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## Revising Cio-Cio-San

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LINDA B. FAIRTILE

## REVISING CIO-CIO-SAN

Puccini's state of mind after the catastrophic first performance of *Madama Butterfly* is well documented.<sup>1</sup> Correspondence reveals that despite nearly universal rejection, he repeatedly asserted that the opera was alive, healthy, and deeply sincere, and that after a few minor adjustments the world would come to love it as he did. It has been postulated that *Butterfly*'s initial, overwhelming failure may have been due to personal animosity, professional envy, a publishing rivalry – choose any or all of the above – rather than fatal defects in the work itself. Nonetheless, Puccini revised the opera for a production in Brescia three months later, again for London in 1905, and yet again for Paris in 1906. In addition to structural adjustments, he added an aria, inserted and deleted smaller passages, changed keys, and modified the sung text and staging notes. Four different piano-vocal editions were issued during Puccini's lifetime, as well as an orchestral score that fully corresponds to none of them.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the most extensive and significant textual changes in all of Puccini's operas appear in the published revisions of *Madama Butterfly*. Many of these verbal modifications, together with cuts and additions to the score, influence the dramatic depiction of the protagonists. Changes to Pinkerton's character soften an insensitive and even offensive figure who, after all, needs to be convincing as the object of Butterfly's love. For Cio-Cio-San, three rounds of revision mean a gradual loss of complexity on many fronts, bringing an exotic, mercurial heroine closer to operatic convention. The Butterfly that we know today has a more Westernized outlook than her original incarnation, and fewer distractions compete for her – and our – attention. But revision is not always synonymous with unqualified improvement, and opera's multifac-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, GIRARDI, Eng. trans., pp. 196-199, and BUDDEN, pp. 240f.

<sup>2</sup> Based on his study of two printed scores with alterations in Puccini's hand, Dieter Schickling has proposed that the traditional view of the four published states of *Madama Butterfly* overlooks the almost constant modification experienced by this work throughout its early performance history. See SCHICKLING 1, p. 528, and SCHICKLING 2, pp. 266-277.

ceted nature ensures that even the simplest modifications sometimes have wide-ranging consequences. While transforming Cio-Cio-San's character may not have been Puccini's goal in every instance of revision that affects her, the changes are nonetheless apparent, and their cumulative result may have exceeded expectation.

Both Julian Smith and Arthur Groos have commented on character changes resulting from Puccini's modifications to *Madama Butterfly*. While Smith claims that revisions, particularly those affecting the role of Pinkerton, gradually diluted Puccini's vision of «what for its time was an unusually pointed moral and social message»,<sup>3</sup> Groos maintains that the dual sources consulted by Puccini and his librettists guaranteed a fragmented realization from the start.<sup>4</sup> By basing the opera on both John Luther Long's short story, whose emphasis on clashing Eastern and Western values influenced Luigi Illica's draft libretto, and David Belasco's stage adaptation, whose focus on Cio-Cio-San's victimhood made such an impression on Puccini, two competing visions of characters, events, and themes were hammered into a single narrative. The opera's final version, Groos argues, represents the triumph of Belasco and Puccini's conception over that of Long and Illica, such that the tragic outcome owes more to the misunderstandings of individuals than to the incompatibility of the cultures that they represent.

Following Cio-Cio-San through multiple layers of revision reveals a character who indeed becomes less stereotypically Japanese, and the gradual loss of local-color episodes and other plot digressions simplifies her trajectory. By the opera's fourth edition, she retains outward manifestations of exoticism, but her words and actions have become more reflective of her European audience. The scene in which Cio-Cio-San reveals her conversion to Christianity, a defining moment in her embrace of Western culture, illustrates this transformation. In the first edition she tells Pinkerton «per farvi contento potrò quasi obliar la gente mia». She confirms this shift of allegiance by grabbing the Otokè – religious figurines representing her ancestors – and exclaiming «E questi: via!».<sup>5</sup> Beginning with the third edition, however, Butterfly instead throws herself into Pinkerton's arms, crying «Amore mio!». In both versions of the scene, her words are rash and her actions unseemly in the context of her native culture: indeed, in both cases she stops herself fearing that her family might overhear. But while the first reading grows logically from Butter-

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<sup>3</sup> J. SMITH, *A Metamorphic Tragedy*, «Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association», CVI, 1979-80, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> GROOS 2, p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> G. GIACOSA and L. ILLICA, *Madama Butterfly*, reprinted in *Fonti*, p. 226.

fly's recent religious conversion, the third edition's passionate outburst is unanticipated and uncharacteristic, surpassing even her most expressive declarations in the love duet. In this moment she becomes a generic operatic soprano, proclaiming her feelings in an extroverted manner that conflicts with the modesty she displays elsewhere in the opera.

