

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2017

**Washington National Opera
presents**

Madame Butterfly

**Puccini's classic tale of love and longing comes to Washington
in an eye-popping staging by production designer Jun Kaneko**

**May 6–23, 2017
in the Kennedy Center Opera House**

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera's 2016–2017 season concludes with one of the most beloved operas in the repertory, Puccini's ***Madame Butterfly***, May 6–21, 2017 in the Kennedy Center Opera House. Featuring some of the most enduring and memorable music in all of opera, this production also features dazzling sets and costumes by Japanese American production designer Jun Kaneko, whose dramatic designs for WNO's 2014 production of *The Magic Flute* amazed audiences. This new-to-Washington production from Opera Omaha and San Francisco Opera is directed by Leslie Swackhamer and conducted by WNO Music Director Philippe Auguin. A special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance of *Madame Butterfly* is presented in the Opera House on Friday, May 19, 2017, and features current singers of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program.

In *Madame Butterfly*, the sun rises on turn-of-the-century Nagasaki, Japan, where dashing American naval officer Pinkerton has chosen the delicate Cio-Cio-San to be his bride. A naïve young geisha on the verge of womanhood, the clearly smitten and fiercely loyal "Butterfly" dismisses warnings of the lieutenant's ulterior motives. When betrayal inevitably strikes and Butterfly must endure both shame and sorrow, she

decides to take destiny into her own hands—leading to one of the most devastating and legendary final scenes in all of opera.

Jun Kaneko's colorful and spellbinding production of *Madame Butterfly*—the first opera he designed—has been seen in more than a dozen North American cities. His arresting visual vocabulary will be familiar to audiences who attended his acclaimed 2014 production of *The Magic Flute*. To celebrate his return to Washington, WNO is also hosting an exhibition of his sculptures in the Hall of Nations. See page 5 for more information.

Heading the cast are three extraordinary Butterflies: Albanian soprano Ermonela Jaho, who has sung this signature role in opera houses from London to Paris to Berlin and beyond, makes her WNO debut with these performances; South Korean soprano Sae-Kyung Rim, who has sung the role at the esteemed Vienna State Opera and throughout Europe, makes her American debut with these performances; and Korean American soprano Yunah Lee, noted for her portrayal of Cio-Cio-San across the country, sings the role for one performance only on May 9. (Korean American soprano Hei-Kyung Hong, who was originally announced for the role of Cio-Cio-San, has withdrawn from the production.) The cast also include two rising-star tenors making their WNO debuts as Lt. Pinkerton, Brian Jagde and Dimitri Pittas. Baritones Troy Cook and Trevor Scheunemann (an alumnus of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program) share the role of Sharpless, while Suzuki is sung by the gifted young mezzo-soprano Kristen Choi in her WNO debut, and Goro is sung by the young tenor Ian McEuen.

The cast also includes several current members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program: Timothy J. Bruno is The Bonze, Michael Adams is Yamadori, Allegra De Vita is Kate Pinkerton, and Andrew Bogard is the Commissioner. Rounding out the cast is company veteran James Shaffran as the Registrar.

Leslie Swackhamer directs this acclaimed production in her WNO debut, and WNO Music Director Philippe Auguin leads the WNO Orchestra in interpreting Puccini's classic score. In addition to production designer Jun Kaneko, the creative team for

Madame Butterfly includes lighting designer Gary Marder, choreographer Adam Noble, and hair and makeup designer Anne Ford-Coates.

At the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance on Friday, May 19, young artist Raquel González, who has memorably sung the roles of Mimì, Micaëla, and Countess Almaviva in past Young Artist Performances, is Cio-Cio-San. Other returning young artists are Hunter Enoch as Sharpless and Daryl Freedman as Suzuki. Guest young artist Chaz'men Williams-Ali sings the role of Pinkerton in his WNO debut.

Madame Butterfly opens on Saturday, May 6, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Opera House and runs for 14 performances, including May 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance is Friday, May 19. The opera's running time is approximately two hours and 40 minutes, including one intermission. The opera is performed in Italian with easy-to-follow projected English titles. Visit WNO's [website](#) for complete production details and casting information.

