

CALGARY OPERA



MADAMA BUTTERFLY

INSIDER'S GUIDE

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut’ina, the Iyarhe Nakoda Nations, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 & 6, and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

KEY IDEAS

- **Originally set at the turn of the 20th century, this production of *Madama Butterfly* begins shortly before the end of WWII** in Act I and, for Act II, six years later, after the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki. Instead of presenting a story of unrequited love, in this new light *Madama Butterfly* becomes a story of survival.
- ***Madama Butterfly* premiered at Italy's most prestigious opera house, La Scala, in Milan in 1904 to booing and jeering from the audience.** Famously, during the daybreak scene, various bird calls were included to give an atmospheric effect, but the audience began adding bird and animal noises of their own! **Historians believe this was an attempt by Puccini's enemies to discredit him.**
- **Puccini didn't let the haters get him down:** after the opening night fiasco of *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini revised parts of the opera and performed it several months later in Brescia, with Ukrainian soprano Solomiya Krushelnytska in the title role. It was a hit and is among the top operas performed worldwide today.
- **Celebrated Japanese opera singer Tamaki Miura won international acclaim for her performances as Cio-Cio-San** between 1915 and 1920 in London and across America, and then further throughout Europe. A recording of her performance of Cio-Cio-San's aria "Un bel dì vedremo" can be found [here](#) on YouTube.
- **The stage director Mo Zhou weighed for many years the decision to accept an opportunity to direct *Madama Butterfly*.** Read further to learn more about the opera's problematic source material and practices of cultural appropriation that are being challenged and transformed by opera makers today.
- **The costumes of this production of *Madama Butterfly* tell an important story:** by the end of the opera, everyone around her returns to wearing traditional attire except Cio-Cio-San, who still believes her husband will return. When Kate appears in a gown modelled after the 1952 American Vogue cover, this directorial choice shows who the despicable Pinkerton believes is his "real American wife."
- **Puccini portrays and shapes the characters through the music:** some of his most beautiful melodies are Cio-Cio-San's. Pinkerton, by contrast, is shown as reckless and cowardly. The use of American musical themes (such as the Star-Spangled Banner) links broader political concerns to the actions of these characters.

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	ABOUT
Cio-Cio-San Young Japanese geisha	CHO-CHO-SAHN	soprano	Known as “Butterfly,” Cio-Cio-San unwaveringly believes in her husband’s return and the American Dream
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton An American naval officer	BEN-dja-min FRANK-lin PINK-er-ton	tenor	Cowardly and self-centered, Pinkerton cannot bear to face the consequences of his actions
Sharpless American consul at Nagasaki	SHARP-less	baritone	Sharpless is perceptive and understanding, cautions Pinkerton, and empathizes with Cio-Cio-San
Suzuki Cio-Cio-San’s maid	soo-DZOO-kee	mezzo-soprano	Faithful and kind, Suzuki remains by Cio-Cio San’s side
Goro Japanese marriage broker	GOH-roh	tenor	Goro is self-serving and manipulative, and treats Cio-Cio-San poorly

Calgary Opera attracts world class talent to perform for our audience, including local singers and McPhee Artists who apprentice at Calgary Opera. For more information about the performers who bring these characters to life, please visit us [here](#).

THE STORY

Act I - Nagasaki, Japan, Late 1946 Less than a year after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton meets with the marriage broker Goro to inspect a house he has rented above the harbour. There he plans to wed Cio-Cio-San, a young Japanese woman known as “Butterfly.” Having survived the devastation of war, Cio-Cio-San sees in Pinkerton the promise of love and a new life built on the ideals of the American Dream. She has even secretly renounced her Buddhist faith for Christianity. Pinkerton, on the other hand, is captivated by Cio-Cio-San but considers the union a fleeting marriage of convenience until he returns to America. Cio-Cio-San’s uncle, a Buddhist monk and *hibakusha* (a survivor of the atomic bombing), arrives unexpectedly at the wedding to expose her religious conversion. Dismayed, her family shuns and ultimately abandons her.