Cio-Cio-San also acquires what Michele Girardi has identified as a «moralistic, Western» attitude towards her former occupation of geisha,<sup>6</sup> and even more so towards the profession of street performer, an option that she briefly ponders in the second act.<sup>7</sup> Butterfly's first direct admission of her geisha status comes early in the opera, and is the same in all editions: she explains to Pinkerton and Sharpless that her family's dire economic circumstances forced her to adopt this profession, a fact that she neither conceals nor finds offensive («abbiam fatto la ghescia | per sostentarci | [...] non lo nascondo, | né mi adonto»<sup>8</sup>). A line of text from the original wedding scene confirms her lack of embarrassment: as she informs Pinkerton of her religious conversion, Butterfly casually remarks «per me spendeste cento yen».<sup>9</sup> Although Goro had mentioned this sum earlier in the act, Cio-Cio-San's own acknowledgement that Pinkerton has in effect purchased her seems to contradict the purity that she ascribes to their relationship elsewhere in the opera. The fourth edition deletes Butterfly's mention of the transaction, in effect Westernizing the marriage, at least from her perspective.

In her second-act aria, «Che tua madre», Butterfly's sense of shame over her professional options intensifies. In the first-edition score she expresses a general aversion to performing in the street for money – a lower status occupation than that of geisha – by sketching a pathetic picture of a destitute mother singing and dancing in the rain. This sad story, however, quickly transforms into a triumphant dream-encounter between the emperor and her son. In the fourth-edition's text, by contrast, she explicitly calls singing and dancing «questo mestier che al disonore porta».<sup>10</sup> The references to her son and to the emperor disappear, and the entire aria becomes a bitter meditation on the street performer's trade. Where Butterfly first mentions dancing, Puccini inserts the indication *un poco agitato*, and at «La Geisha canterà!» there is now a mandated slowing of the tempo. Finally, she proclaims that she would rather die than dance for money. Perhaps Puccini, or Albert

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<sup>6</sup> GIRARDI, p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> I thank Arthur Groos for pointing out the important difference between these two occupations.

<sup>8</sup> GIACOSA and ILLICA, *Madama Butterfly*, p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263, n. 2.

Carré, director of the Opéra Comique, who played a large part in the creation of the fourth edition,<sup>11</sup> saw an opportunity to reinforce the opera's poignant outcome by aligning Butterfly's moral compass with the audience's own, enabling them to identify with her shame as well as with her loneliness and romantic longing. In any case, Cio-Cio-San's preference for death over dishonor, as expressed in the revised «Che tua madre» text, echoes the grim choice of many an operatic heroine at the same time that it sets the stage for her eventual suicide.

Butterfly's transformation into a more conventional protagonist with a clearer and less complicated perspective can also be gauged by her changing personal relationships over the course of four editions. By focusing more intently on her devotion to Pinkerton, often at the expense of her interactions with other characters, Puccini and his librettists set her impossible dream more starkly into relief, while at the same time sacrificing some of the depth and dimension of her original incarnation. Whether as mother, daughter, niece, or cousin, Butterfly's identities apart from her role as abandoned wife seem to have been viewed as something of a distraction, at least until the opera's final scene. Most notably affected by revision is her ongoing relationship with her son, temporarily named Dolore. The second edition reduces Dolore's time on stage, possibly due to the difficulty of performing with a young child. Instead of remaining for most of the second act after he has been presented to Sharpless, he now exits just before the sighting of Pinkerton's ship and does not return until after the Flower Duet. The boy's absence from the stage in later editions removes the most obvious manifestation of Butterfly's motherhood, temporarily restoring her to the radiant bride of the first act. His physical presence lacking, Dolore is also spoken to and about less frequently. For example, the passage in which Butterfly hands him an American flag and changes his name in honor of his father's return – «Or bimbo mio | fa in alto sventolar la tua bandiera: | Gioia ti chiami»<sup>12</sup> – becomes in the second edition a victorious reassertion of romantic love: «Trionfa il mio amor! | Il mio amor; la mia fè trionfa intera. | Ei torna e m'ama!».<sup>13</sup> The new text is at odds with its musical setting, a quotation of the *Star-Spangled Banner* left over from the original score, and it leaves unfulfilled Butterfly's promise to change her son's name upon Pinkerton's return.

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<sup>11</sup> See GIRARDI, pp. 247-258, as well as my own doctoral dissertation, *Giacomo Puccini's Operatic Revisions as Manifestations of His Compositional Priorities*, New York University, pp. 87-97.

