

# CALGARY OPERA

Media Release

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## CALGARY OPERA OPENS SEASON WITH REIMAGINED CLASSIC, *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*

A meditation on survival, displacement, and  
the illusion of the American Dream

**Calgary, AB** – Calgary Opera proudly opens its 2025/26 main stage season with Giacomo Puccini’s tragic masterpiece *Madama Butterfly*, a timeless tale of love, betrayal, and cultural collision. With performances beginning **November 1, 2025**, at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, this reimagined production — directed by acclaimed stage director Mo Zhou and conducted by Calgary Opera’s Artistic Director Jonathan Brandani — promises to deliver an emotionally powerful and visually stunning experience.

A Co-Production by Calgary Opera, Arizona Opera and Opera Grand Rapids, *Madama Butterfly* runs on **November 1 and 7 at 7:30 p.m. and on November 2 at 2 p.m.** with its new matinee offering this season, at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium.

“Set in post-WWII Nagasaki during the American-led Allied Occupation of Japan, *Madama Butterfly* explores survival and illusion in a time of cultural upheaval. We anchor Puccini’s lush score in a moment when personal dreams collided with intricate historical realities,” said Stage Director Mo Zhou.

“The challenge has been to honour the work’s emotional power while revealing its deeper human truth — to move beyond stereotype and sentimentality, and instead give voice to a woman who dares to believe, even when the dream she was sold proves false. I’m also deeply proud to collaborate with an all first-generation Japanese female design team, whose vision brings authenticity, intentional care, and emotional insight to this story.”

In *Madama Butterfly*, a young Japanese woman falls for an American naval officer who promises more than he delivers. Director Mo Zhou reimagines Puccini’s beloved classic and her approach illustrates how classic operas

can evolve for modern audiences without changing the music or words, offering a model for reimagining other controversial works. 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."

"This is such an exciting way to open our season: it is one of the world's most popular and beloved operas, and our audiences will be in for a powerful evening of great emotions. Puccini's wonderful music is the perfect vehicle for bringing this heartbreaking story to life," said Jonathan Brandani, Artistic Director of Calgary Opera and conductor for this production.

The production will feature the pure and unfiltered power of the human voice, with no amplification, in addition to unique percussion instruments to amplify the live score, in addition to costume and set design that emphasizes an authentic perspective.

"Every time I am confronted with this opera, I am in awe of how successfully the music brings to the fore the humanity and the complexity of the characters. This opera contains so many magical moments and I can hardly wait to bring this music to life for all of our audiences to experience its incredible power," added Brandani.

Interactive lobby activations will also be available for audiences to enjoy, including a Japanese Calligraphy demonstration, as well as a Living Kimono Project that allows audience members to ask questions and learn more about kimonos and their significance from local representatives of the Japanese community in Calgary.

***NOVEMBER 1 & 7 at 7:30 p.m. / NOVEMBER 2 at 2 p.m. (New Matinee!)***

[Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium](#)

***A Co-Production by Calgary Opera, Arizona Opera and Opera Grand Rapids***

Composer - Giacomo Puccini  
Librettists - Luigi Illica + Giuseppe Giacosa  
Conductor - Jonathan Brandani  
Stage Director - Mo Zhou  
Featuring - Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

**CAST**

Cio-Cio-San - Yasko Sato  
Pinkerton - Matthew White  
Suzuki - Nina Yoshida Nelsen  
Sharpless - Phillip Addis  
Goro - Julius Ahn  
Uncle Bonze - Stephano Park  
Yamadori/Imperial Commissioner - Luka Kawabata  
Kate Pinkerton - Alessia Vitali  
Registrar - Luke Noftall  
Yakusidé - George Theodorakopoulos  
Cio-Cio-San's Mother - Maria Milenic  
Cio-Cio-San's Aunt - Kelsey Ronn  
Cio-Cio-San's Cousin - Katelyn Bird  
Sorrow - Nela Anna Pilecki

### **CREATIVE**

Costume Designers - Mariko Ohigashi & Kathleen Trott  
Lighting Designer - Marie Yokoyama  
Set Designer - Chika Shimizu  
Intimacy Director - Anastasia St. Amand

Sung in Italian with projected English translations. Run time is approximately 3 hours, including one 25 minute intermission. Audiences are invited to a pre-show talk in the Jubilee lobby one hour prior to each performance ([More info](#))

### **TICKETS AND INFORMATION**

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [calgaryopera.com](http://calgaryopera.com) or call Calgary Opera Audience Services at 403-262-7286. <https://www.calgaryopera.com/madama-butterfly>

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### **For Further Information, please contact:**

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**Season images are available** [HERE](#).

## **ABOUT CALGARY OPERA**

Founded in 1972, Calgary Opera is one of Canada's leading professional opera companies. For 52 years, the not-for-profit arts company has made a name for itself nationally and internationally for its commitment to the development of Canadian talent and the creation of new opera works, including seven world premieres. Through education and community outreach, Calgary Opera fosters a love of music and theatre in young people and provides opportunities for young artists to develop skills for successful professional careers in the performing arts industry.

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