

Aspects of vocal requirement, of technical and interpretative nature, in Butterfly's aria "Un bel dì, vedremo" from Madama Butterfly

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***Abstract:** The communication below aims to present essential musical features in **Madama Butterfly** ("Cio-Cio San", as it is also called), a work full of strength and severity of verism motivated by the historical nature of the topic, and in which the voices bring an impressive homage to the Italian dramatic canto style, while the orchestra, intelligently modeled, links the symphonic motifs and reveals the secret thoughts of the protagonists; **Madama Butterfly** (1904), which portrays the distant Orient, so in fashion in Puccini's era, and is characterized by great individual refinement.*

***Keywords:** verism, opera, tradition, characters, language*

1. Introduction

Madama Butterfly (also called "Cio-Cio San"), a three-act opera, Japanese tragedy on a libretto by Luigi and Giuseppe Giacosa after a play by David Belasco, was written in Torre del Lago. Puccini had received from Sade Yacco singer some authentic Japanese songs that had enchanted the composer and made him order Japan mechanical folk music in Tokyo. It is said that Torre del Lago's brood, with its musical murmur, would have transposed the author in the Japanese climate as a venue for his next work. Unfortunately, the premiere of **Madama Butterfly** was the biggest ever known failure in Italian opera, although the composer had been convinced he had found the most successful libretto, which he had transposed in a perfect way.

2. Stylistic and interpretative considerations

Young American Pinkerton, being in mission at Nagasaki, marries "temporarily" with a young Japanese woman, Cio-Cio San, who, for the sake of her future husband, without the will of her relatives, converts to Christianity, attracting for this, the curse of her uncle, Benzo. If throughout the first act of the opera her joy and vibrant youth dominates the Japanese landscape, with the curse, whose terrible leit-motif begins to follow her, laughter and joy leave her.

For Cio-Cio San, who had lived happy moments with Pinkerton - who is leaving for her going back to the United States - begins a long wait, confident in his promise that he will return.

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In love with the American officer, she refuses Yamatori's marriage request, and when Sharpless himself, the American consul at Nagasaki, insists on making her understand that Pinkerton will not come back, Cio-Cio San shows her child, whom she considers the supreme argument of her waiting and in front of which the consul has nothing to say.

The emergence of the American vessel at the horizon erases any heroine's doubt, until she finds out that Pinkerton is not alone, but accompanied by his "real" wife, Kate, with whom he just came to take his baby.

For the young Japanese begins a period of agonizing torture, overshadowed musically-dramatically by the composer in the economy of the show, as oversized is the ritual that prepares the traditional heroine's hara kiri. Finally, despairing, Cio-Cio-San sends her child to the garden, then suicides.

"Un bel dì, vedremo," the aria of Butterfly in Act II, is written in an *Andante molto calmo* (interrupted once by a *Lento* in measures 42-48) and is characterized by frequent fluctuations of measures, by tempo and tonal, which maintains the dramatic tension of vocal speech amplified by supporting the orchestral texture.

The first difficulty encountered in interpreting this area is the attack of the first sound (*G bemol 2*) in *piano* - which means a perfect vocal technique - with an airy orchestra support in *pianissimo, come da lontano*.

After the debut of the aria with melodic performances with a cantilena character, where the difficulty of execution / interpretation lies not so much in the writing of the vocal score, but in the "tricks" the composer uses to achieve certain expression effects (such as the legatos of the phrases).

AND^{te} MOLTO CALMO 48

CANTO
VOICE

Un..... bel dì, ve - dre - mo le -
One..... fine day we'll no - tice A

48
AND^{te} MOLTO CALMO
pp come da lontano

- var - si un fil di fu - mo sul l'e - stre - mo confin del
thread..... of smoke a - rit - ing on the sea..... In the far ho -