Act II - Nagasaki, January 1953 Six years later, on the eve of the American military withdrawal, Cio-Cio-San waits for the return of her husband, who left shortly after the wedding. Her maid Suzuki tries to convince her that he will not come back, but Cio-Cio-San will not be persuaded and even refuses other offers of marriage, including from Prince Yamadori, a former *Kazoku* (member of the Japanese aristocracy). The American consul at Nagasaki, Sharpless, arrives with a letter from Pinkerton, which he cannot bear to fully disclose. Cio-Cio-San presents Pinkerton with her son, whom she named Dolore (Sorrow), a name she will change to Gioia (Joy) when her husband returns. A ship is suddenly seen in the harbour, which Cio-Cio-San recognizes as Pinkerton’s. She stays awake all night in a silent vigil, filled with memory and anticipation.

Act III - Early Morning, The Following Day In the morning, Sharpless and Pinkerton arrive at the house with another unexpected guest. Pinkerton, selfish and cowardly, struggles to face Cio-Cio-San, leaving others to tell her the devastating truth on his behalf. With quiet resolve, she makes a final, deliberate choice—an act of sorrow, dignity, and defiance against the false promise of the American Dream.

BUTTERFLY TRANSFORMED

Like many acclaimed and well-loved operas, *Madama Butterfly* portrays stories and characters from cultures other than the creators' own. While empathy for others remains an essential starting point for artistic creation and one of the hallmarks of opera's musical immediacy, the European art form has also grappled with a history of misrepresentation and appropriation of non-Western cultures. As diverse creative voices come to the fore, new storytellers are reclaiming narratives, shifting agency, and transforming audiences' understanding of these timeless works.

Without altering the original libretto or score, stage director Mo Zhou offers compelling solutions to the historically reductive "unrequited love" narrative crafted at the turn of the 20th century. By shifting the time period four decades forward, this production of *Madama Butterfly* gains a striking immediacy, especially in the 80th anniversary year of the bombing of Nagasaki.

In postwar Japan, approximately 45,000 Japanese women married American GIs, setting their hopes on a better life in an uncertain and rapidly changing world. Many immigrated to the United States, often pressured to assimilate into postwar American society; others were left behind, raising children alone in the shadow of occupation as outcasts of both worlds. Zhou's conception of *Madama Butterfly* invites us to reflect on these untold stories: how many women, like Cio-Cio-San, were left behind? How many children, like Sorrow, were abandoned between two nations, two identities, and two impossible dreams?

In grounding Puccini's tragedy within this historical reality, Zhou transforms what was originally built on exotic fantasy into something achingly human, a meditation on survival, displacement, and the illusion of the American Dream.

Led by a creative team of first-generation immigrant Asian women in America, this production deepens the backbone of Puccini's music through dramaturgy that resonates with lived experience and historical truth. "This is not a love story," Zhou says. "It's a story of survival, and one we must keep telling, truthfully, intentionally, and with care."



Sachiko Taguchi and George Blackwell, around 1951, in Japan. Credit: Courtesy of Blackwell family (Smithsonian Inst.)

JAPANESE MELODIES IN ITALIAN OPERA: TRIBUTE OR CULTURAL APPROPRIATION?

Composer Giacomo Puccini saw David Belasco's play *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* while he was in London. While the composer spoke no English and could not understand the text, he was captivated by the heroine's story.

Unfortunately, the play itself relies on cultural stereotypes and offensive dialogue. Although the opera's libretto, written by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, addresses these wrongs, and Puccini condemns American imperialism both through his musical writing and depiction of Pinkerton, some academics argue the incorporation of authentic and imitative Japanese melodies into operatic writing can misrepresent Japanese culture.

Many listeners may hear only beauty and expression in the musical score; indeed, Puccini was gifted at capturing universal emotions through sound. When listening for the first time to the music, however, stage director Mo Zhou describes the impressions of her Japanese design team in this way: they felt as if the music "picks and chooses" from "every possible [element of] Japanese folklore."



