend the London revival on 24 October 1905.

34 Unsigned letter to Ricordi's branch office in London that acts as a go-between with Mr Higgins of Covent Garden, 22 March 1905, ASR, CLET002309.

35 Letter from Puccini to Alfredo Vandini, Milan, 7 February 1906: "I arranged for *Butterfly* at the Opéra Comique Paris and in New York with a British company directed by the impresario Savage", in Gara, cit., letter 464, p. 317.

36 Tito Il Ricordi, 'Henry W. Savage e 'Madam Butterfly' negli Stati Uniti', in *Ars et Labor*, Year 62, February 1907, pp. 110-116.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Paris, Opéra-Comique, 28 December 1906 (in the presence of Puccini), conductor François Rühlmann, director Albert Carré, sets Marcel Jambon, Alexandre Bailly, costumes Marcel Mültzer. Starring Marguerite Carré Giraud (Madama Butterfly), Edmond Clément (Pinkerton), Jean Périer (Sharpless), Berthe Lamare (Suzuki).

39 "Carré is excessively meticulous", letter from Puccini to Illica, 15 November 1906, in Adami, cit., p. 159. Puccini arrived in Paris on 23 October 1906.

40 Letter from Tito Il Ricordi to Albert Carré, Milan, 1st April 1903, ASR, CLET002292.

41 Luigi Illica made three studies for Madama Butterfly's house, the design for the scene at the Consulate, two studies of lanterns: "I join an "authentic" copy of a Japanese lantern", letter from Illica to Giulio Ricordi, np., nd., ASR, LLET000293. The works belong to the Archivio Storico Ricordi.

42 Albert Carré, *Souvenirs de Théâtre réunis, présentés et annotés par Robert Favart*, Plon, Paris 1950, p. 314.

43 Arthur Pougin, *Le Ménestrel*, 5 January 1907, pp. 3-5 ("We need only mention that M. Albert Carré had his say in it").

44 Letter from Illica to Giulio Ricordi, Paris, [December] 1906, ASR, LLET000225.

45 Letter from Puccini to Giulio Ricordi, Paris, "Sunday night" [21 November 1906], in Giuseppe Adami (edited by), *Giacomo Puccini, Epistolario*, Milan, Mondadori 1982, p. 101.

46 Letter from Puccini to Gabriele D'Annunzio, Boscolungo Abetone, Serra Bassa, 16 August 1906, in Gara, cit., Letter 485, p. 328.

47 *Musica e Musicisti*, cit., Year 59, 15 March 1904, p. 174

48 Letter from Puccini to Giuseppe Giacosa, Milan, 19 May 1904, in Arthur Groos (edited by), *Madama Butterfly. Fonti e documenti della genesi*, Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini, Maria Pacini Fazzi, Lucca 2005, p. 435.

49 [Tito Il Ricordi], 'Teatro Grande-Brescia 'Madama Butterfly'', in *Musica e Musicisti*, Year 59, 15 August 1904, p. 504.

50 *Pan Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1905, p. 4.

51 Unsigned article, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 October 1905.

52 Carré, cit., p. 315.

53 Letter from Illica to Giulio Ricordi, Paris, December 1906, ASR, LLET000225. For Puccini "The singer is *not up to it*", Letter from Puccini to Conte Giuseppe della Gherardesca, 8 December 1906, in Michele Girardi, *Madama Butterfly mise en scène di Albert Carré*, EDT, Turin 2012, p. 10.

54 New York, Metropolitan Opera House, 11 February 1907 (in the presence of Puccini), conductor Arturo Vigna. Starring Geraldine Farrar (Madama Butterfly), Enrico Caruso (Pinkerton), Antonio Scotti (Sharpless), Louise Homer (Suzuki).

55 Letter from Puccini to Tito Il Ricordi, New York, 18 February 1907, ASR, LLET000344.

56 John Luther Long, 'Madame Butterfly', in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, 1898: "She was quite an impossible little thing, outside of lacquer and paint".

