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Berkshire Eagle ENTERTAINMENT

Berkshire Opera Festival offers a promising first act with its production of 'Madama Butterfly' at the Colonial

By April 16, 2016

By David P. Foster

POSTER BOY — It is a new concept that will set up the Berkshire Opera Festival's season from the beginning. The festival's first act will be a production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

The Boston Musical Intelligencer

The Berkshire Eagle's 'Madama Butterfly' Earns Attention

NEWS & FEATURES REVIEWS UPCOMING EVENTS ABOUT THE JOURNAL

IN REVIEW

Madama Butterfly Earns Attention

By Eric Korman

As the Berkshire Opera Festival's first act, the production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre has earned attention from the Boston Musical Intelligencer. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

BUTTERFLY IN THE BERKSHIRES

The Berkshire Opera Festival's production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre has earned attention from the Boston Musical Intelligencer. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

NEPR

Young People Help Set The Stage For New Opera Company

At the same time, the Berkshire Opera Festival is getting ready for its first season. The Berkshire Opera Festival has been a long time in the making, and it is now ready to take the stage. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

THE NEW YORKER

CLASSICAL MUSIC

BERKSHIRE OPERA FESTIVAL: 'MADAMA BUTTERFLY'

By David P. Foster

The Berkshire Opera Festival's production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre has earned attention from The New Yorker. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

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Berkshire Opera Festival opens with 'Madama Butterfly'

The Berkshire Opera Festival's production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre has earned attention from TimeUnion. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

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The first Berkshire Opera Festival opens its doors with Madama Butterfly

The Berkshire Opera Festival's production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial Theatre has earned attention from Gramilano. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival. The production is being produced by the Berkshire Opera Festival, which is a new venture for the festival.

KBRB

Opera Festival Looks To Add To Berkshire Cultural Scene

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Berkshire Opera Festival, Madama Butterfly set

Present At Birth

by: [Walter Carroll](#)
AUGUST 30, 2016

This past Saturday in Pittsfield, MA a new opera company, the **Berkshire Opera Festival** was born. With its inaugural production of *Madama Butterfly* opening for a three performance run at the **Colonial Theatre**, it was an auspicious event in the cultural life of this culture-rich area. The second performance is Tuesday, August 30, and the final performance is Friday, September 2.

This is a fully-staged presentation of Puccini's popular opera with an outstanding international cast, a chorus of talented singers from the Berkshires and an excellent orchestra of musicians from Massachusetts and nearby. The staging is fairly simple but effective, enhanced by lighting which emphasizes the changing moods of the piece.

This is a birth which has had a long gestation. The idea for the company first began some 17 years ago, but it has been the subject of intense effort of fundraising, recruiting performers and staff and organizing the company in the last two years. The co-founders, [Jonathan Loy](#) and [Brian Garman](#), also served as stage director and conductor respectively. Both have long professional resumes, working with companies such as New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Santa Fe Opera and more.

Similarly the cast has had a wide experience. Moldavian soprano [Inna Los](#) was the highlight of this performance, both as the giddy young bride and as the young mother determined that she has not been abandoned and that the man she loves will return. She has sung Cio-Cio-San at Michigan Opera, New Jersey Opera, in Finland, and has sung leading roles at the Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper, and she has also sung at the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Her handsome Pinkerton, [Jason Slayden](#), has also been seen at Lyric Opera, Opera Michigan, Colorado Music Festival and Opera Santa Barbara. One of the veterans of the cast is [Weston Hurt](#), an excellent baritone, whose Sharpless ached with the frustration of being unable to convince

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Music

AUG 30 2016

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS:

72K

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS:

404

DOMAIN AUTHORITY:

60

88

The Berkshire Opera Festival triumphs in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

by MICHAEL MILLER • SEPTEMBER 8, 2016 • PRINT-FRIENDLY

Print PDF



Inna Los as Cio-Cio-San in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at the Berkshire Opera Festival. Photo Ken Howard.

Musically, this summer in the Berkshires, there was one event that was truly exciting, in the sense of something important that was entirely new... or almost, as the people behind it made entirely clear. Several weeks ago I had the pleasure of interviewing the two impressive and engaging founders of the Berkshire Opera Festival, Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman, who promised to "bring fully-staged opera back to the Berkshires." And this they have just fulfilled with a production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, that was in a way as perfect as an opera performance can get, considering that opera is the quintessence of imperfection among art forms—or perhaps that should be said of art itself. Musical and theatrical ability that was both solid and brilliant, imagination, good taste, and deep knowledge and understanding of the work and its authors flowed together with all the concentration and energy aroused by a new, make-or-break enterprise to create a performance that can only be described as an object lesson in how to perform opera—and a thrilling and moving one newcomers, casual opera-goers, and opera-makers alike can appreciate. The Berkshire Opera Festival has, within less than a week, made itself indispensable.

These three performances of Puccini's masterpiece did not, as it happened, take place in a vacuum. Our beloved Hubbard Hall Opera Theater presented *Madama Butterfly* only two weeks before with its radically different aesthetic—a swan song for its outgoing founding Artistic Director, Alexina Jones—and the Bard Music Festival and Summerscape devoted their powerful resources to *Puccini and his World* this year, presenting, most significantly, the predecessor to *Butterfly*, *Iris* (1898), by Pietro Mascagni and Luigi Illica, the same librettist who collaborated with Puccini on *Butterfly* a few years later. *Butterfly* did not receive much attention at the festival itself; however, an important essay by Arthur Groos, "Madama Butterfly between East and West," was included in the annual scholarly publication, as well as an English translation of the production notes of Albert Carré's Paris premiere of the opera. Unfortunately Bard conflicted with Hubbard Hall, and I was unable to attend HHOT's production. The *Problematik* ruminated at the Festival was profoundly instructive, but it failed to shake me in my scepticism about Puccini as an artist, as much as I appreciated their superb performance of my favorite, *Il Tabarro*. There is too much of what I perceive as the wrong kind of manipulation in it. I'd rather turn myself over to the no less suspect hands of Shakespeare, Berlioz, Verdi, or Wagner. Theater is, after all, manipulation, and we all love it, at least civilized people. Who is to say an opera-goer is right or wrong, when he gets weepy and or squirms in his seat? This apart, I came away from my immersion in Bard with a much better understanding of and respect for his craft as a dramatist and a composer—in his case one indivisible from the other. He worked hard and with reverence towards the several generations of local composers who preceded him in his family. If his effects were occasionally

About the author

Michael Miller

Michael Miller, Editor and Publisher of *New York Arts* and *The Berkshire Review*, an

International Journal for the Arts, was trained as a classicist and art historian at Harvard and Oxford, worked in the art world for many years as a curator and dealer, and contributed reviews and articles to *Bostonian*, *Master Drawings*, *Drawing*, *Threshold*, and *North American Opera Journal*, as well as numerous articles for scholarly and popular periodicals. He has taught courses in classics, the English language, and art history at Oberlin, Rutgers, New York University, the New School, and Williams. Currently, when he is not at work on *The Berkshire Review* and *New York Arts*, he writes fiction, pursues photography, and publishes scholarly work. In 2011 he contributed an introductory essay to Leonard Freed: *The Italians* / exh. cat. *Io Amo L'Italia*, exhibition at Le Stelline, Milan, and wrote the revised section on American opera houses in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*. He is currently at work on a libretto for a new opera by Lewis Spratlan, *Midi*, an adaptation of Euripides' *Medea* set in the French West Indies, ca. 1930.