Detail of Japanese print, 1854, author unknown, depicting the Arrival of the Black Ships

At the time Puccini was writing *Madama Butterfly*, Japan had recently opened trade and political relations with the West after two centuries of a foreign policy of isolation and tightly controlled borders. In July 1853, American warships arrived in Edo Bay and their commander threatened the Japanese shogunate with military force to sign a treaty for diplomatic relations. The event is known as the Perry Expedition, or 黒船来航, *kurofune raikō*, Arrival of the Black Ships.

Seven months later, the Americans returned for a response, and, after weeks of negotiations, the Convention of Kanagawa was signed, which opened two ports to American ships, provided for the care of shipwrecked sailors, and established an American consulate at Shimoda.

Other nations followed with treaties of their own, and trade soon expanded between Japan, Europe, and North America. The event catalyzed major internal and external political shifts for, as well as the industrialization of, Japan. As Japanese goods became more widely available in Europe, Japanese music became an important influence for European composers, such as Puccini.

Puccini's representation of Japanese culture in the music of *Madama Butterfly* was informed by his own musical research and discussions with Japanese individuals although presented through the lens of a late Romantic operatic musical idiom. (Think of Broadway musicals or Disney portrayals of heroes and heroines from different eras or cultures: sung in English with a contemporary American pop musical language.) While pianist [Kumi Shimozaki](#) has argued that Puccini thoughtfully incorporated Japanese melodies that reflect the thematic content of the opera, some listeners may listen to the music with an uncomfortable feeling of witnessing cultural appropriation.

Stage director Mo Zhou, however, found purpose in this aspect of the opera as well: "Act I is almost like a theme park," Zhou explains. "All the Japanese characters are putting on a performance for the Americans—playing into their expectations, wearing costumes, acting the part. That's how we justify the Orientalism in the music. They're giving Pinkerton the show he wants to see." But as the opera progresses, the artifice fades. "By Act II and III, everything becomes painfully real. The illusion is shattered."

When listening to and watching *Madama Butterfly*, consider:

- Who is telling whose story?
- How are they telling it?
- For what purpose?

In recent years, opera creators prefer to share their own stories or to collaborate with those whose stories they would like to tell. As such, opera also presents an important opportunity to think critically about art, as well as to go beyond the opera itself and learn more about the history, language, traditions, and stories of those represented.

FURTHER READING

Calgary Opera is committed to constructive conversation and debate about opera's creators, storylines, and other historical elements of the works we perform.

We encourage our listeners to continue the discussion before and after the performance by exploring resources such as these:

The Butterfly Process | Learn more and watch [here](#)

Spurred by a postponed production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* for Boston Lyric Opera's 2020-21 Season, BLO hosted six public discussions, facilitated by Phil Chan, co-founder and author of *Final Bow for Yellowface*. These discussions explore the historical impact and current producing realities of *Madama Butterfly*.

Madama Butterfly: A Japanese Perspective | Read [here](#)

Japanese pianist Kumi Shimosaki reflects on the history of the opera *Madama Butterfly* and its links with Japanese culture. The author argues that, given the historical context, Puccini more thoughtfully incorporated Japanese musical ideas to greater dramatic effect than other composers of similar works.

Seeing Myself in Madama Butterfly | Read [here](#)

This moving essay by Nikkei-Canadian baritone Luka Kawabata touches on the author's upbringing, Japanese cultural practices found in *Madama Butterfly*, and the evolution of Asian representation in classical music.

The War Bride Project | Learn more and watch [here](#)

After documenting her mother's story in the film *Fall Seven Times, Get Up Eight: The Japanese War Brides*, Kathryn Tolbert, daughter of a Japanese war bride, spent a year traveling the US to record interviews with others like her mother. Funded by a grant from Vassar College, this oral history archive is the result.

Japanese Songs in Madama Butterfly | Learn more and listen [here](#)

An outline of Japanese songs in *Madama Butterfly*: sheet music, recordings, translations, and contextual information about the songs' meanings, as well as where they can be heard in the opera.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Who is the composer? The person who writes the music of an opera.