Un poco mosso ritenuto
Poi la ua - ve bian - ca en - tra nel..... por - - to,
Then the trim white ves - sel Glides..... in to the har - - bour,
Un poco mosso ritenuto

p mf

The voice evolves, for the most part, on phrases built on the pattern of melodic recitatives such as:

a tempo
con semplicità

met - to là sul ci - glio del col - le
stay up - on the brow of the hill - ock,

a tempo
pp

This musical score shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'a tempo' and 'con semplicità'. The lyrics are 'met - to là sul ci - glio del col - le' and 'stay up - on the brow of the hill - ock,'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'a tempo' and 'pp'.

or

SOSTENENDO MOLTO
Lo stesso movimento

Chi sa - rà? chi sa - rà? E co - me sa - rà giun - to
Can you guess who it is? And when he's reach'd the sum - mit,

SOSTENENDO MOLTO
Lo stesso movimento
p

This musical score shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'SOSTENENDO MOLTO' and 'Lo stesso movimento'. The lyrics are 'Chi sa - rà? chi sa - rà? E co - me sa - rà giun - to' and 'Can you guess who it is? And when he's reach'd the sum - mit,'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'SOSTENENDO MOLTO', 'Lo stesso movimento', and 'p'.

A good voice mastery is also necessary to achieve the transition from *forte con passione* to *piano dolcemente*, in the area of measures 15-18:

con passione
ritenuto

Ve - di? È ve - nu - - to! Io non gli scen - do in - con - tra. Io no.
See you? Now he is com - - ing! I do not go to meet him. Not!!

ritenuto
f con passione

dolcemente
rall.
pp

This musical score shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'con passione' and 'ritenuto'. The lyrics are 'Ve - di? È ve - nu - - to! Io non gli scen - do in - con - tra. Io no.' and 'See you? Now he is com - - ing! I do not go to meet him. Not!!'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'ritenuto', 'f con passione', 'dolcemente', 'rall.', and 'pp'.

With measure 57, the voice enters an accelerated process of tension accumulation - with a massive support of the orchestra - which leads to the climax of the end of the area. The difficulty of this moment is even greater, as it is preceded by three measures in *forte*, in a register not at all convenient for the voice.

Tutto que-sto avverrà, te lo pro-met - to. Tien - ti la tua pa-
 This will all come to pass as I tell you. Ean - ish your sid - le

- u - - ra, io con si - cu - ra fe - - - de l'a - - spet - - - to.
 fears, For he will re - turn..... I know..... it.

poco rall. *cres.* *poco rall.* *cres.*

To sustain the climax, the performer must control the air column very well throughout the phrase and relax - by short breathing - the larynx.

For the creation of Madama Butterfly, not only did the subject incite Puccini, but also the moral integrity of the main character, which gave him the opportunity to create another type of opera heroine - closest to his sensitivity, psychology and his concepts about life and especially about love.

Puccini has managed to musically portray a character of perfect, delicate and fragile beauty and purity, but dignified and courageous in front of her despair.

Madama Butterfly - Distribution of the first premiere,
 Milano, 1904

Conductor: Cleofonte Campanini

Cio-Cio San (soprano)	Rosina Storchio
Suzuki (mezzosoprano)	Giuseppina Giaconia
Pinkerton (tenor)	Giovanni Zenatello
Sharpless (baritone)	Giuseppe de Luca

Distribution from the second premiere, in Brescia:

Conductor: Cleofonte Campanini

Cio-Cio San (soprano)	Salomea Kruceniski
Suzuki (mezzosoprano)	Giannina Lucacewska
Pinkerton (tenor)	Giovanni Zenatello
Sharpless (baritone)	Virgilio Bellatti

3. Conclusions

The Cio-Cio-San Opera is imposed by the originality of the development of the dramatic conflict through a specific vocal coloration that the composer has studied Japanese music through the unity of dramaturgy given by the use of leitmotifs. More than in previous works, Puccini achieves in Cio-Cio-San the most perfect symbiosis between text and music he creates in symphonic way, in modern timbre and harmonic combinations, and in close conjunction with the characters' feelings.

The musical pages created by Puccini in Madama Butterfly, whose value was not recognized at the premiere in Milan on February 17, 1904, have gained, with the passage of the years, the well-deserved place in the world of opera performances, "Cio-Cio -San "being considered a masterpiece of the lyrical theater.

4. Bibliography

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