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THEATRE REVIEW: ‘Madama Butterfly,’ easy to watch Berkshire opera production

By **J. Peter Bergman** Thursday, Sep 1 Arts & Entertainment

Madama Butterfly

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Based on a play by David Belasco and a story by John Luther Long
Music by Giacomo Puccini
Directed by Jonathan Loy

“Non lo sapete insomma [In other words, you don’t know.]”



Inna Los and the chorus. Photo: Ken Howard.

No words sung by Cio-Cio San (Madame Butterfly) in the opera more succinctly sum up the problems of the story of this classic opera. The young, 15-year-old girl who commits herself to a marriage with a foreigner, adopts his religion as her own, and conforms her mode of dress and style of living to what she imagines his to be could be more unrealistically certain of anything. She has come to the marriage to Lt. Pinkerton of the U.S. Navy from a short life as a geisha, trained to please and to accept money for doing so. Her family has no wealth and is led by a religious zealot whose anger at her choices alienates her from mother, aunts, and relations of all sorts. She has only her faithful attendant, Suzuki, and her husband’s friends to rely upon after he sails away again, leaving her on her own. She has to fend off a marriage broker who sold her once to her American spouse and would sell her again for a higher fee to low-level prince. She is convinced her husband is faithful and she will remain faithful also but, in truth, she really doesn’t know much about what is going on in her own world, the world she has created for herself.

This is a beautiful love story told with extremely lovely music, thematic in almost a Wagnerian fashion with themes heard early in the opera returning as underscore or even sung for a bar or two later in the work returning us, the audience, emotionally to committed moments encountered much earlier. As constructed, the opera’s principal characters are exactly who they are when we first meet them. The men do not grow and do not change. Pinkerton is the only exception; his early cynicism has been altered first by loving admiration for his child-bride and then by his return with another, American, wife. More than three years have passed between Act One and Act Two and, in those years, Butterfly has changed a great deal. She is no longer a child. She is a woman of 18, and a troubled woman at that. She has matured. Therein lies my one principal problem with the Berkshire Opera Festival’s lovely first full production in the region.

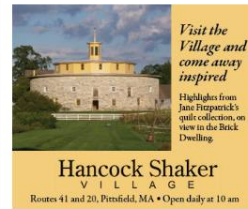
This opera has been in my head since I first heard Lida Albanese sing it at the Metropolitan when I was 5 years old. From that performance comes my strong, emotional memory of Butterfly’s suicide, something that has never been equaled for me since. Four years later, in Chicago, I saw Maria Callas create the role and, once again, her two different women, young and older, have remained with me as a standard to which I measure every Butterfly since 1955. The lyrico-Spinto



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THEATRE REVIEW: ‘Madama Butterfly,’ easy to watch Berkshire opera production |

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: **38.1K**

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **4.85K**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **35**



Berkshire Opera Festival offers a promising first act with its production of "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial

By Andrew L. Pincus

Special to The Eagle

POSTED: 08/31/2016 02:42:22 PM EDT | UPDATED: 19 DAYS AGO

PITTSFIELD — It's a brave opera company that will start up in the Berkshires, where two opera companies have folded in the last 12 years. The recently formed Berkshire Opera Festival has plunged right in with a well-sung "Madama Butterfly" that concludes a run of three performances at 7:30 p.m. Friday in the Colonial Theatre.

"Butterfly" is at once a smart and ambitious maiden effort. Puccini's opera is so beloved that audiences will come out for it, yet so dependent on a Cio-Cio-San that she can make or break a production.

Fortunately, the new troupe found its singer in Inna Los. Despite some over-the-top hysterics in the final act — this geisha grows up fast in the three years her rat of a husband, Pinkerton, is away — she commands the stage vocally and dramatically. By comparison, Jason Slayden makes Pinkerton seem more frat boy than conquering American naval officer, despite his agonies of remorse at the end.

Putting it another way, Berkshire Opera Festival is off to a promising start. If it can avoid the money trap that sank its predecessors — Berkshire Opera Company and Shaker Mountain Performing Arts Festival — it should find a ready home in the region. Plans for three productions in a season sound like a lot, but if the leaders can pull it off, bring 'em on.

The Colonial, despite its dry acoustics, proved hospitable to staged opera without amplification.

Designer Stephen Dobay's simple but effective set consists of moveable screens and a large, abstract disc like a rising sun (we're in the Land of the Rising Sun) against the back wall. Intimate scenes, such as the couple's wedding night, take place behind a screen, made translucent by John Froelich's consistently imaginative lighting. Butterfly's suicide sword hangs ominously on the face of the sun disc.

In director Jonathan Loy's otherwise inventive staging, an attempt to update the action seems to confuse it. The opera's first part, which takes place, as written, in Nagasaki in the early 1900s, is given traditional treatment with kimonos, mincing steps and frequent bowing — all stylized, with overtones of Kabuki.

The second part is transposed to postwar Nagasaki, without reference to the atomic bomb. Butterfly appears in ragged modern dress, barefoot in her poverty. (The tasteful costumes are by Charles Caine.) No longer a childlike, humble geisha, she becomes a raging, very modern wronged wife. Either staging, if consistent, would work. This double one asks you to believe that three years pass in 50 or 60.

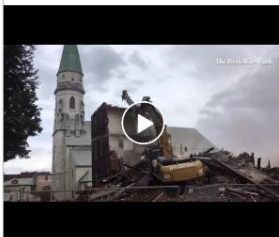
As heard in Tuesday's performance, Butterfly's big aria, "Un bel di" ("One fine day") — always a showstopper — went for the larger passions rather than tenderness or longing. A shower of petals fell as she strewed flowers in the house for her husband's return.



Soprano Inna Los commands the stage vocally and dramatically in Berkshire Opera Festival's debut production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly." By comparison, Jason Slayden makes Pinkerton more frat boy than conquering American naval officer. (Ken Howard — courtesy berkshire opera festival)

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Berkshire Opera Festival offers a promising first act with its production of "Madama Butterfly" at the Colonial - Berkshire Eagle Online

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1.95K

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67



43



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Butterfly Emerges Strong in Berkshire Opera Festival Debut

BY CHARLES GEYER ON 31 AUGUST 2016 CONCERT REVIEWS, OPERA, ROMANTIC

OPERA REVIEW: Madama Butterfly, inaugural production of the new Berkshire Opera Festival

INTERVIEW: Jonathon Loy, BOF General Director

Opera is back in the Berkshires!

The new Berkshire Opera Festival took its first bow on August 27 with its fascinating and beautiful new production of Puccini's perennially popular Madama Butterfly at the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. If first impressions are everything, a better introduction could not have been imagined.

Of course we know Butterfly well, don't we? For 112 years she has tantalized and beguiled operagoers (and shamed Western sensibilities) with her tale of innocent, exotic victimhood – the geisha with the heart of gold, used and then discarded by the callous Yankee vagabond. Too fragile to bear abandonment, she chooses death as the only expedient suited to her pain and shame.

Maybe.... Maybe not.

Butterfly Who?

In choosing Madama Butterfly as

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IN: REVIEWS

AUGUST 30, 2016

Pittsfield *Butterfly* Warrants Attention

by [TONY SCHEMMER](#)



The recently restored 1903 Colonial Theater now possess fine stage facilities and lobbies as well as a jewel box house.

Having already urged all and sundry within striking distance of Pittsfield not to miss the remaining performances of *Madama Butterfly* on August 30th and September 2nd, we now offer more reasons why.