57 Letter from Puccini to Giulio Ricordi, Torre del Lago, 16 November 1902, in Carner, cit., p. 188.

58 Letter written by Puccini to Illica, at Cassano d'Adda, on the same 16 November 1902, in Groos, cit., p. 349.

59 Letter written by Puccini to Luigi Illica, at Castell'Arquato, [24 January 1904], in Groos, cit., pp. 410-411.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *The London Times*, 11 July 1905, p. 5: "Signor Caruso sang so well that his appearance was easily forgiven, but when he was not actually singing some of the audience were moved to observe that he looked like an inspector of police in the first act".

62 Leporello, *Madama Butterfly*, in *Illustrazione Italiana*, year 31, n.9, 28 February 1904.

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Butterfly, Act 1,
costume design by Giuseppe
Palanti, world premiere,
La Scala, 17 February 1904

The soprano Rosina Storchio,
who created the role of Butterfly,
world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904

The soprano Salomea Krusceniski in
the role of Butterfly, photograph by
C. Capitanio, new version, Brescia,
Teatro Grande, 28 May 1904



Butterfly with friends and kin,
watercolor by Leopoldo
Metlicovitz, 1904





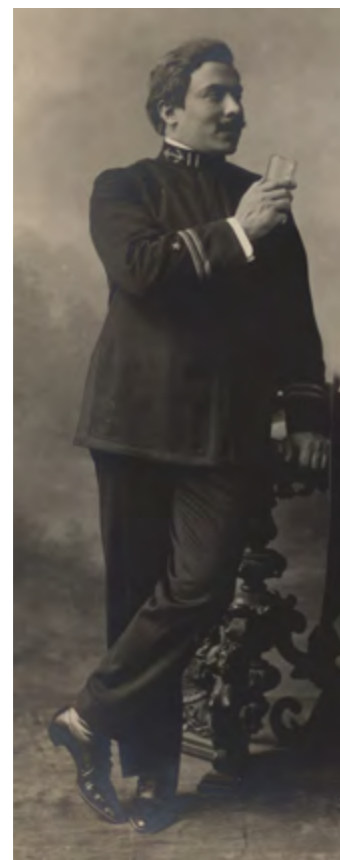
An image supplied to the costume designer Palanti by Ricordi, published in *Uniforms and Equipments for Officers U.S.N.*, New York, undated

Pinkerton, Act 1, costume design by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904

The soprano Emmy Destinn in the role of Butterfly, photograph by Johnston & Hoffmann, London, 1905



Coiffures, prop designs by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904



The tenor Giovanni Zenatello, who created the role of Pinkerton, photograph by C. Capitano, Brescia, 1904

The tenor Enrico Caruso, the first Pinkerton at the Royal Opera House of London (1905) and at the Metropolitan Opera of New York (1907) during an ocean crossing, photograph by Studio Atlantic



Trouble, Act 2, costume design by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904



The soprano Geraldine Farrar, the first Butterfly at the Metropolitan Opera of New York, 1907

A page of Puccini's autograph full score with a stage indication at Butterfly's entrance with the child, folio 228v

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FLAUTI 1^o 2^o

Ottavino

OBOE

CORNO INGLESE

CLARINI

CLARONE

FAGOTTI

CONTRAFAGOTTO

CORNI 1^o 2^o

" 3^o 4^o

TROMBE 1^o 2^o 3^o

TROMBONI 1^o 2^o 3^o

TROMBONE BASSO

ARPA

TIMPANI

CAMPANELLI

CASSA • PIATTI

TRIANGOLO

Andante

(Entrata col Bambino)

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VIOLINO 1^o

VIOLINO 2^o

VIOLE

CELLI

C. BASSI



Women's Chorus, Act 1,
costume design by Giuseppe
Palanti, world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904



Women's Chorus, Act 1,
costume design by Giuseppe
Palanti, world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904



The Aunt with the little one,
Act 1, costume design by Giuseppe
Palanti, world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904

Details for Suzuki and the little one,
prop designs by Giuseppe Palanti,
world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904



Men's Chorus, Act 1, costume
design by Giuseppe Palanti,
world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904