<sup>12</sup> GIACOSA and ILLICA, *Madama Butterfly*, p. 268.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268, n. 3.

Even when the child is present on stage, revisions curtail Butterfly's interactions with him at the same time that they reinforce allusions to Pinkerton. In the second act, while preparing for her husband's arrival, Butterfly asks Suzuki to retrieve her wedding sash. In the first edition, this initiates a brief orchestral reminiscence of the love duet, which Butterfly, cradling her son, interrupts with an incongruously upbeat nursery song. When Suzuki returns with the garment, the love music resumes (Ex. 1). Beginning with the third edition, Suzuki already has the wedding sash close at hand. When asked, she produces it immediately, and the love music sounds continuously as Cio-Cio-San dresses. The nursery song is gone, and with it another intimate moment shared by Butterfly and her son (Ex. 2). In this instance, a more subtle modification also results: eliminating the nursery song's sudden change of mood renders Butterfly less capricious and girlish, diluting traits that Arthur Groos has identified as stereotypes of the Japanese woman.<sup>14</sup>

Over the course of three revisions, Puccini eliminated nearly 200 measures of music involving Butterfly's various relatives.<sup>15</sup> In the original score, several members of this colorful, animated family were given solo lines during the first-act wedding festivities. The interjections of her mother, cousins, and especially her alcoholic Uncle Yakusidé undermined what was for Cio-Cio-San a serious occasion, reinforcing instead Pinkerton's frivolous attitude towards their marriage. The smaller role played by her relatives in the final version of the opera is less distracting, but it also leaves little impression of her former life with her family.

The single largest cut to the score eliminates 157 measures of music in which Pinkerton interacts with both Cio-Cio-San's relatives and the local officials attending the wedding. For the second edition Puccini removed the first 50 measures, in which Goro slips cash to the local authorities and Pinkerton indulges in a vaudevillian exchange of bows with Butterfly's family and friends; five measures also disappear from the family's gluttonous descent on the buffet table. For the third edition, Puccini removed most of the end of the scene – the remainder of the buffet passage, as well as Sharpless's presentation of the officials – but he retained the introductions of Butterfly's numerous relatives. Finally, the fourth edition deletes the scene in its entirety.

The dramatic impact of these cuts is not insignificant, since they erode the Japanese context that Butterfly leaves behind, first by choice, and then by force, as she is disowned for converting to Christianity. That Puccini deleted the scene in stages implies that he was reluctant to see it disappear entirely.

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<sup>14</sup> GROOS 3, pp. 57-59.

<sup>15</sup> See SCHICKLING 2, pp. 269-274.

(Suzuki va ad un cassettone e vi cerca l'obi e la veste bianca)

*LENTO*(al bimbo, prendendolo  
in grembo e cullandolo)

BUTTERFLY

*rit: . . . . .*

Ca-ra faccia pen-

*rit. col canto*

*ALLEGRETTO MOSSO*  $\text{♩} = 126$ 

BUTTERFLY

(cantic-  
chiando)

- so - sal «È Ro-je un bimbo bion - do, la,

*ALLEGRETTO MOSSO*  $\text{♩} = 126$

BUTTERFLY

(voce naturale)

la, la, la, la, la, la; si - mi-le a so- -le

BUTTERFLY

do-po la tem - pe - sta; l'az-

Ex. 1. G. PUCCINI, *Madama Butterfly*, first edition, Act II, 87<sup>+1-15</sup>.

**BUTTERFLY** *rit. a piacere*  
 - grati! L'o-bi che vestii da

**SUZUKI** (ha terminato la toeletta)  
 È fatto.

*col canto*

**LENTO COME PRIMA**  
**BUTTERFLY**  
 spo - - sa. Qua..... ch'io lo

**88** **LENTO COME PRIMA**

(mentre Butterfly indossa la veste, Suzuki mette l'altra al bambino, avvolgendolo -  
**BUTTERFLY** io quasi tutto nelle pieghe ampie e leggere)

vesta. Vo'..... che mi

*poco rall.*

*poco rall.*

Ex. 2. PUCCINI, *Madama Butterfly*, current edition, Act II, 88<sup>2+4</sup>.