Point one: this is a damned good production in a beautifully restored 750-seat theater, contemporaneous with the premier of the work presented. Seeing Puccini in this setting treats us to the smaller scale and intimacy of player-interaction characteristic of early performances.

Point two: This is a very superior cast of national status and the two leads are truly "singing actors," artists that can both look and sing their parts.

Finally, hoping to intrigue a public less acquainted, or even completely unfamiliar with opera, we pointed it out that with surtitles, this kind of opera is no more daunting than a foreign film. We reminded that Puccini was in fact writing popular musical theater in his day and our Broadway musical has come full circle back to opera. Though publicists "dare not speak its name," *Phantom*, *Les Miz*, *Miss Saigon* &c are sung through, from start to finish. *Ergo*, are

operas.

Let's begin with a consideration of the cast, starting with the supporting rôles. Sarah Larsen as Suzuki possesses a powerful rich mezzo and she devoured her entire rôle like a piece of cake. Eduardo Valdes delivered the substantial supporting role of Goro with a notably vibrant strong tenor. Having reviewed his performance in *Die Tote Stadt* (Odyssey Opera, Boston, 2014), it came as no surprise that Weston Hurt delivered a nuanced Sharpless with his unfailing rich baritone. We heard Benjamin Tayler's remarkably beautiful and powerful baritone alas only briefly in the cameo rôle Yamadori. But on that basis, we imagine he would be pretty fab when he has performed that *dissoluto punito*, "The Don." Credit must be due to General Director Loy (and his extensive professional associations) for corraling these recognized stalwarts with extensive national or international credits.

Enrico Lopez-Yañez's choral preparation and performance were consistently strong. The singers all came from the greater Berkshire region. And kudos to them all.

As to our two principals, Inna Los (*Butterfly*) and Jason Slayden (*Pinkerton*), we wonder if we have damned them with extravagant praise previously. Moldovan Los's exquisite movement and acting coupled with a soprano faultless throughout the entire tessitura should be less astonishing upon reviewing her extensive credits, such as *Butterfly* at Lyric Opera Chicago, and *Lù* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Truly, she owns this rôle.

While Puccini is unrelenting in his demands on *Butterfly* (one wonders if any inadequate soprano considered real *seppuku* at the end), he is much more judicious husbanding the vocal resources of the tenor lead. Slayden's striking *Pinkerton persona* seems so archetypal, we wondered what would happen with *his* opening question, "e soffitti e pareti?" In the event he handsomely delivered all the B-flats and A's sprinkled through the whiskey scene with Sharpless and the finale of Act I. And then, after Puccini's considerate respite in Act II, Slayden evinced a strong, stirring close in the beautiful trio "Io so che sue pene" and the segue into that plum tenor solo which Puccini added in his revisions, (after the premiere bomb at La Scala), "addio fiorito asil."

The only thing more expensive than opera is war. Considering the hard financial constraints a producer faces, we thought the unit set was attractive and functional. The set and costume "update" to 1960's (looked more to us like the 1950's – no matter, equally fitting) slipped by imperceptivity. We therefore attribute the update to economy rather than to directorial "concept," which so often veers into the loony. But, a nice thrust, in Act II, placing *Butterfly* in a tweed skirt and jacket was aptly jolting. After all, she had at least *planned* to abandon Shinto, and she clung to the heartbreaking deception that she was a *genuine* American wife.

A number of things don't just happen in productions. Clear and precise Italian enunciation carried across the board in this one. Vocal projection, up at least to our seats 1/3 back in the balcony came across perfectly. As director of this company's inaugural, Loy designed sensible stage blocking resulting in effortless and natural gestures, poses and stage movement.

In the pit, Brian Garman's players ran the gamut from some imported ringers from large musical centers, with a larger component recruited from the greater Berkshire region, and locally. Many had experience performing the score, some were symphonic instrumentalists unfamiliar with opera. So forging one unified ensemble was an accomplishment *per se*. The orchestral sound in this house was full, although Garman employed an orchestral reduction (to 35) with brass and woodwind resources reduced from the original scoring by Ettore Panizza in the 1910's under Puccini's direct supervision. The composer sanctioned its use for smaller theaters with smaller orchestra pits.

We detected a slight diffidence in that wonderful but challenging *allegro vigoroso* which opens the drama. These were the orchestra's first notes of the first night of the first season of a new company and we suspect that henceforth they will play even here with the dash and brio required. In any event, recovery was rapid and they played

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(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS:

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430

The Boston Musical Intelligencer

AUG 30 2016

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NEWS & FEATURES REVIEWS UPCOMING EVENTS ABOUT THE JOURNAL

IN: REVIEWS

AUGUST 28, 2016

Follow This *Butterfly*

by [TONY SCHEMMER](#)

Advisory from a far-flung correspondent:

We pray Western MA does not ape New York and Paris. New Yorkers and Parisians are, in probability, less likely to visit the Empire State building or the Eiffel Tower, in their own backyard.

But small wonders happily happen. Even in one's backyard.

For those living in Pittsfield (MA) and the surrounding Berkshires (including Tanglewoodland), one such wonder happened last night at the Colonial Theater, Pittsfield. Although time constraints force this correspondent to postpone his full account of the *Madame Butterfly* produced there by the Berkshire Opera Festival, he wants the readership to know there are two more performances on August 30th and September 2nd.

At heart an eclectic, your correspondent doesn't think there's but **one** right way to play music, or to present show. That is, we don't think "historically informed" Bach supplants Bach on contemporary instruments. We don't think the astonishingly brilliant Baz Luhrmann *La Bohème* on Broadway was "wrong" while the Metropolitan Opera's glorious *Bohème* by Zeffirelli is "right." In fact, we suggest that a Met *Butterfly* live, or in its own HD broadcast are distinctly different, complementary experiences. We don't think a *Madama Butterfly* in a gargantuan house precludes one on a smaller scale where the experience is quite different because of the immediacy.

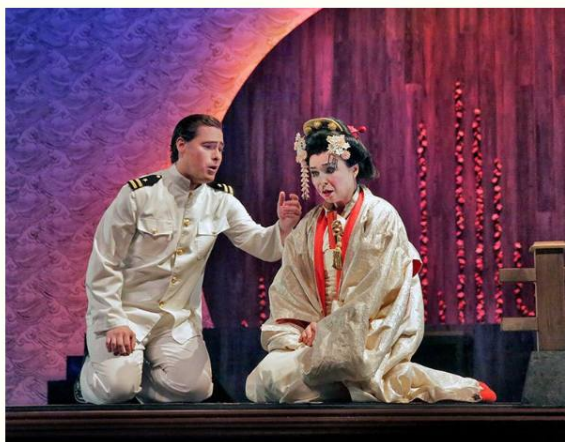
So here in a beautifully restored jewel box, authentically of our own Gilded Age (1903), plays an intense, immediate, and gripping *Butterfly* (premiered February 17th, 1904), very much recreating the effect of Puccini's works when they played in comparable theaters. That is to say, Puccini's shows made popular musical theater, economically viable, and often in physically immediate surrounds, as here at the Colonial.

With this early advisory, we also wish to point out that surtitles (in this case excellently projected center stage) render opera no more daunting to a general audience than a foreign film on Netflix. Just go. *Les Miz* is sung from start to finish too, you know.

And finally, until tomorrow, be assured there is none of the laughably proverbial audio/visual (ideal vs. real) mismatch in performers' body type. The ill matched and worse-fated protagonist stars are interpreted here by an exquisite Inna Los as Butterfly and a dashing Jason Slayden, both evoking vintage Hollywood gods. Truly, Los and Slayden are singers. They are actors. They are lookers.

