



press information

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Presented on PBS by



The Late Anthony Minghella's Production of  
Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*  
on *Great Performances at the Met*

A Grand Retelling  
Takes Center Stage at the MET

Anthony Minghella's sumptuous production of *Madama Butterfly*, Giacomo Puccini's heartbreaking tale of love and betrayal, offers viewers a rare visual treat Saturday, June 20 at Noon (ET) on *Great Performances at the Met* on PBS HD (check local listings).

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*Great Performances at the Met* is a presentation of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America's most prolific and respected public media providers.

Minghella, who died unexpectedly in March 2008, marks his debut in opera with the re-staging of *Madama Butterfly* – this is also the first time in 20 years that a new production has opened at the Met. *The New York Times* described it as “a gorgeous cinematic spectacle.”

Soprano Patricia Racette stars as Cio-Cio-San, the young geisha who chooses to die honorably, rather than suffer in shame after learning of her husband's betrayal. Racette returns to the Met stage after her first appearance in the title role drew a wide-range of critical acclaim. “Her singing was robust, nuanced and passionate,” raved *The New York Times*. “In every dimension, Ms. Racette's effort was exceptional; hers is a performance not to be missed.” Tenor Marcello Giordani co-stars as Cio-Cio-San's American husband Pinkerton. The telecast also

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features mezzo-soprano Maria Zifchak as Cio-Cio-San's maid Suzuki and baritone Dwayne Croft as Sharpless.

*Madama Butterfly*, conducted by Patrick Summers, features costumes by Han Feng, with sets by Michael Levine, lighting by Peter Mumford, choreography by Carolyn Choa, and puppetry by the Blind Summit Theater.

*Great Performances at the Met: Madama Butterfly* is the ninth of 11 productions airing this season on the series. It is sung in Italian with English surtitles. The production was transmitted onstage as part of The Met: Live in HD March 7, 2009, and recorded for this telecast.

Ranked as number one in Opera America's list of the 20 most-performed operas in North America, *Madama Butterfly* wasn't well-received when it opened initially in February 1904. Puccini revised the opera, and several months later, it opened to much success.

*Great Performances* is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers, and PBS. Corporate support for *Great Performances at the Met* is provided by Toll Brothers. Special funding for the telecast was provided by The Annenberg Foundation.

Visit *Great Performances* online at [www.pbs.org/gperf](http://www.pbs.org/gperf) for additional information on this and other programs.

For the Met, Mia Bongiovanni and Elena Park are Supervising Producers, and Louisa Briccetti and Victoria Warivonchik are Producers. Peter Gelb is Executive Producer. For *Great Performances*, Bill O'Donnell is series producer; David Horn is executive producer.

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#### **About WNET.ORG**

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as [Great Performances](#), [Worldfocus](#), [Nature](#), [American Masters](#), [Charlie Rose](#), [Wide Angle](#), [Secrets of the Dead](#), [Religion & Ethics](#)

Newsweekly, Visions, Consuelo Mack WealthTrack, Wild Chronicles, Miffy and Friends, and Cyberchase to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit [www.wnet.org](http://www.wnet.org).

### **About the Met**

Under the leadership of General Manager Peter Gelb and Music Director James Levine, the Met has a series of bold initiatives underway that are designed to broaden its audience and revitalize the company's repertory. The Met has made a commitment to presenting modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertory, with highly theatrical productions featuring the greatest opera stars in the world.

The Met's recently announced 2009-10 season will feature eight new productions, four of which are Met premieres. Opening night will be a new production of *Tosca* starring Karita Mattila, conducted by Levine and directed by Luc Bondy. The four Met premieres are: Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and directed by Patrice Chéreau, both in Met debuts; Verdi's *Attila*, conducted by Riccardo Muti and directed by Pierre Audi, with set and costume design by Miuccia Prada, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, all in their Met debuts; Shostakovich's *The Nose*, conducted by Valery Gergiev and directed and designed by William Kentridge in his Met debut; and Rossini's *Armida* with Renée Fleming, conducted by Riccardo Frizza and directed by Mary Zimmerman. Other new productions are Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, conducted by Levine and directed by Bartlett Sher; *Carmen* with Angela Gheorghiu in the title role, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and directed by Richard Eyre, both in Met debuts; and Thomas's *Hamlet* with Natalie Dessay and Simon Keenlyside, conducted by Louis Langrée and directed by Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser in their Met debuts.

The Metropolitan Opera's 2008-09 season pays tribute to the company's extraordinary history on the occasion of its 125th anniversary, while also emphasizing the Met's renewed commitment to advancing the art form. The season features six new productions which included the company premiere of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*, the Met's first staged production of Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* since 1906, Massenet's *Thaïs*, Puccini's *La Rondine*, Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, and Bellini's *La Sonnambula*. The 2008-09 season also features 18 revivals as well as the final performances of Otto Schenk's production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle conducted by Levine, and two gala celebrations, including a 125th anniversary celebration on March 15.

Building on its 77-year-old international radio broadcast history – heard over the Toll Brothers-Metropolitan Opera International Radio Network – the Met now uses advanced media distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to attract new audiences and reach millions of opera fans around the world.

The Emmy and Peabody Award-winning *The Met: Live in HD* series expanded to feature 11 live transmissions in the 2008-09 season, selling more than 1.5 million tickets with one more transmission remaining. The productions are seen this season in over 850 theaters in 36 countries around the world. These performances began airing on PBS in March 2008. The series returns for its fourth season in 2009-10 with nine transmissions, beginning October 10 with a new production of Puccini's *Tosca* starring Karita Mattila and ending with a new production of Rossini's *Armida* starring Renée Fleming on May 1. Metropolitan Opera Radio on SIRIUS XM Radio is a subscription-based audio service broadcasting both live and rare historical performances. The Met recently introduced *Met Player*, a new subscription service that makes its extensive video and audio catalog of full-length performances available to the public for the first

time online, and in exceptional, state-of-the-art quality. In addition to providing audio recordings through the *Met on Rhapsody* on-demand service, the company also presents free live audio streaming of performances on its website once every week during the opera season with support from RealNetworks®.

The Met has recently launched several audience development initiatives, including Open House dress rehearsals, the Arnold and Marie Schwartz Gallery Met, reduced ticket prices—including an immensely popular new rush ticket program, and an annual Holiday Series presentation for families. For more information, please visit: [www.metopera.org](http://www.metopera.org).

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