Influenced by Giulio Ricordi's aversion to secondary characters and situations, he may have come to realize that the opera's first act was excessively detailed. Still, the order in which he removed the various parts of the scene, preserving the family's introductions as long as possible, suggests that he was aware of their importance to an emotional grasp of Butterfly's predicament: the greater an audience's familiarity with her family, the better it comprehends the depth of her isolation when they renounce her. This isolation is a crucial component of the opera's design, epitomized by the painfully relevant song that the first edition's Cio-Cio-San recalls to Suzuki just before taking her life: «Ei venne alle sue porte, | prese il posto di tutto, | se n'andò e nulla vi lasciò | nulla fuor che la morte». <sup>16</sup> By witnessing Butterfly's interaction with family and friends as it unfolds in the first edition, the audience can better appreciate both the pain caused by their renunciation and her subsequent desperate attachment to Pinkerton.

While it is clear in each version of the opera that Cio-Cio-San's survival depends upon her belief in an idealized future with her husband and son, in earlier editions this veil of fantasy is sometimes lifted to reveal the threadbare reality of her daily existence. A passage cut from the Flower Duet presents such a juxtaposition. The duet, in modified arch form, finds Butterfly and Suzuki joyfully decorating the house to celebrate Pinkerton's return. It originally included an episode in which Butterfly is forced to confront her desperate financial situation. Pausing near the garden, she addresses the ominously silent Suzuki: «E accenderem mille lanterne almeno | e forse più di mille... | No?... Siam povere?... Cento... | Dieci... Il conto qual sia | la maggior fiamma è nell'anima mia...». <sup>17</sup> The musical setting of this text, slow and tentative as Butterfly comes to terms with her poverty, offers a glimpse of the sad truth behind her desperate anticipation (Ex. 3). In the third and fourth editions of the score, which lack the lantern episode, the Flower Duet is concerned exclusively with happy preparations.

In a similar vein, a cut after the Flower Duet eliminates nine measures in which Cio-Cio-San's long suppressed doubts threaten to burst forth: in the first three editions, after observing her careworn face in a mirror, she throws herself at her maid's feet and tearfully begs to be made beautiful. To Suzuki's reassuring observation that joy and rest enhance one's physical appearance, Butterfly can only reply thoughtfully, «Chissà, chissà...» (Ex. 4). <sup>18</sup> This passage pushes to the brink of collapse Butterfly's faith in her illusions. Such

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<sup>16</sup> GIACOSA and ILLICA, *Madama Butterfly*, p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

BUTTERFLY (a Suzuki, che si arresta)

E accen - de - rem mil - le lan - ter - ne al me - no

BUTTERFLY

e for - se più di mil - le...

BUTTERFLY (vedendo che Suzuki tace, riflette e dice:)

No?... Siam

Ex. 3. PUCCINI, *Madama Butterfly*, first edition, Act II, 73<sup>+9</sup> to 74<sup>+6</sup> (beginning).

near-fatal misgivings represent a complication that may have been judged unsuitable for the more straightforward Cio-Cio-San of the opera's Paris version.

A final and eloquent loss of complexity occurs in «O a me, sceso dal trono», Cio-Cio-San's farewell to her child before taking her life, and unlike the primarily textual modifications discussed so far, this change hinges on Puccini's musical language. In the state that it is known today, the instrumental foundation of «O a me» is stark and simple: virtually the entire orchestra alternates tonic and minor-dominant harmonies, which are reflected in the

BUTTERFLY  
*MENO*

po - ve - re?... Cen - to...

*MENO* *rall.* *mf*

BUTTERFLY

Die - ci... 74 Il con - to qual si - a

*a tempo* *a tempo* *mf*

BUTTERFLY  
(con intensità) *rall. molto.*

la mag - gior fiam - ma è nel - l'a - ni - ma

*rall. molto.* *f*

BUTTERFLY *a tempo (deciso)*

mia.....

*a tempo (deciso)* *f*

Ex. 3. (conclusion).

*AND!<sup>te</sup> SOST.<sup>to</sup> ♩ = 52*  
 BUTTERFLY

83 *AND!<sup>te</sup> SOST.<sup>to</sup> ♩ = 52*

Troppi sospi-ri la bocca mandò,... e l'occhio riguardò... nel lon-

BUTTERFLY (gettandosi a terra e poggiando la testa sui piedi di Suzuki) (con intensità) *cres.:.....*

-tan troppo fi - so. Suzuki, fammi bel - la, fam - mi

BUTTERFLY (alza la testa e guarda in faccia a Suzuki) (piangendo forte)

bel - la, fam - mi bel - la!.....

Ex. 4. PUCCINI, *Madama Butterfly*, first edition, Act II, 83<sup>+1-14</sup> (beginning).

large-scale tonal motion from B minor to F-sharp minor and back again. Cio-Cio-San has resolved to kill herself, and her farewell conveys an almost objective exaltation, as though she is transformed by her sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> But in the opera's first version, an additional nine measures delay the return of B minor, as Butterfly exhorts her son to look at her face: «Guarda ben di tua madre la faccia | sia pur pallida e poca | che non tutto consunto vada di mia beltà l'ul-

<sup>19</sup> At «O a me» the score directs Butterfly to sing «con esaltazione».