Washington National Opera's 2017–2018 season includes new productions of Verdi's epic drama *Aida*, the company premiere of Handel's magical baroque opera *Alcina*, and Verdi's towering masterpiece *Don Carlo*, plus Rossini's delightful comedy *The Barber of Seville* and Bernstein's biting satire *Candide*. The season also features a festival weekend of four world premieres as part of the American Opera Initiative, the return of the holiday family opera *The Little Prince*, two special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performances, and more. [Subscription packages](#) and [single tickets](#) are available now.

Madame Butterfly Performance and Ticket Information

Saturday, May 6 at 7 p.m. ▪ Sunday, May 7 at 2 p.m. ▪ Monday, May 8 at 7 p.m.
Tuesday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m. ▪ Wednesday, May 10 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 11 at 7:30 p.m. ▪ Saturday, May 13 at 7 p.m. ▪ Sunday, May 14 at 2 p.m.
Monday, May 15 at 7 p.m. ▪ Wednesday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 18 at 7:30 p.m. ▪ Friday, May 19[†] at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 20 at 7 p.m. ▪ Sunday, May 21 at 2 p.m.

[†] Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance—see page 5 for casting

Tickets start at \$25 and are available [online](#), in person at the Kennedy Center Box Office, and by calling (202) 467-4600 or (800) 444-1324. For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

Madame Butterfly Production Information

Music by Giacomo Puccini ▪ Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Co-Production of Opera Omaha and San Francisco Opera
Performed in Italian with Projected English Titles

May 6, 7m, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14m, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21m, 2017

Cast and Creative Team

Cio-Cio-San	Ermonela Jaho * (5/6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18, and 20)	Conductor	Philippe Auguin
		Director	Leslie Swackhamer *
	Sae-Kyung Rim * (5/7, 11, 14, 17, and 21)	Production Designer	Jun Kaneko
	Yunah Lee * (5/9)	Lighting Designer	Gary Marder *
Pinkerton	Brian Jagde * (5/6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18, and 20)	Hair and Makeup Designer	Anne Ford-Coates for Elsen Associates
	Dimitri Pittas * (5/7, 9, 11, 14, 17, and 21)	Assistant Director	Cindy C. Oxberry
		Stage Manager	Lynn Krynicki
Sharpless	Troy Cook * (5/6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18, and 20)		
	Trevor Scheunemann ± (5/7, 9, 11, 14, 17, and 21)		
Suzuki	Kristen Choi *		
Goro	Ian McEuen		
The Bonze	Timothy J. Bruno ‡		
Yamadori	Michael Adams ‡		
Kate Pinkerton	Allegra De Vita ‡		
Commissioner	Andrew Bogard ‡		
Registrar	James Shaffran		

* Washington National Opera Debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

Madame Butterfly: The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance

Friday, May 19, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Cast

Cio-Cio-San	Raquel González ‡
Pinkerton	Chaz'men Williams-Ali *
Sharpless	Hunter Enoch ‡
Suzuki	Daryl Freedman ‡
Goro	Ian McEuen
The Bonze	Timothy J. Bruno ‡
Yamadori	Michael Adams ‡
Kate Pinkerton	Allegra De Vita ‡
Commissioner	Andrew Bogard ‡
Registrar	James Shaffran

* Washington National Opera Debut

‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

Madame Butterfly Related Programs and Events

Jun Kaneko Exhibition, April 17–May 22, 2017, Kennedy Center Hall of Nations

Renowned Japanese American visual artist and painter Jun Kaneko, the production designer of *Madame Butterfly*, brings a free exhibition of his ceramic sculptures to the Hall of Nations. Balancing elements of both American and Japanese aesthetics, the installation includes pieces from two of his sculpture series: *HEADS*, large, neutral forms, instantly recognizable as human yet loaded with a vast array of traditions and associations; and *Dangos*, a term adapted from the Japanese word for “rounded form.” *Dangos* are usually mound-like, freestanding sculptures, molded into an intriguing family of different shapes reflecting a wide range of expression.

Musical Preview: *Madame Butterfly*

Sunday, April 30 at 6 p.m., Kennedy Center Millennium Stage

Enjoy a free preview of musical highlights from *Madame Butterfly*, featuring members of WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and other artists from the production.