Dear Readers, do not fail this intrepid company in their intrepid inaugural production. Be there. Or, be damned. (oops, wrong opera.)

Juicy details to follow.



Jason Slayden and Inna Los


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It's Un Bel Di As We Welcome The Berkshire Opera Festival

By Lisa Green

Since the Berkshire Opera Company folded in 2008, opera productions have been conspicuously absent from the performing arts scene in the Berkshires. So when Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman, both accomplished opera directors and conductors, announced plans to form the Berkshire Opera Festival, it wasn't only opera aficionados that applauded the venture. While the principals in the cast of the first production, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, come from elsewhere, Loy and Garman didn't have to go far to cast and hire many of the chorus, musicians and creative team members.



"I'm very happy to say that about 90 percent of our chorus is from the area, and nearly half of the orchestra is local," says Garman. "There's such a wealth of talent in the Berkshires that it would have been foolish not to tap into it. Employing local musicians whenever possible is central to the vision of Berkshire Opera Festival."

The 2016 inaugural festival season opens on Aug. 27. You'll appreciate it even

more knowing who some of the locals are — on stage, behind it, and in the pit.

Beckie Kravetz, Wigs and Makeup Designer

Kravetz (in photo, above) is a world-renowned theatrical mask maker, which is how she started in the business, but through that segued into designing wigs and makeup. In 1988, she became the resident mask maker for the Los Angeles Opera, where she also worked as a principal makeup artist and assistant wig maker. Now living in Cummington, she's missed working on opera productions. "I had a connection with an LA Opera colleague who had worked with Jonathon Loy at the Met (Opera Company), so when I read about the new company I introduced myself to him. Coming back to work in my own backyard is an incredible thrill."

International costume designer Charles Caine, a 20-year Met veteran (and Egremont resident), is also working on this production. He had done a previous "Butterfly" with another wig and makeup designer, Steven Horak, who had a big wig stock, and those will be put to use in the Berkshire production. So Kravetz is primarily focusing on the makeup. While Kravetz often does dramatic, stylized painting for opera singers, she says Loy wants a subtle version of the Butterfly look, so the makeup will be only slightly dramatized.

The biggest challenge, she says, is that everybody is on stage in the first 15 minutes of the opera. "That's a lot of people to get into wigs and makeup before the show," she says. Fortunately, she has two assistants — Horak and an intern — and she'll also be doing a training session with the cast to show them how to get started on their makeup. "Cat's-eye (liner) works well as Asian eye makeup, and that's really in style right now, so a lot of people know how to do it."

Steve Hassmer, Chorus and Uncle Yakuside

The tenor, who lives in Great Barrington, has a small part in *Madama Butterfly's* story, as the uncle in the wedding scene. Hassmer's degree was in music education, but he's done more performing than teaching; he was in a national tour of *My Fair Lady* and worked on cruise ships for a while (a "survival job," he calls it).

"After my wife finished dental school, we moved back east and I've been a stay-at-home dad, but in



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140

Review

The Butterfly of Pittsfield

August 29, 2016 1 Comment



There are a lot of great things about living in western Massachusetts, but a plethora of places to see live opera is not one of them. The new Berkshire Opera Festival, based in Pittsfield, is trying to change that. Their ambitious and professional production of *Madama Butterfly*, which opened on Saturday, suggests that their arrival is a welcome one.

The surprisingly beautiful Colonial Theatre seats 700 and is acoustically excellently suited for this endeavor (it was formerly a touring theater for acts ranging from Sarah Bernhardt to the Ziegfeld Follies). Company General Director Jonathon Loy's production begins with an extremely traditional Act 1, full of kimonos and screens, belied only by the stark, flat surfaces of Stephen Dobay's set. Loy and Dobay have gift for tableaux, and use the scrims in the screens and some falling flower petals to beautiful effect. It is, visually, a handsome and polished production. The backdrop hints at mid-century modernism, which comes to the foreground in Act 2. Butterfly sheds her elaborate geisha-wear in favor of a Western-style suit and hairstyle, though Suzuki has not followed her. (The costumes are by Charles Caine.) This shows her dedication to Pinkerton and to American culture in vivid fashion, but I think the political angle is somewhat unexamined? Japanese-American relations in the 1960s were, to say the least, different from those in the original setting of 1904. The production never goes there and it's an uncomfortable hole. This isn't a production with politics on its mind, though, Loy's direction is best in the detailed, careful staging of the dramatic scenes such as the love duet and the Sharpless-Butterfly scene in Act 2.



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DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **23**



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Home-grown Berkshire Opera Festival sprouts at the Colonial Theatre

By Sharon Smullen

Special to The Eagle

POSTED: 08/25/2016 03:40:28 PM EDT | UPDATED: 26 DAYS AGO



Rather than hire an orchestra, Berkshire Opera Festival co-founder and "Butterfly" conductor Brian Garman has assembled an ensemble of freelance musicians from Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut in the hope, he says, of building long-term relationships and preserving creative control. (Jonathan Loy — courtesy berkshire opera festival)

PITTSFIELD — Opera fans more used to applauding a movie screen or catching the southbound train from Wassic now need venture no further than Pittsfield's Colonial Theatre for a fully staged live opera experience in a grand auditorium.

On Saturday, Moldovan soprano Inna Los will take the stage as Cio Cio San in Giacomo Puccini's 1904 masterpiece "Madama Butterfly," the inaugural production of the Berkshire Opera Festival. Additional performances are on Tuesday and next Friday, all at 7:30 p.m..

During a production break in the Colonial's lobby lounge, festival cofounders Brian Garman, artistic director and conductor, and Jonathon Loy, general director and stage director, described how they first met at Pittsburgh Opera 18 years ago, where Garman was a principal conductor and Loy a college intern.

"We shared the same sensibilities and tastes in singing and production," said Loy.

In 2014, Garman moved from Seattle to New York, where Loy was guest stage director and member of the Metropolitan Opera staging staff. Those were uncertain times, Loy recalled, "and we said, maybe now is the time to think about what we want to do together."

He invited Garman to the Berkshires where Loy has spent every summer with his family since childhood. "I showed him around and he immediately fell in love with the place," said Loy.

With no home-grown opera since the Berkshire Opera Company's demise in 2009, they decided to return fully produced live opera to the Berkshires.

"Madama Butterfly" tells the story of an arranged marriage between Japanese geisha Cio Cio San and Pinkerton, an American naval officer who subsequently abandons her; and her unswerving faith that he will one day return and take her to America.

"There's a reason why 'Butterfly's' popularity has endured over the past 112 years," Garman explained. "You can't not fall in love with the story and the music, and it's a masterpiece dramatically. I'd be hard pressed to imagine a more sympathetic heroine than Cio Cio San in any opera."

The roster of principal singers includes several Met veterans and features Los in a signature role she has performed from Chicago to Las Vegas and in Europe; Jason Slayden as Pinkerton; Weston Hurt at Sharpless; Sarah Larsen as Suzuki; and Eduardo Valdes as Goro. Berkshire bass baritone John Cheek plays the Bonze, with Benjamin Taylor as Yamadori, Katherine Maysek as Kate

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Brian Garman conducting. Photo: Andrew Ousley

Butterfly in the Berkshires

AUGUST 25, 2016 / ADMIN / 0 COMMENTS

The Berkshire Opera Festival, the brainchild of general director Jonathon Loy and artistic director Brian Garman, opened earlier this month with recitals at venues in Lenox and Stockbridge, MA. On Saturday, August 27, the company presents its first fully staged opera production, *Madama Butterfly*, starring Inna Los, Jason Slayden and Weston Hurt, at Pittsfield's Colonial Theater. Recently, followkellow.com spoke with Garman and Loy about their company's maiden voyage.