Kimonos, prop designs
by Giuseppe Palanti,
world premiere, La Scala,
17 February 1904

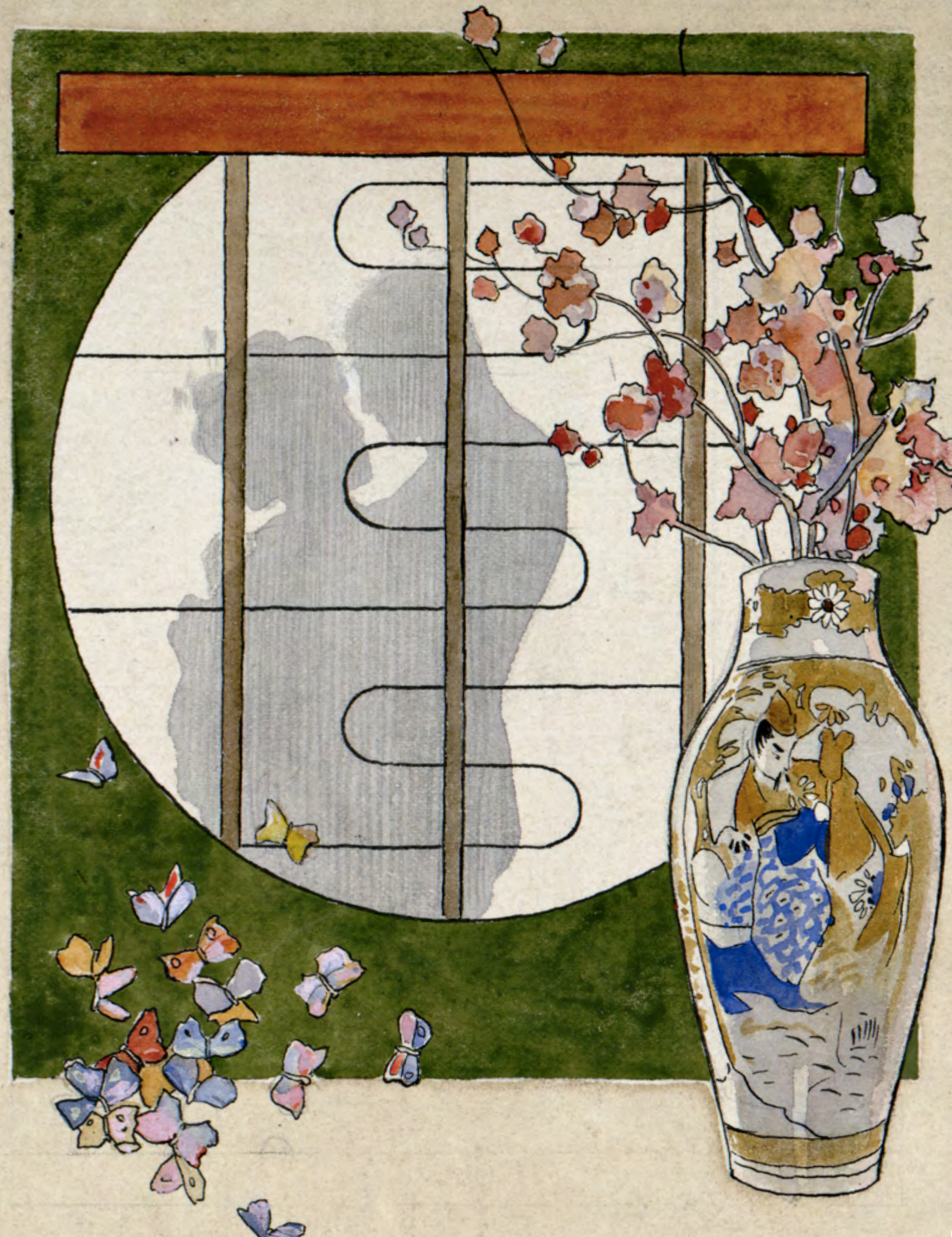
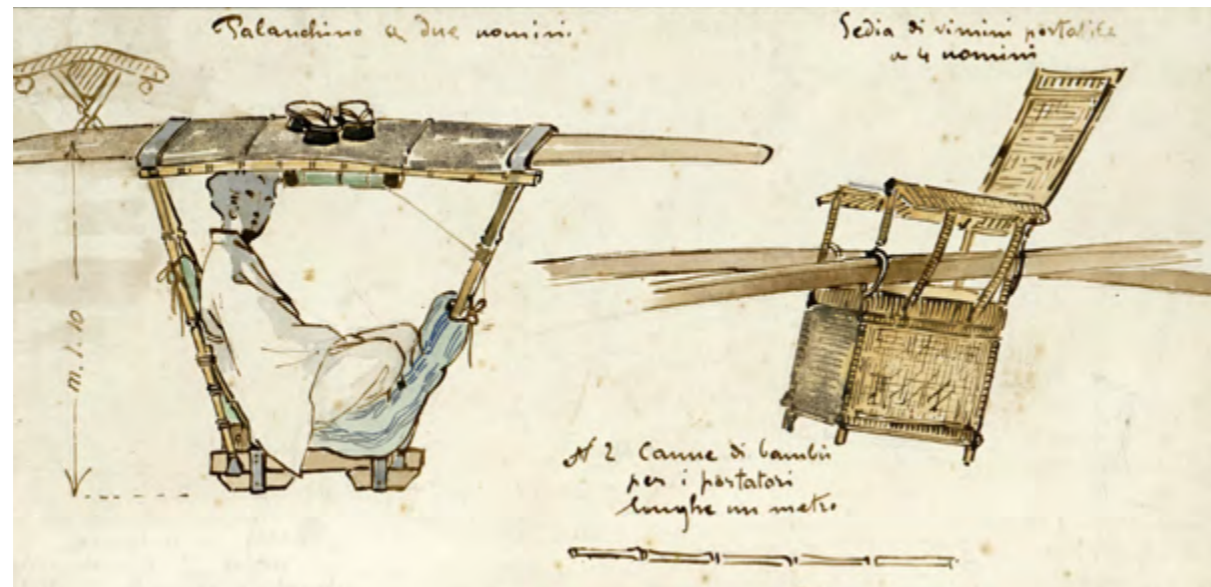