On December 22, 1858, **Giacomo Puccini** (DJAH-koh-moh pooch-EE-nee) **was born into a family of musicians.** For two centuries, members of his family had served as the music director for the Cathedral of San Martino in Lucca, Italy. Initially, Puccini pursued music as the family profession, but **when he attended a performance of Verdi's *Aida*, he realized that his true calling was writing operas.**



Puccini studied at the prestigious Milan Conservatory and on graduating, connected with the music publisher Giulio Ricordi, who would become a life-long friend and advocate for Puccini's music. After the failure of his second opera, *Edgar*, Ricordi encouraged Puccini to visit Bayreuth and watch *Die Meistersinger* by Richard Wagner.

Inspired by the performance, Puccini returned to Italy to compose *Manon Lescaut*. From this opera onward, Puccini carefully selected the subjects for his operas and spent considerable time on the preparation of the librettos. **The operas in his mature style, including *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly* all feature strong, compelling heroines whose stories end in tragedy.**

Puccini is one of the few composers whose works make up the operatic canon who had a relationship with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York.

Madama Butterfly received its American premiere at the Metropolitan Opera on February 11, 1907 and has since been heard consistently at the company since. Calgary Opera has performed *Madama Butterfly* six times in its history.

Puccini's musical style is luxurious and richly expressive; he knew how to move an audience. Many of Puccini's operas, including *Madama Butterfly*, have also been portrayed in popular media or included as soundtracks in popular culture.

Learn more by reading: [Giacomo Puccini](#) on Encyclopedia Britannica

ABOUT THE LIBRETTISTS

Who is the librettist? The person who writes the words (dialogue and lyrics) of an opera.

What does “libretto” mean? In Italian, libretto means “little book.” Early Italian opera houses printed off “little books” for audience members that had all the words written inside, so that attendees could follow what was being sung.

Luigi Illica (lou-EE-GEE EEL-lee-kah) and **Giuseppe Giacosa** (dju-ZEP-pay djah-KOH-zah) served as the librettists for the opera *Madama Butterfly*.

Illica and Giacosa began their collaboration with Puccini on the opera *Manon Lescaut*, which had been an important early success for the young composer.

Illica was a well-known Italian playwright and writer; he was resourceful and quick.

His role was to provide the first draft and details of the plot. He had a ripe imagination which, if left unchecked by Giacosa, could take the opera in unexpected tangents.



Luigi Illica



Giuseppe Giacosa

Giacosa’s role was to transform the prose text into verse, and to ensure that the dramatic arc was captured in the libretto. Giacosa was a gifted, albeit slow and methodical writer, which sometimes brought him into conflict with Puccini who hurried his librettists.

The temperaments of the two librettists were vastly different as well: Giacosa was good-natured and generous; whereas Illica was unpredictable and quick-tempered. However, **the two worked well together and complemented one another’s skills, and their collaboration resulted in some of Puccini’s most beloved operas: *La Boheme*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*.**

Learn more by reading: [GIACOSA, Giuseppe](#) on Encyclopedia Britannica and [LUIGI ILLICA](#) at Atlanta Opera.

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

What is the creative team? The people who guide the vision for the opera and bring it to life in a compelling way



Chinese-born stage director Mo Zhou is a visionary force in opera and theatre. Her acclaimed productions of *Madama Butterfly* have been performed in companies including Vancouver Opera, Florentine Opera, and Kentucky Opera. Ms. Zhou received her training at The Juilliard School, Merola Opera Program, Wolf Trap Opera, and Glimmerglass Festival. She has also worked on the directing staff at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and Dallas Opera. She is a prominent advocate for young talent and has served as guest faculty at prestigious young artist programs at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and Music Academy of the West.