BK: With the Berkshire Opera Festival just days away from its first performance of *Butterfly*, I'd love to know how the company came together.

JONATHON LOY: Brian and I have known each other for eighteen years. We met in Pittsburgh, where he was a conductor and I was in school and got myself an internship at Pittsburgh Opera. We wanted to do something together and stayed in touch as our careers grew. In 2014, Brian was returning to New York from Seattle, where he was director of the Seattle Young Artist Program. I was in my fifth season on the staging staff of the Metropolitan Opera. Things were up in the air at the Met. We thought it was a good time to rethink things. I had done a production with the old Berkshire Opera company [which existed from 1985 to 2009]. It's the richest cultural landscape up here, but in the summer, it had a void to fill. I brought Brian up and showed him around the Berkshires, and he fell in love with it. And we said, "Okay—let's incorporate a company!" Our goal is to bring folks from all across the state to the Berkshires and use it as the best

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I am the author of five biographies of prominent women in the arts, including the recently published [CAN I GO NOW?: THE LIFE OF SUE MENGERS](#), [HOLLYWOOD'S FIRST SUPERAGENT](#) (a *NEW YORK TIMES* Culture Best Seller of 2015) and [PAULINE KAEI: A LIFE IN THE DARK](#) (a *NEW YORK TIMES* Notable Book of 2011). My other books: [ETHEL](#).

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Young People Help Set The Stage For New Opera Company

by Adam Frenier
AUGUST 23, 2016
PITTSFIELD, Mass.



A new opera company in Berkshire County is getting ready for its first-ever performance. The Berkshire Opera Festival has turned to some young people with an interest in theatrical production for help. And they're getting their hands dirty as they prepare for a production of Madama Butterfly.

Sprawled out on the stage of a Berkshire Community College theater, some former students are dabbing away at a huge backdrop. With a light blue background, they are stenciling, then painting by hand about 600 Japanese waves, in more of an ocean blue, across the 24 by 36 foot sheet.

Former BCC student Kevin Lallatin said it's been quite an undertaking: first they had to prepare the canvas, and then turn it into a big piece of graph paper before starting to paint.

"We then just lined up the stencil on the inside and stenciled, and then moved down to the next square, stenciled over it, down to the next square, stenciled over it," Lallatin said.

This will be the main backdrop for the Berkshire Opera Festival's production of Madama Butterfly.

One of the group's co-founders, Jonathon Loy, said they approached the college about using its set shop since it would be quiet during the summer months. He said they've been thrilled

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BERKSHIRE OPERA FESTIVAL: "MADAMA BUTTERFLY"

August 27 2016 - September 2 2016

With the Tanglewood Festival presenting eleven weeks of topnotch concerts less than ten miles away, this new outfit looks to distinguish itself with a mission to present fully staged opera. In Jonathon Loy's production, Puccini's verismo classic unfolds against the background of the Japanese economic miracle of the nineteen-sixties; Brian Garman conducts.

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Opera returns to the Berkshires

Berkshire Opera Festival opens with "Madama Butterfly"

JOSEPH DALTON, CLASSICAL NOTES Updated 4:33 pm, Thursday, August 11, 2016

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IMAGE 1 OF 2
Brian Garman

Opera is returning to the Berkshires, fully staged and with orchestra. Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman intend for it to continue as a permanent part of every summer season.

Loy and Garman are the founders of the new Berkshire Opera Festival, which debuts on Saturday, Aug. 27, at the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, with a three-performance run of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly."

The venture has been in the works for several years and arrives with what's reported to be strong community backing, as well as the know-how that comes from the co-founders extensive experience in the field. Loy, who serves as general director, has been on the artistic staff of the Metropolitan Opera. And Garman, the artistic director, has held conducting posts at the Seattle and New York City Operas, among many other companies.

Opera does seem a natural addition to the flourishing artist environment of Berkshire County. "The most culturally rich place for the summer in the entire country" is how Loy describes it.

Yet opera is probably the most expensive of art forms to produce, since it combines the mechanics of theater with an often sizeable compliment of stage performers plus the support of an orchestra. As to how the genre is generally faring, national arts news either hails the explosion of newly written operas and the crowds who attend HD broadcasts, or bemoans the financial struggles of companies large and small, starting, in fact, at the very top with the Met.

The local scene has had its share of ups and downs. Eight years ago, the curtain fell for the last time on the Berkshire Opera. The closure came after 24 summer seasons that included many artistic distinctions, but nearly constant financial struggles.

Loy and Garman hesitate to speak at any length as to what specific lessons they've gleaned from that company's demise. "We've been given warnings, advice and recommendations," says Loy.

More Information

"A number of people are still smarting from the closure of the old company, and that's understandable," admits Garman.

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180

Costumes take center stage during Berkshire theater season

Local designers dish on how quick costume changes happen and what inspires them

By Sharon Smullen >>Special to The Eagle

POSTED: 08/12/2016 10:03:28 AM EDT | UPDATED: ABOUT A MONTH AGO



Nehassaku deGannes' Lady Davenant costume in 'Or,' at Shakespeare & Company, hides two additional costumes under it — a trick used to make quick costume changes go smoothly. (Photo by Ava G. Lindermaier)

Nothing catches your eye in a theater production quite like the costumes, which immediately establish the scene, era and tone of the setting, and say volumes about a character's personality before a word is spoken.

The process of clothing actors in the Berkshires falls to a cadre of professionals with years of experience behind them.

PERIOD PIECES

At Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, costume maven Govane Lohbauer sits in a spacious, air-conditioned shop "the envy of every designer who comes through here," she said, when compared to the "little rabbit hutch rooms" they typically inhabit. Around her, members of her 15-person crew industriously turn out costumes for three of the nine productions presented this summer on the company's four stages.

Lohbauer, a veteran of 37 seasons at Shakespeare & Company, came to the world of theater costumes accidentally.

"I started sewing when I was 11 and never stopped," said the former third-grade teacher. "My daughter decided she was going to be in the theater and dragged me along."

Along with designing three shows a season, she runs a full rental business with four rooms of well-organized costume racks. Stock includes little black dresses, a "Dynasty Collection" of sequins, glitter and enormous shoulders, fairies, shoes, crowns and "an inexplicable rack" of rarely used wedding dresses. "They do seem to breed in the night," she mused.

"Our budgets are so tiny we depend heavily on the stock," she explained, as do renters from as far as Boston and New York.

Still, half the costumes each summer are built from scratch, including all the costumes for Liz Duffy Adams' historical play "Or" — which runs through Sept. 4 at the Tina Packer Playhouse — where two of the three actors play three roles each.

From her experience with the annual spring education tour, Lohbauer was used to designing for quick changes.

"You make compromises to start with," she explained. "[Actors] wear the same shoes, stockings, pants and undergarments throughout the whole play, and you plan costume changes before you design the show."

Only then does she talk with the director about time and place

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1



Lenox: Tea & Talk with Berkshire Opera directors

The Berkshire Eagle

POSTED: 07/27/2016 12:30:14 PM EDT | UPDATED: ABOUT A MONTH AGO

Directors and cast members of Berkshire Opera Festival's "Madama Butterfly" will participate in a Tea and Talk at Ventfort Hall Mansion and Gilded Age Museum, 104 Walker St., at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 2.