Butterfly, Act 1, costume design by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904

Litter and wicker palanquin, prop designs by Giuseppe Palanti, world premiere, La Scala, 17 February 1904

Butterfly and Pinkerton, watercolor by Leopoldo Metlicovitz, 1904



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In 1808, Giovanni Ricordi founded a music publishing firm in Milan that would significantly shape the cultural history of Italy and Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries: Casa Ricordi. It published the works of the “big five” composers of Italian opera – Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini. From the beginning, all of the company’s documents were meticulously archived. The former business archives of the Casa Ricordi publishing company, which was acquired by Bertelsmann in 1994, have since become a historical archive: the Archivio Storico Ricordi, one of the world’s foremost privately held music collections, which is now housed in the Biblioteca Braidense in Milan.

The original scores of many operas of the 19th and early 20th century stored here, along with those of many other compositions, are highlights of European music history. In 2006, Bertelsmann sold its former music rights business to Universal, but retained the rights to the Ricordi brand and the publisher’s famous archives. The Archivio Storico Ricordi is under the special protection of the Italian Ministry of Culture. As a national heritage, the Archivio must remain in Italy.

After having been an integral part of Casa Ricordi for decades and being used primarily for commercial purposes such as the publication of “critical editions,” the archive has recently been undergoing an accelerated transformation into a historical research archive.

Since February 2011, a project group at Bertelsmann and the Ricordi team in Milan have been developing a sustainable concept for indexing the archival material and preserving it for posterity. Together, they are working on the continuous restoration and digitization of the archive. The idea is to develop the Archivio Storico Ricordi into a best-practice case in the field of communicating cultural and historical archive materials in the digital era, and to make its resources accessible to a wider audience besides the academic community.

Bertelsmann is aware of the great responsibility associated with owning this unique cultural asset, and continues to cultivate the tradition associated with the Ricordi name.

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