The 2017 Butterfly Bash, hosted by WNO's BravO Club, Ivy: the Social University, and Art Museum of the Americas

Saturday, May 13, at 8:30 p.m., Art Museum of the Americas at the Organization of American States, 201 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Celebrating WNO's *Madame Butterfly* at the 2017 Butterfly Bash, which will include performances by WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists, a live jazz band, and hors d'oeuvres, drinks and dessert. General admission is \$60 per person. Details on how to purchase tickets will be available soon.

Opera Insights before every performance, Opera House

WNO presents a free pre-performance education event prior to every performance of *Madame Butterfly*. These events will begin one hour prior to curtain in the Opera House and last approximately 20–25 minutes. (The *O-Zone* lecture with musicologist Saul Lilienstein on Wednesday, May 10 begins at 6:15 p.m. and lasts approximately 45 minutes.) A complete list of discussion leaders will be posted to WNO's [website](#).

Artist Q&As: *Madame Butterfly*

Immediately following the performances on Sunday, May 7; Monday, May 8; Sunday, May 14; Monday, May 15; and Sunday, May 21; Opera House

Join WNO artistic staff for a wide-ranging discussion with the artists of the production. These events are free to patrons presenting a ticket from any performance of *Madame Butterfly*

ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the company presents a diverse season of grand opera—including both classics from the repertory and more contemporary pieces—plus several newly commissioned American works and a variety of special concerts and events. The WNO Orchestra is led by Music Director Philippe Auguin. Founded in 1956 and an affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 2011, WNO has a storied legacy of world premieres, new productions, international tours, live recordings and radio broadcasts, and innovative education and community-engagement programs. Throughout its history, WNO has been led by titans in the opera field, including the legendary Plácido Domingo, who headed the company from 1996 to 2011.

WNO contributes to the future of opera through two signature artist-development programs. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, now in its 15th season, has become one of the nation's most competitive and comprehensive professional training programs for young singers and collaborative pianists. Alumni of the program have won major competitions and gone on to successful careers at major opera houses in the U.S. and abroad. The WNO Opera Institute nurtures the ambitions of high-school-age singers from across the nation during an intensive three-week summer program held at American University in Washington.

Among the company's most successful recent programs is the 2012 launch of the American Opera Initiative, a comprehensive commissioning program that works to expand the American operatic repertory, to give WNO's young artists the chance to collaborate with living composers and librettists on new works, and to make American opera more relevant to 21st-century audiences. The most popular of WNO's community-engagement programs is M&M'S® *Opera in the Outfield*, during which an opera is broadcast live from the Kennedy Center Opera House

stage to the high-definition scoreboard at Nationals Park. The company's other education programs include the *Kids Create Opera* program at local elementary schools, Look-In performances for students in grades 4–8, and the Student Dress Rehearsal Program for middle and high school students. The company also offers free Opera Insights programs before every performance in the Opera House.

To celebrate the company's 60th anniversary last season, Washington National Opera presented three complete cycles of Wagner's *Ring* in spring 2016. These performances, featuring an acclaimed production by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Music Director Philippe Auguin, marked the first time the company presented *The Ring* in complete cycles in its history.

Discover [Washington National Opera](#) on social media:



#MadameButterflyDC

FUNDING CREDITS

Major support for WNO is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

David and Alice Rubenstein are the Presenting Underwriters of WNO.

WNO acknowledges the longstanding generosity of Life Chairman Mrs. Eugene B. Casey.

WNO's presenting sponsor
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Generous support for WNO Italian Opera is provided by Daniel and Gayle D'Aniello.

Madame Butterfly is a production of the Clarice Smith Opera Series.

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is made possible through the generous support of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, with additional funding provided by Judy and Billy Cox, Nicole Alfandre Halbreiner, Susan Carmel Lehrman, John & Mary Lee Malcolm, Michael F. and Noémi K. Neidorff and The Centene Charitable Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey P. Pohanka, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Schuiling, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Guillermo Schultz, Washington National Opera Council, and The Women's Committee of Washington National Opera.

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TICKETS & INFORMATION

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