Conductor Jonathan Brandani was appointed Calgary Opera's Artistic Director in September 2021. Recent engagements include opera productions and concert appearances at Gothenburg Opera (Sweden), Meininger Hofkapelle (Germany), the Bregenzer Festspiele (Austria), the Danish Royal Opera House Copenhagen, Teatro Comunale di Bologna (Italy), Théâtre Royal de Wallonie-Liège (Belgium), Teatro Lirico di Cagliari (Italy), The Atlanta Opera and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. From 2014-2019 he was Associate Conductor of Minnesota Opera (USA), and from 2017-2020 he was Principal Guest Conductor of Daegu Opera House (South Korea).



Mariko Ohigashi is a New York & Tokyo based costume designer for opera, theatre, dance, and film.

International theater credits in Japan include Next to Normal (Toho/Theatre Creation); The Bridge of Prague (Kinokuniya Southern Theatre Takashimaya & Kyoto Theatre); Run to You (Nagoya, Osaka, Tokyo tour); The Barber of Seville & The Marriage of Figaro (Rohm Theater Kyoto, Opera); Hansel and Gretel (Sony Music Foundation, Opera/Suntory Hall, Tokyo); The Count of Monte Cristo (Kinokuniya Hall).



Marie Yokoyama is a Japanese lighting designer based in New York.

Her opera design credits include Madama Butterfly (Vancouver Opera); La Bohème (Arizona Opera); Madama Butterfly (Co-pro Virginia Opera, Florentine Opera, & Kentucky Opera); Rinaldo (Minnesota Opera); note to a friend (Tokyo Bunkakaikan); Orphée et Eurydice (University of Michigan). She is the Associate Artist for the Redhouse Arts Center.



Chika Shimizu is a New York based scenic designer.

Regional: Soft Power, Pacific Overtures (Signature Theatre, DC), The Great Wave (Berkeley Rep), Sanctuary City (Pasadena Playhouse), Hamlet (DCPA), RENT (Paper Mill Playhouse), Moriarty (Cleveland Playhouse), Somewhere (Geva Theatre), The Great Leap (Portland Center Stage), Vietgone, Tiger Style! (TheatreSquared), The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Yale Rep, CT Critics Circle Award nom).

For a full listing of the creative team, learn more [here](#).

ABOUT THE LEAD

In this opera, Japanese soprano Yasko Sato plays the lead role of Cio-Cio-San



After earning her diploma, master's degree and doctorate with highest honors from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, soprano Yasko Sato completed her training in Italy under the guidance of Raina Kabaivanska.

Season 2025/2026 will see her as Cio Cio San in *Madame Butterfly* at Calgary Opera and Estonian National Opera, as well as the protagonist of a solo recital in Abiko, Japan. She has also recently appeared as Cio Cio San at Vancouver Opera, Estonian National Opera, Theatre Vanemuine, Opera Lombardia, and as Liù in *Turandot* at Teatro Rendano in Cosenza.

After her debut in the role of Leonora in Verdi's *Oberto Conte di San Bonifacio* on tour in Japan with Teatro Lirico Sperimentale di Spoleto, she took on the roles of Mimì in *La Bohème*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*.

She then delved into the role of Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, with a paper entitled "Madama Butterfly: evolution of a woman," which investigates the composer's ultimate intentions through an analysis of the character's evolution within the opera's various revisions. She premiered *Madama Butterfly* in Sabadell with great success and vivid critical acclaim, earning enthusiastic reviews in major Spanish newspapers.

She has sung the demanding role of Cio-Cio San in major opera houses including Seattle Opera, Atlanta Opera, Opera Royal De Wallonie in Liege, Tokyo National Theater, Megaron Theater in Athens, Estonian National Opera, Slovene National Theater in Ljubljana, and throughout Italy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use discussion and class activities to explore the questions the opera *Madama Butterfly* poses to listeners of all ages:

Begin with your sensory experience of attending an opera: What stood out to you about the opera? What caught your attention? Share your thoughts with a friend.

Cio-Cio-San is a teenager at the time of her marriage to Pinkerton, an American naval officer.

- Why is her young age important to the story and its conclusion?
- Do you have any relatives who married young, particularly during or around times of war? Consider asking them about their experiences to learn more about the choices young people faced at the time.