The program is in advance of the performances at The Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield for the premiere production on Aug. 27, 30 and Sept. 2.

General Director and Stage Director Jonathon Loy and Artistic Director and Conductor Brian Garman will discuss all aspects of the opera and where it falls in the operatic repertoire in order to give the work a perspective.

Tickets cost \$24 for advance reservations and members, and \$29 the day of the event. Reservations are recommended as seating is limited.

For information or reservations, call 413-637-3206 or visit gildedage.org.

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The first Berkshire Opera Festival opens its doors with Madama Butterfly

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5 August 2016 By gramilano — Leave a Comment

The Berkshires in Massachusetts is about to welcome the **Berkshire Opera Festival** which aims "to entertain and enrich the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds throughout the Berkshire region by providing accessible and affordable performances of a broad range of operas with the highest artistic standards". No mean task in 2016, but its founders, **Jonathon Loy** and **Brian Garman**, are capable and confident.

Certainly, there is Tanglewood and Jacob's Pillow, so the area certainly isn't artistically barren during the summer but, I asked Loy, is the Berkshire Opera Festival filling a gap?

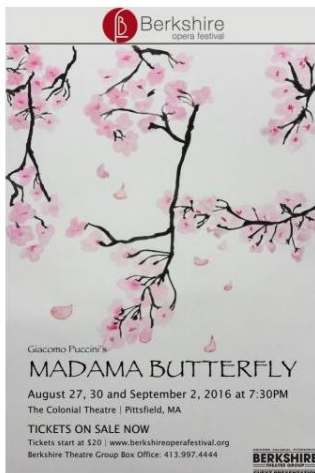
" Yes, Berkshire Opera Festival is absolutely filling a void in the community. There has been no professional, fully-producing opera company here since 2009.

Garman adds,

" And there's a real desire in the community to have a fully-producing opera company in the Berkshires again. In such a culturally rich area, Berkshire Opera Festival should be a welcome addition.

Jonathon Loy is BOF's General Director, Co-Founder and Stage Director of the company's first production, *Madama Butterfly*, and Brian Garman is its Artistic Director, Co-Founder and will conduct *Butterfly*. That's quite a lot of hats.

" Yes – says Loy – men of many hats! The disadvantage of multiple roles is the lack of time in the day to accomplish everything that always needs to be attended to, but the advantage is making sure that everything is as we believe it should be to bring opera back to the Berkshires at the highest artistic level.



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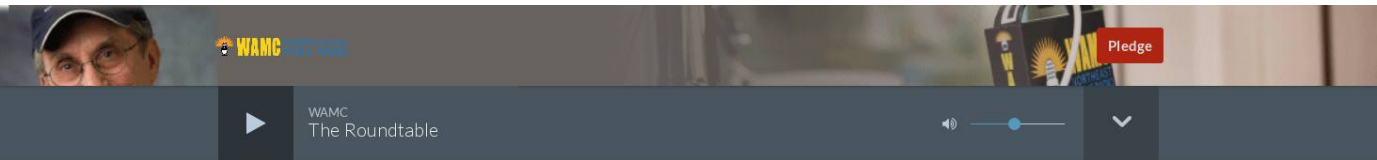
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(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **4.52K**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **28**

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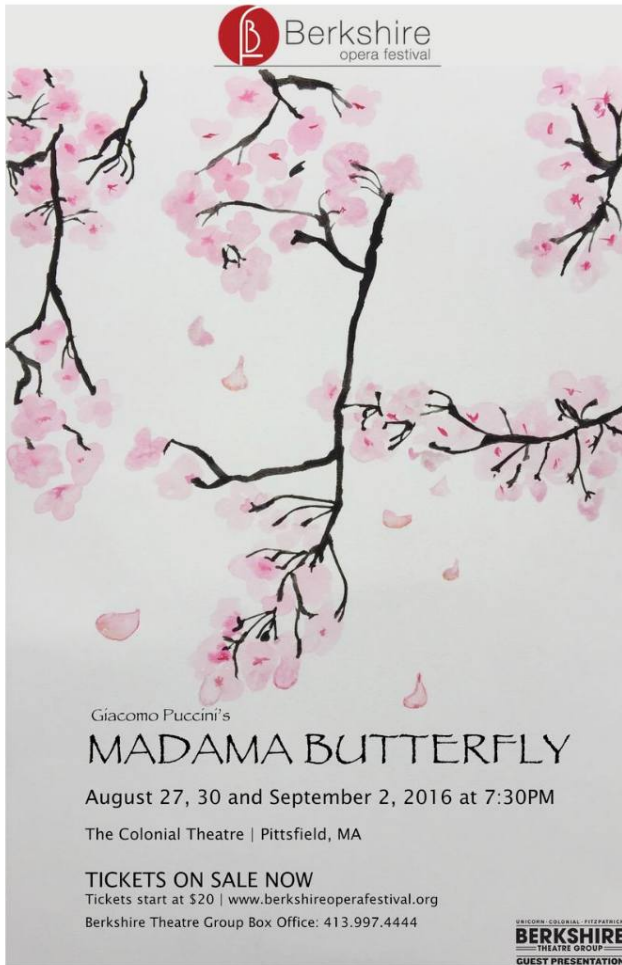
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Opera Festival Looks To Add To Berkshire Cultural Scene

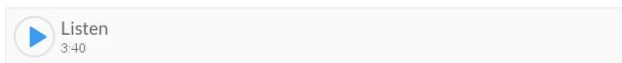
By JIM LEVULIS • AUG 3, 2016

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AUG 3 2016

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(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **937**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **68**



86





Courtesy photo

Brian Garman is the artistic director of the Berkshire Opera Festival.

Berkshire Opera Festival Debuts in August

By Stephen Dravis

iBerkshires Staff

01:53AM / Tuesday, August 02, 2016

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PITTSFIELD, Mass. — Berkshire County offers summer visitors a world-renowned symphony, Tony Award-winning theater and important works of art from the Renaissance to the contemporary.

The region truly has it all ... almost.

Actually, there is at least one hole in the county's arts scene, a hole that Jonathan Loy and Brian Garman are aiming to fill.

"Absolutely, the Berkshires are the most culturally rich place in the country," Loy said recently. "For there not to be opera here is unfortunate and maybe even a problem.

"Opera is an art form that deserves to be heard and seen and supported. By bringing fully produced opera back, what we're doing is serving a very specific niche that needs to be filled."

Enter the Berkshire Opera Festival, which Loy and Garman co-founded in 2014. The BOF's debut season begins Wednesday, Aug. 10, with the first of two recitals in Lenox and Stockbridge and culminates in a fully staged production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly," at Pittsfield's Colonial Theatre on three nights starting Saturday, Aug. 27.

Loy, a guest director on the staging staff at New York's Metropolitan Opera, is the BOF's general director. The Philadelphia native is a longtime seasonal resident of the Berkshires, having grown up spending summers with his aunt and uncle in West Stockbridge.

"I consider myself part of the community," he said. "I've been coming here since I was born."

He has known Garman, the festival's artistic director, for 18 years. The pair met at the Pittsburgh Opera, where Loy was an intern and Garman was the principal conductor.

"We hit it off then and always spoke about doing something together," Loy said. "We shared the same artistic tastes and ideals."

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Berkshire Opera Festival Debuts in August / iBerkshires.com - The Berkshires online guide to events, news and Berkshire County community information.