SUZUKI (*accarezzando la testa di Butterfly, per calmarla*)

Gio - ia, ri - po - so ac - cre - sco - no bel - tà.....

*pp*

BUTTERFLY (*pensierosa*) (*alzandosi, ritorna alla toeletta*)

Chis - sà! chis - sà! chis - sà! chis - sà!

*rall:.....*

*rall:.....*

Ex. 4. (*conclusion*).

timo fior».<sup>20</sup> With this pathetic image comes an abrupt change of musical character: shimmering strings, syncopated pulsations, and descending seventh chords support a delicate, almost sentimental vocal line, until the heavy B minor triads return (Ex. 5). By deleting the nine contrasting measures for the second edition, Puccini ensures the transcendent nature of Butterfly's farewell.

This brief study of Cio-Cio-San as she was and as she is today must leave many questions unanswered. One of the most important is whether the particular sequence of revisions, for Brescia, for London, and for Paris, tells us anything about Puccini's evolving personal conception of her character. As with his other operas, the opportunity to see the work performed, with various casts under various conditions, accounts for some of the practical changes that he made. And revisions to this opera, perhaps more than any other, reflect the influence of his collaborators and colleagues. But while *Madama Butterfly's* popularity grew with each edition, Puccini himself seems to have favored at least some aspects of the first. This preference is expressed not only in the controversial Teatro Carcano score, which restores, allegedly

<sup>20</sup> GIACOSA and ILLICA, *Madama Butterfly*, *Fonti*, p. 293.

BUTTERFLY

fi - so di tua ma - dre la fac - cia!...che te'n re - sti u - na

BUTTERFLY *cres:.... e allargando* *f* *molto rit.*

trac - cia,..... guar - da ben di tua ma - dre la

*cres:.... e allargando* *p* *molto rit.*

BUTTERFLY

fac - cial..... sia pur pal - li - da e

*pp* *poco cres.* *dim*

Ex. 5. PUCCINI, *Madama Butterfly*, first edition, Act II, 145<sup>+5</sup> to 146<sup>+3</sup> (beginning).

BUTTERFLY

*pp* *dim:*

po - ca..... Che non tut - to consun - to

*ppp* *dim:*

BUTTERFLY

*cres.* *rit. 3* *a tempo, ma largamente*

va - da di mia beltà l'ul - ti - mo fior. Ad -

146 *a tempo, ma largamente*

*cres. molto* *ff*

BUTTERFLY

*rit.* *(con voce fioca)* *rall:*

- di - ol! addi - ol piccolo a - mor!..... Va. Gioca,

*p* *pp rit. col canto* *pp* *rall:* *tristamente*

*m.d.*

Ex. 5. (conclusion).

on the composer's orders, several passages from the opera's first edition for a performance at that theater in 1920, but also in a letter that Puccini wrote to Carlo Clausetti, one of Ricordi's directors, at around the same time.<sup>21</sup> Discussing the score, Puccini remarked,

...dio sa quando sarà esaurita la 1<sup>a</sup> edizione, e allor io non vedrò la mia *Butterfly* senza le brutte amputazioni e per l'intermezzo ti prego far ritirare dal m<sup>te</sup> di Pietà l'originale e mandarci il fascicolo...<sup>22</sup>

Besides establishing that the first edition continued to be offered for sale long after two revisions superseded it, this letter suggests that Puccini regretted cutting at least some material from the original score.

The notion that Puccini bequeathed to posterity a version of *Madama Butterfly* that he himself found lacking may come as little surprise to those who dismiss his work as cynical and manipulative. But there may be an alternate interpretation. Having learned the painful lesson that the opera's first version failed to communicate its essential message, Puccini tinkered with the work until it became acceptable to the colleagues, critics, and audiences whose opinions mattered to him. Rather than manipulating them, he allowed their reactions to shape his opera. Regardless of his personal preferences, he came to realize that the fourth edition of *Madama Butterfly* worked in the theater and was embraced by the public. And so it is for the fourth version of Cio-Cio-San, who despite being less Japanese and more conventional than her earlier self, still manages to elicit tears.

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<sup>21</sup> For more about the Teatro Carcano score, see SCHICKLING 1, pp. 534f.

<sup>22</sup> Puccini to Carlo Clausetti, 25 November, 1920 (Archivio storico Ricordi).