Stage Director Mo Zhou has shared that “Madama Butterfly is not a love story - it’s a survival story.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

What did you notice about the set, costume, and lighting design in the opera? How does it emphasize themes like hope, isolation, or defiance?

Some opera companies are revising *Madama Butterfly* to be more inclusive and representative of Japanese culture. Watch [this performance](#) of Cio-Cio-San’s aria “Un bel dì vedremo” sung in Japanese by soprano Janet Szepei Todd, and share your impressions with a friend.

Lingering questions? Send us a note or join our opera discovery programs like Opera Buddies and Unpacking Opera to learn more.

Additional Lesson Plans & Resources:

- Metropolitan Opera [Study Guide & Lessons Plans](#)
- Boston Lyric Opera [Study Guide](#)
- Vancouver Opera [Madama Butterfly Resource Page](#)

DISCOVERING OPERA

Opera is a vibrant and ever-changing artform that combines the dramatic intensity of the theatre, heightened through music and singing.

- Operas can be long or short, with any number of people involved.
- Operas can be sung in any language.
- Operas can tell stories about any time, place, person, or issue.
- Operas are still being written today.

Operas are created by the cast, crew, and artistic production team including:

- composers, who write the music
- librettists, who write the words or “libretto”
- directors
- conductors
- singers
- instrumentalists
- dancers
- set, lighting, special effects designers
- costume and makeup designers
- fight and intimacy coordinators
- choreographers
- stage managers and technical crew
- and the audience



**Each person brings who they are as a person to the creation of an opera.
Their individual contributions shape the performance.**



Operas are not typically autobiographical, although they do use stories and music to express the personal struggles and ideals of the creators. They often also comment on important social concerns of the creators' time.

Sometimes stories from cultures not of the creators' own were used to convey universal themes. In these cases, the creators relied on imagination and empathy to enter the emotional world of someone whose specific experiences they never lived through.

When this is the case, there are also important ideas to reflect on, including:

- Who is telling whose story?
- How are they telling it?
- For what purpose?

In recent years, opera creators prefer to share their own stories or to collaborate with those whose stories they would like to tell. As such, opera also presents an important opportunity to think critically about art, as well as to go beyond the opera itself and learn more about the history, language, traditions, and stories of those represented.



UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC OF OPERA

We understand music on its own terms by making music! By singing its melodies and harmonies, playing it and especially by improvising, we bring the music into our ears, bodies, and spirits.

To increase our musical understanding, we begin by learning by heart the melodies and rhythms we encounter. As the music of more artists becomes familiar, we begin to encounter unfamiliar music with more musical understanding.

Whether you've heard an opera once or a hundred times, there's always more to discover.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE

Whether you're brand new, or have been a subscriber for years, you're welcome at the opera. Here's how you can get the most out of your visit:

WHAT TIME SHOULD I ARRIVE?

We recommend you plan to arrive at the venue 45 minutes prior to the show start time. This will allow for time to find parking and take your seat without risk of missing any part of the performance.

WHAT TIME DOES THE SHOW START?

Invited Dress Rehearsals at the Jubilee Auditorium start promptly at 7:00 pm.

WHERE IS THE THEATRE?

Visit our [Getting Here](#) page for more information about our venues.

WHERE DO I PARK?

Visit our [Getting Here](#) page for more information about parking at our various venues.

ARE FOOD AND DRINKS ALLOWED INTO THE AUDITORIUM?

Drinks are allowed in the auditorium, provided they are in plastic containers.

Food is available for purchase in the lobby during intermission, although it may not be consumed in the theatre.



WHAT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE THEATRE?

The Jubilee Auditorium is fully wheelchair accessible (with the exception of the 2nd balcony) with ramps available at the north entrance. Assisted listening devices are available at the coat check. Please view our [Accessibility](#) page for more detailed information about accessibility features.

WHAT IS A DRESS REHEARSAL?

A dress rehearsal is the final on-stage rehearsal of an opera before it premieres to the public. A dress rehearsal includes nearly full production values (with costumes, sets, lights, orchestra), but the show is still a work in progress.