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: **AUG 2 2016 178K**

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **1.22K**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **51**



140



Tickets to Berkshire Opera Festival's 2016 Summer Season Now on Sale

April 26 10:58 2016 by Opera News Desk

Berkshire Opera Festival's co-founders, Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman, have announced that tickets are on sale now for song recitals that will fill out the festival's 2016 summer season. Two programs will be presented, and general admission tickets for each are priced at \$30. They can be ordered through the Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF) website, www.berkshireoperafestival.org, or by calling BOF at (413) 213-6622.

The first program, Breaking Down Barriers, will be performed at Ventfort Hall in Lenox on Wednesday, August 10 at 7:30pm. Featuring songs by Boston's own Amy Beach, Cécile Chaminade, Ethel Smyth, and others, the recital highlights works by female composers of Giacomo Puccini's time whose music was largely overlooked during their lifetimes.

The second program, The "Unknown" Puccini, will be presented at Saint James Place in Great Barrington on Tuesday, August 16 at 7:30pm. It features songs Puccini wrote for voice and piano, and will be an interesting treat for those who know him only as a composer of opera. Both recitals will be performed by cast members of BOF's Madama Butterfly, along with a few very special guests.

Artistic Director Brian Garman remarked, "We're delighted to present these song recitals in our return to Ventfort Hall and our debut at Saint James Place. The programs will feature some familiar tunes alongside wonderful songs that have been unjustly neglected through the years."

These recitals complement BOF's inaugural production of Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly, which will receive three performances at The Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield. It premieres Saturday, August 27, with subsequent performances on Tuesday, August 30, and Friday, September 2. All performances begin at 7:30pm. For tickets, casting, and all other information, visit www.berkshireoperafestival.org.

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Tickets to Berkshire Opera Festival's 2016 Summer Season Now on Sale

APR 26 2016

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: 3.44M

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: 10.7K

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: 78

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BERKSHIRE ON STAGE and SCREEN

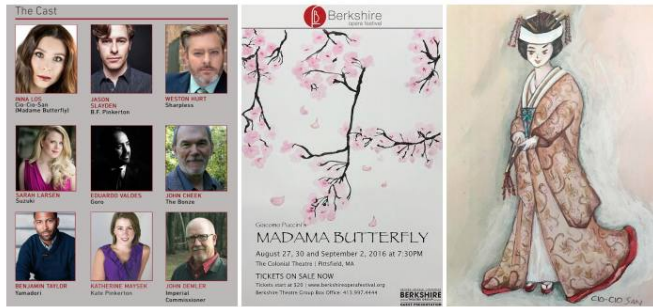
From the Berkshires to Broadway and Beyond

Photo: Scott Barrow

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Berkshire Opera Festival founders discuss their vision for “Madama Butterfly”

Larry Murray / May 16, 2016



News about Berkshire Opera Festival's inaugural production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at The Colonial Theatre. Jonathan Loy and Brian Garman fill in the blanks for us by *Larry Murray*

Opera lovers all across the region are full of nervous anticipation – and a million questions – about the upcoming debut of the Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF). Opera lovers have been securing their tickets for the new company's inaugural production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The popular opera will receive three performances this summer at the historic Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield, premiering Saturday, August 27, 2016, with subsequent performances Tuesday, August 30, and Friday, September 2. All performances begin at 7:30pm. Tickets are priced from \$20 to \$98, and can be ordered through BOF's website, www.berkshireoperafestival.org, or by calling the Berkshire Theatre Group box office at (413) 997-4444.

BOF General Director Jonathon Loy, who also serves as stage director, commented, "We're very excited to open Berkshire Opera Festival for business at last, and to share all our company has to offer with the community and beyond. I am thrilled to be directing the first fully-produced opera to be presented in the Berkshires in years." The production is conducted by Artistic Director Brian Garman. "Butterfly is a perennial favorite, and for good reason," Garman remarked. "A timeless love story, and heartbreakingly beautiful music sung by a world-class cast – I can't think of a better way to launch Berkshire Opera Festival."

The opera features Moldovan soprano Inna Los in the title role. From the Metropolitan Opera to Deutsche Oper Berlin to the Wiener Staatsoper, she has sung around the globe to great acclaim, and her performances of Puccini's doomed geisha have enjoyed success worldwide. Tenor Jason Slayden, recognized for his stirring portrayals of many Verdi and Puccini roles, sings Pinkerton. Reprising a

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BERKSHIRE ON STAGE and SCREEN

MAY 16 2016

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: **21.1K**

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **2.69K**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **35**



250

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30 July 2016

ARTS IN ACTION: Berkshire Opera Festival brings Grand Opera to the Berkshire Region of Western Massachusetts with 2016 Festival production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*



It was said by the first Chancellor of unified Germany Otto von Bismarck—and repeated but not, as has sometimes been suggested, originated by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber in *Evita*—that 'politics is the art of the possible.' In this era of imperiled public funding for the Performing Arts, aging audiences, and short attention spans, what, then, is opera? Just as it was when the genre-initiating scores of Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi were first performed in the late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries, opera is the art of the beyond possible—neither the impossible nor Ivor Novello's 'land of Might-Have-Been,' that is, but what can be. Harnessing the power of what opera can be and what opera can mean to a community is central to the mission of **Berkshire Opera Festival**, an initiative that aims to build upon the momentum established by Berkshire Theatre Group since its inception in 2010 by bringing world-class but accessible and affordable opera to the Berkshire region of Western Massachusetts. With programming including recitals and an Opera Talk presented by eminent connoisseur and industry insider **Cori Ellison**, the 2016 Festival culminates in late August and September with BOF's inaugural mainstage opera production, a staging of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* conducted and directed by BOF Artistic and General Directors and Co-Founders **Brian Garman** and **Jonathon Loy**.

In advance of the performances of *Madama Butterfly*, BOF's objectives will be furthered by a pair of intriguing recitals, both of which will introduce singers from the *Madama Butterfly* cast, as well as special guests. On Wednesday, 10 August, the Festival will present *Breaking Down Barriers: Songs by Female Composers of Puccini's Time* in Ventfort Hall Mansion in Lenox. Featuring passionate performances of Art Song repertory composed by unjustly-neglected *veriste* of Puccini's generation, this performance will confirm that the creation of red-blooded Italian melodies is not solely a gentleman's undertaking. A week later, on Tuesday, 16 August, Puccini's own under-explored Art Songs seize the spotlight in *The "Unknown Puccini": A Recital of Songs by Puccini*, performed at First Congregational Church in Stockbridge. With General Admission tickets priced at only \$30, these budget-friendly recitals offer Manhattan-quality musical adventures that do not demand that attendees be Wall Street trust-fund babies. Tickets for both recitals can be purchased [online](#) or by phoning 413.213.6622.

Imaginatively brought to life by a team of talented, experienced artists including scenic designer **Stephen K. Dobay** and costume designer **Charles Caine**, BOF's production of *Madama Butterfly* brings an ensemble worthy of Milan's Teatro alla Scala, where the opera had its bafflingly unsuccessful premiere in 1904, to the stage of Pittsfield's beautiful and historic Colonial Theatre. The Cio-Cio San of celebrated Moldovan soprano **Inna Los** will fall victim to the charisma of the Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of tenor **Jason Slayden**, and the couple's drama will play out under the benevolent watch of the Sharpless of baritone **Weston Hurt**. Mezzo-soprano **Sarah Larsen** will portray Cio-Cio San's devoted maid Suzuki, and the meddlesome marriage broker Goro will benefit from the electric stage presence of tenor **Eduardo Valdes**, a Metropolitan Opera stalwart with nearly 600 MET performances to his credit. Bass-baritone **John Cheek** will pronounce Lo zio Bonzo's thunderous denunciation of his delicate niece, and baritone **Benjamin C. Taylor** will woo her as the wily Yamadori. Mezzo-soprano **Katherine Maysek** will depict Pinkerton's 'vera sposa americana' Kate, and to Pittsfield native baritone **John Demler II** commissario imperiale's utterances will be entrusted. Performances are scheduled for 27 and 30 August and 2 September, and tickets range in price from \$20 to \$98. An evening of top-quality, heartbreaking Italian opera in Pittsfield can be savored for the cost of dinner at the neighborhood trattoria! Tickets for *Madama Butterfly* can be purchased [online](#) or by phoning 413.997.4444.

