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Madama Butterfly Makes a Triumphant Return to Omaha.

Opera Omaha will present their critically acclaimed production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* designed by the renowned artist, Jun Kaneko on April 15 and 17, 2011. Leslie Swackhamer, the original stage director, returns to Omaha to recreate this exciting production. Mihoko Kinoshita will make her Opera Omaha debut as the title character. Ms. Kinoshita received rave reviews for her portrayal of *Madama Butterfly* in Vancouver Opera's presentation of this same production last year.

This production has toured internationally since its debut here in Omaha in 2006. Opera Omaha and Jun Kaneko received national praise for the original sets and costumes, which marries Puccini's romantic music with Kaneko's breathtaking designs. The production sold-out performances in its inaugural run at the Orpheum Theater. One of the most beloved operas in America, *Madama Butterfly* tells the story of geisha, Cio Cio San, known as *Madama Butterfly*, who is presented to Lieutenant Pinkerton of the United States Navy in an arranged marriage. Pinkerton leaves her to return to his life and *Butterfly* journeys through three years of waiting patiently for his return, unaware that he has married another woman. With the comprehension of what has happened, *Butterfly* realizes the only honorable escape is death.

Joseph Rescigno, who has conducted for more than 50 companies on four continents, including New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Washington National Opera, will conduct the Omaha Symphony for both performances. Mika Shigematsu, Gerard Powers, Todd Thomas, Jason Ferrante, Elizabeth Bieber, Gregory Pearson, and Dan Richardson round out the cast.

“We are truly excited to bring back this production after its five year critically lauded tour,” said Brad A Watkins, Communications Director at Opera Omaha, “The critical reviews from Vancouver to Philadelphia have been overwhelmingly positive. The sets and costumes designed by Jun Kaneko were called ‘visually daring while remaining true to the essence of the music and drama’ by *Opera* magazine. This is a homegrown success story that Omaha can be proud to call our own.”

Madama Butterfly performances are Friday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 17 at 2:00 p.m. at the historic downtown Orpheum Theater. Tickets start at \$19. To purchase go to ticketomaha.com or call (402) 345-0606.

About Opera Omaha

Opera Omaha, the only professional opera company in Nebraska, began in 1958 as the Omaha Civic Opera Society, a volunteer association, and with tremendous community support became fully professional by 1970. Opera Omaha produces a season of original mainstage productions, presented at the historic Orpheum Theater, and smaller productions and musical events throughout the community. Opera Omaha is internationally known for its productions of eight world premieres and four American premieres of classical masterpieces, and is highly regarded regionally for an extensive education and outreach program that annually reaches as many as 15,000 people from elementary school through adulthood.