Some of the seats are blocked off so that the production team (director, stage manager, lighting designer, choreographer, music staff, and others) can watch the show from the theatre, take notes, and communicate with the backstage crew. Should anything need adjusting, the rehearsal might be stopped or a part repeated to make sure that it is perfect.

WHAT DO I WEAR?

You'll find people at the opera wearing a variety of styles, from jeans to jewels. Although many people enjoy dressing up when they go to the opera, there's no mandatory dress code.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT THEY'RE SAYING?

Surtitles will be projected above the stage, which translate the Italian words into English as the singers are performing. This is similar to watching a film in a foreign language with subtitles turned on.

DO OPERA SINGERS USE MICROPHONES?

In almost all operas, microphones are not needed. Instead, opera singers use their voices and bodies to naturally amplify the resonance of their vocal folds; they can be heard above the orchestra in large halls without amplification.

To learn more, visit calgaryopera.com/faq.

ABOUT CALGARY OPERA

Founded in 1972, Calgary Opera is one of Canada's most innovative and ambitious professional opera companies. With more than 50 events during the 2024-25 season, curious listeners of all ages can experience the wonder of opera all throughout the school year, whether as grand events at the Jubilee Auditorium or in diverse community experiences throughout our city and beyond.

Since 2007, we've offered an annual school tour production, performing for young audiences around Southern Alberta.

For over 25 years, we've offered the in-school music program Let's Create an Opera, reaching over 60,000 students.

This season, we are thrilled to partner with teachers and students at three schools for Let's Create an Opera, which will culminate in an original children's operas performed in English, French, and Blackfoot.



Throughout its 52-year history, Calgary Opera has championed new works and Canadian artists and stories. We have produced:

- 8 new works, including the internationally acclaimed opera "Filumena"
- 27 new productions (new versions of existing operas), and
- 8 Canadian premieres.

Calgary Opera's mission is to serve its entire community with innovative and inspiring stories told through the bold medium of opera. We're thrilled you'll be joining us!

To stay connected and learn more, sign up for our newsletter [here](#).

COMING UP NEXT

HANSEL & GRETEL

DRESS REHEARSAL



Who can attend?

- K-12 students
- Post-secondary students
- Educators
- Music students of any age
- Lifelong learning groups

Thursday, January 30, 2026 at 7 PM
Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Calgary AB
Tickets (\$20 including GST) by calling 403-262-7286



To purchase tickets for groups or individuals, please call the Calgary Opera Audience Services Team at 403-262-7286, ext 1, or email info@calgaryopera.com.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 6 Sachiko Taguchi and George Blackwell, around 1951, in Japan. Courtesy of Blackwell family. Smithsonian Institute.

Page 7 Detail of Japanese print, 1854, author unknown.

Page 10 Portrait of Giacomo Puccini. Unknown studio. Public domain.

Page 11 *Left:* Portrait of Luigi Illica. Archivio storico Ricordi. *Right:* Portrait of Giuseppe Giacosa. Encyclopædia Britannica.

Page 12 *Top:* Portrait of Mo Zhou, courtesy of artist. *Bottom:* Portrait of Jonathan Brandani, courtesy of artist.

Page 13 *Top:* Portrait of Mariko Ohigashi, courtesy of artist. *Middle:* Portrait of Marie Yokoyama, courtesy of artist. *Bottom:* Portrait of Chika Shimizu, courtesy of artist.

Page 14 Portrait of Yasko Sato, courtesy of artist.

Page 15 *Right:* Lucia Cesaroni and Talise Trevigne in Calgary Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro*. HarderLee Photography. 2023. *Bottom:* Audience members attending Calgary Opera's WonderLand. 2024.

Page 15 Students participate in Calgary Opera's *Let's Create an Opera*.

Page 16 Canva image used with permission.

Page 20 *Upper right:* Calgary Opera's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*
Lower left: Students participate in Calgary Opera's *Let's Create an Opera*

For more information, contact:

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