

EMI recorded *Madama Butterfly* in September and October 1959 in Rome, reuniting the two stars of the 1956 recording of *La Bohème*, Victoria de los Angeles and Jussi Björling. It was to be the last complete opera that Jussi Björling recorded, and the heart condition that would end his life at the age of just 49 in 1960 was already apparent. He collapsed during one recording session of the act 1 love duet and needed several days to recover before he was able to continue. Yet listening to this recording you might never know. Björling's singing is carefree, thoroughly Italianate in style, and commits to disc a Pinkerton that you want to listen to again and again. He is passionate and committed in the love duet, and rather than being callous or calculating, his Pinkerton simply doesn't think about the consequences of his actions. EMI's engineers did better than anyone else at capturing the full range and beauty of Björling's voice and we are fortunate that he was able to record a role that he had not sung on stage since 1939.

Victoria de los Angeles is an ideal Butterfly. The Spanish soprano sang a wide variety of roles on stage including Carmen, Mimì, Marguerite, and Elisabeth, but for Butterfly her light and smooth tone is suitably youthful and infatuated yet it has plenty of power when needed. By act 3 de los Angeles gives us a fully-rounded picture of Butterfly's tragedy, aching with sorrow. Few have sung the role so beautifully.

Italian baritone Mario Sereni sings Sharpless. Sereni had an extensive career at the Met in New York, singing more than 500 performances between 1957 and 1984, concentrating on Italian roles and particularly on Puccini and Verdi. He is perhaps less remembered today as some other baritones but this recording demonstrates that he was a performer of the first rank who deserves to be better known.

Conductor Gabriele Santini was the artistic director of the Rome Opera and brings all the experience of that role to bear. Conducting his own orchestra he is able to bring out the wonderful details of Puccini's score to give us a Butterfly that remains one of the best ever recorded.



disc one
(53:36)

ACT ONE

1. E soffitto...e pareti (2:12)
2. Questa è la cameriera (4:08)
3. Dovunque al mondo (3:37)
4. Quale amania vi prende! (3:58)
5. Ah! Ah! quanto cielo! (3:05)
6. Gran ventura (3:34)
7. L'imperial Commissario (3:05)
8. Vieni, amor mio! (2:53)
9. Ieri son salita tutta sola (4:52)
10. Ed eccoci in famiglia (5:35)
11. Viene la sera (3:35)
12. Bimba dagli occhi pieni di malia (4:08)
13. Vogliatemi bene, un bene piccolino (7:12)

ACT TWO

14. E izaghi e Izanami (7:06)
15. Un bel di vedremo (4:38)

disc two
(73:08)

1. C'è Entrate (3:28)
2. Non lo sapete insomma (1:48)
3. A voi però giurerei fede costante (3:27)
4. Or a noi (5:53)
5. E questo e questo (2:08)
6. Che tua madre dovrà (2:43)
7. Io scendo al piano (1:45)
8. Vespa! Rospo maledetto! (1:54)
9. Una nave da guerra (2:30)
10. Scuoti quella fronda di ciliegio (4:49)
11. Or vienmi ad adornar (5:44)
12. Coro a bocca chiusa (3:01)

ACT THREE

13. Oh eh! Oh eh! Oh eh! (8:06)
14. Già il sole! (2:00)
15. Povera Butterfly! (2:46)
16. Io so che alle sue ...Oh! l'amara fragranza (3:35)
17. Addio, fiorito (1:43)
18. Glielo dirai...Premetto (2:10)
19. Che vuol da me (5:36)
20. Come una mosca prigioniera (2:56)
21. Con onor muore (5:07)

puccini

madama butterfly

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PACO 214

CAST

Cio Cio San - Victoria de los Angeles
Pinkerton - Jussi Björling
Sharpless - Mario Sereni
Suzuki - Miriam Pirazzini
Kate Pinkerton - Silvia Bertona
Goro - Piero De Palma
Il principe Yamadori - Arturo La Porta
Lo zio Bonzo - Paolo Montarsolo
Il commissario imperiale - Antonio Sacchetti
Yakusidè - Bonaldo Giaiotti
L'ufficiale del Registro - Paolo Caroli
La madre di Cio Cio San - Vera Magrini
La zia - Nina De Courson
La cugina - Silvia Bertona

Chorus and Orchestra of Rome Opera House
conducted by Gabriele Santini

Recorded September-October 1959, Rome

Stereo XR remastering by: Andrew Rose
Cover artwork: Victoria de los Angeles
as Cio Cio San

Total duration: 2hr 16:44

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