

Passionate Madama Butterfly

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Puccini's passion will enrich your soul with the Met Opera's Madama Butterfly. If there's one opera you cannot miss, it's the live broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera's sumptuous staging of Puccini's Madama Butterfly, with sensational vocal prowess by Kristine Opolais and Roberto Alagna.

Fortunately, you don't have to travel all the way to New York to experience the magic of this must-see production, but can see it in HD on the big screen at Cinema Nouveau cinemas from 23 April.

Celebrating the visual genius of director Anthony Minghella, who passed away in 2008, Minghella's acclaimed 1996 production is gloriously revived by his wife Carolyn Choa, whose direction and choreography complements the rich score, Michael Levine's imaginative production design, the stunning costumes by Han Feng, awe-inspiring lighting design by Peter Mumford.



The magical use of puppetry

What also makes this production unique is the magical use of puppetry by the Blind Summit Theatre, with Butterfly's young boy played by a puppet that will break your heart.

I fell totally in love with Kristine Opolais, who plays the title role, and Roberto Alagna as Pinkerton, when I saw the duo in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, the last HD transmission a few weeks ago.

They soar in *Butterfly*, with Opolais infusing her performance of the young Japanese geisha with ardent passion, only equalled by Alagna's potent Pinkerton.

One of the most acclaimed *Butterflies* of recent years, Kristine Opolais, reprises the role of *Butterfly*, which she last sang at the Met in 2014. Roberto Alagna reprises the role of Pinkerton opposite Opolais, also his co-star in the Met's recent production of *Manon Lescaut*.

As one of the world's leading Puccini sopranos, Kristine Opolais has sung *Cio-Cio-San* at the Met, the Bavarian State Opera, and Royal Opera, Covent Garden. This season, prior to her performances as *Cio-Cio-San*, she stars in the title role in the Met's new production of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. She made her Met debut as Magda in Puccini's *La Rondine* during the 2012/13 season and, additionally, filled in for a sick colleague as a last-minute replacement for the HD performance as Mimi in *La Bohème* with the company in 2014.

Roberto Alagna has previously sung the role of Pinkerton at the Met, in addition to the Gran Teatre del Liceu and the Bavarian State Opera. Prior to his performances in *Madama Butterfly*, the French tenor makes his role debut as a late addition to the cast singing des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* with Opolais. Since his Met debut in 1996 as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, he has sung over 100 performances of 12 different roles with the company, including Don José in *Carmen*, Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca*, Radamès in Verdi's *Aida*, and the title characters in Gounod's *Faust* and Massenet's *Werther*.

Equally brilliant are Dwayne Croft, who reprises the role of Sharpless, with Maria Zifchak as Suzuki.



Heartbreaking tale of a young Japanese geisha

Filmed at the Metropolitan Opera a few weeks ago, the opera tells the heartbreaking tale of a young Japanese geisha who clings to the belief that her arrangement with a visiting American naval officer is a loving and permanent marriage.

The story triggers ideas about cultural and sexual imperialism for people far removed from the opera house, and film,

Broadway and popular culture in general have played endlessly on it.

The lyric beauty of Puccini's score, especially the music for the thoroughly believable lead role, has made *Butterfly* timeless and one of the defining roles in opera.

Under the baton of Karel Mark Chichon, Puccini's music truly invades your soul. Chichon, who makes his Met debut conducting the performances of Anthony Minghella's acclaimed production, has been chief conductor of the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie since 2011. He has previously conducted for many opera companies around the world, including Deutsche Oper Berlin, Vienna State Opera, Teatro Real in Madrid, and Gran Teatre del Liceu. Later this year, he will conduct *Tosca* at the Bavarian State Opera.

In addition to the production, lovers of opera are invited behind the scenes with the Met's stars.



Special intermission

The special intermission features during *Madama Butterfly*, hosted by Deborah Voigt, include:

- Backstage interviews with the stars of *Madama Butterfly*, Kristine Opolais and Roberto Alagna, in their second back-to-back live transmission around the world;
- Live interviews with the principal cast of the Met's acclaimed new production of Roberto Devereux, the final opera in Donizetti's 'Tudor queens' trilogy, which will be screened at Cinema Nouveau theatres from Saturday, 7 May; and
- A montage of great scenic moments celebrating the 10th anniversary of Live in HD, and an interview with Scenic Artist Doug Lebrecht

These grand operas, filmed at the iconic Metropolitan Opera House, feature some of the world's most talented singers, conductors, composers, orchestra musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers and dancers. With these exclusive productions, Cinema Nouveau continues to give local audiences the opportunity to witness these spectacular 'live' broadcasts on the big screen, in full digital projection, at various of their cinemas across South Africa.

The Met was the first arts company to experiment as an alternative content provider, starting on a modest scale in 2006. Since then, its programme has grown every season with more than 19 million tickets sold to date, and its 10th anniversary season being celebrated this year.

The Met: Live in HD series is made possible by a generous grant from its founding sponsor, The Neubauer Family Foundation. Global corporate sponsorship of The Met: Live in HD is provided by Bloomberg.



Limited screenings

Madama Butterfly has limited screenings exclusively at Cinema Nouveau and select Ster-Kinekor theatres countrywide from Saturday, 23 April, including: Gateway Nouveau in Durban; V&A Waterfront Nouveau in Cape Town; Ster-Kinekor Somerset Mall in Somerset West and Garden Route Mall in George; Rosebank Nouveau and Ster-Kinekor Bedford Centre in Joburg; and at Brooklyn Nouveau in Pretoria.

The running time is approximately 3 hours and 20 minutes, including two intervals. The local screening dates and times are as follows: 23 April and 3 and 5 May at 5pm; 24 April at 2.30pm; and on 26 April and 4 May at 11.30am.

For booking information on The Met: Live in HD season, go to www.cinemanouveau.co.za or www.sterkinekor.com. Download the Ster-Kinekor App on any Nokia, Samsung Android, iPhone or Blackberry smartphone for updates, news and to make bookings. Follow on Twitter [@nouveaubuzz](https://twitter.com/nouveaubuzz) and on Facebook at Cinema Nouveau. For information, call Ticketline on 0861-Movies (668 437).

Read more about other new films opening this weekend at www.writingstudio.co.za

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za

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