One of the greatest challenges facing opera companies, particularly American opera companies, is the necessity of attracting new audiences to ensure the genre's continued success without alienating the aficionados whose dedication has carried opera through the dark days of economic recessions and waning governmental support. With the myriad of instant-gratification distractions of today's digital-media environment, a critical component of recruiting the next generation of opera lovers is overcoming the lingering stigma of opera's perceived elitism. Talk is cheap, but, without compromising the integrity of performances and productions, opera can be, too. Committed to bringing opera that is 'of the people, for the people, and by the people' in the best Lincolnian sense to Western Massachusetts, Berkshire Opera Festival is a paramount model of opera as the art of what can be.



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ARTS IN ACTION: Greensboro Opera to welcome 2017 with new production of Bizet's *Carmen*



Who needs fireworks and champagne to celebrate the start of 2017 when **Greensboro Opera** offers Triad audiences a new production of Georges Bizet's 1875 masterpiece *Carmen*?

Assembling a cast of singers who sound as handsome as they look, Greensboro Opera's Artistic Director **David Holley** again brings Grand Opera—to a genuinely grand scale—to the Gate City. Featuring mezzo-soprano **Sandra Piques Eddy**, the charismatic heroine in Greensboro Opera's 2015 production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, in the title rôle, baritone and Eddy's fellow veteran of The Metropolitan Opera **David Pershall** as Escamillo, tenor **Dinyar Vania**, the dashing Alfredo in Opera Roanoke's 2016 production of *La traviata*, as Don José, soprano and recent Lyric Opera of Chicago alumna **Melinda Whittington** as Micaëla, mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Foley Davis**, Suzuki in Piedmont Opera's *Madama Butterfly*, as Mercédès, and bass-baritone **Donald Hartmann**, the hilarious Don Magnifico in Greensboro Opera's *La Cenerentola*, as Zuniga, this *Carmen* is certain to meet both the musical and the dramatic requirements of Bizet's perennially-popular score. Yale faculty member and acclaimed maestro and vocal pedagogue **Ted Taylor** will conduct. ¡Olé!

Performances are scheduled for 7:30 PM EST on Friday, 13 January, and 2:00 PM EST on Sunday, 15 January 2017, in UICG Auditorium [formerly Aycock Auditorium] on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

To learn more about the cast and production, click on the graphic above. To purchase tickets, please click [here](#) or phone Triad Stage at 336.272.0160.

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Berkshire Region of
Western Massachusetts**
(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: **2.36K**
**with 2016 Festival
production of Puccini's
Madama Butterfly** (EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **508**

JUL 30 2016

DOMAIN AUTHORITY:

24



23

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About the author

Michael Miller

Michael Miller, Editor and Publisher of *New York Arts* and *The Berkshire Review*, an International Journal for the Arts, was trained as a classicist and art historian at Harvard and Oxford, worked in the art world for many years as a curator and dealer, and contributed reviews and articles to *Bostonia*, *Master Drawings*, *Drawing*, *Threshold*, and *North American Opera Journal*, as well as numerous articles for scholarly and popular periodicals. He has taught courses in classics, the English language, and art history at Oberlin, Rutgers, New York University, the New School, and Williams. Currently, when he is not at work on *The Berkshire Review* and *New York Arts*, he writes fiction, pursues photography, and publishes scholarly work. In 2011 he contributed an introductory essay to Leonard Freed: *The Italians* / exh. cat. *Io Amo L'Italia*, exhibition at Le Stellite, Milan, and wrote the revised section on American opera houses in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*. He is currently at work on a libretto for a new opera by Lewis Spratlan, *Midi*, an adaptation of Euripides' *Medea* set in the French West Indies, ca. 1930.

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The Berkshire Opera Festival: an Important New Cultural Resource to Make its Debut in Late August. Its Co-Founders, Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman Tell Michael Miller All About It.

by MICHAEL MILLER • JULY 27, 2016 • PRINT-FRIENDLY



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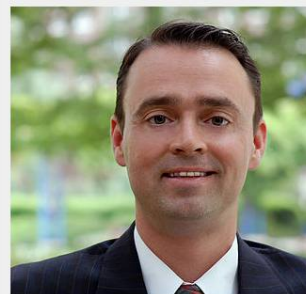


Jonathon Loy

Opera has been a cherished part of musical life in the Berkshires for many years, and its force extended far beyond the region. Britten's *Peter Grimes* was premiered at Tanglewood in 1946. The county had its own opera company between 1985 and 2009 in the Berkshire Opera Company, as serious one, which performed obscure classical works and premiered new operas. Tanglewood reached its operatic height under James Levine's leadership, when it offered, every summer, outstanding productions of operas by the Tanglewood Fellows with world-class stage directors and designers and impressive concert performances with the BSO and distinguished casts, often drawn from the Metropolitan Opera, where Maestro Levine was Artistic Director until earlier this year. Alas the Berkshire Opera Company shut down its operations, and James Levine has departed.

The current truncated concert performances of over-familiar operas can hardly be taken seriously.

Now two seasoned, enterprising professionals in the opera world has recognized this serious gap in our cultural life and have set in motion an ambitious plan to fill it. The Berkshire Opera Festival, which will present its first season in late August and early September of this year. Jonathon Loy, General Director and Co-Founder is a Guest Director on the staging staff at The Metropolitan Opera and a 2002 OPERA America Fellowship winner. Brian Garman, Artistic Director and Co-Founder, is a distinguished conductor, who worked at the Seattle Opera between 2009 and 2014 in the pit and as Music Director of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program. As you will learn in this podcast, both know the aesthetics, mechanics, and business of opera from top to bottom, and show every sign of creating and institution that will endure and be highly appreciated in the Berkshires.



Brian Garman

Their first production is Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, with a first-rate cast, including Inna Loos as Cio-Cio-San, Jason Slayden as B. F. Pinkerton, and Weston Hurt as Sharpless. The chorus and orchestra consist mostly of local singers and musicians. Maestro Garman will conduct the

(EST.) MONTHLY VISITS: **1.78K**

(EST.) COVERAGE VIEWS: **227**

DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **35**



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DOMAIN AUTHORITY: **10**

Premiere of Berkshire Opera Festival

JULY 26, 2016 IN REGIONAL OPERA 2016

Berkshire Opera Festival premieres with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

As part of OperaMetro's seasonal regional outreach, I talked to Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman, co-founders of the new Berkshire Opera Festival, which resides in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The Festival opens its doors in late August with a fresh new production of *Madama Butterfly* and promises of more to come in future summers.

Time scheduling pressures being what they are for us these days, the interview is formatted as an open discussion, even though their responses are to OM's emailed questions. But imagine that we are sitting together far away from the urban swelter of late July in a cool shaded grove in the Berkshire Mountains. I believe the freshly made lemonade is coming.

