JANN PASLER

POLITICAL ANXIETIES AND MUSICAL RECEPTION: JAPONISME AND THE PROBLEM OF ASSIMILATION*

For the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* on 17 February 1904, La Scala spared no expense, hiring first-rate singers and the set-designer Lucien Jusseaume from Paris. The orchestra was enthusiastic, and gave the composer a standing ovation at the dress rehearsal. Puccini had never had such confidence in a work's success. The fiasco that followed, with so much laughter and hostility that «virtually nothing could be heard», came as a complete surprise both at home and abroad. Scholars have acknowledged problems with the score, particularly the length of the acts.[1] But as the audience behaved «anti from the very beginning», according to contemporary observers, most have blamed the disaster principally on envious rivals who may have «engineered» the response with a «claque».[2] Puccini's publisher, who encouraged this idea, may have been trying to deflect from problems with the work,[3] but Puccini concurred. «Stunned by everything that happened», he was convinced that it was «the result of a pre-prepared Dantean inferno».[4]

Yet, something is troubling in this unproven conspiracy theory. As Julian Budden points out, an eye-witness saw Mascagni, perhaps Puccini's greatest rival, «in tears before the curtain» and he was «never insincere». Budden clings to the conspiracy because he recognizes that the changes Puccini made in his

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* This is an expanded version of the paper delivered at the centennial symposium. As the reader will no doubt notice, I come to this from the perspective of a scholar of French music and musical reception.

[1] A. WILSON, *The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism, and Modernity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 98-105, points to the excessively long acts and the attention to details at the expense of the whole. See pp. 000-000 below.

[2] M. CARNER, *Puccini, a Critical Biography*, New York, Holmes & Meier, 1992³, pp. 147-152; W. ASHBROOK, *Reflections on the Revisions of* «*Madame Butterfly*», in *Giacomo Puccini. L'uomo, il musicista, il panoramma europeo*, ed. G. Biagi Ravenni and C. Gianturco, Lucca, Liberia Musicale Italiana, 1997, pp. 159-168: 159; BUDDEN, pp. 240f.; GIRARDI, p. 199.

[3] WILSON, *The Puccini Problem*, pp. 97f.

[4] GIRARDI, p. 221.

opera subsequent to the Milanese flop «were certainly not enough to account for the altered reception». But is it really a truism, as he asserts, that «once the tone of the evening had been set by a claque, the rest of the public could be guaranteed to follow suit»?[5] In Paris, even raucous resistance to Wagner's music, some of it motivated by wrenching nationalist hatred, inevitably came up against an equal amount of zeal and insistence on hearing it. There Puccini was widely perceived as the «favorite» of the Milanese public and they were «very well-disposed in advance».[6] That this audience would turn «against it from the start» should give us pause.[7] What made these fans change their minds and not listen to «a single note», as Puccini observed? And why, after «the pandemonium» and the audience left the theater «happy as larks [...] as if by a collective triumph», would Giulio Ricordi compare the situation to a «real battle, as if the Russian army in serried ranks had wanted to attack the stage to drive away all Puccini's Japanese?».[8] Is it possible that Puccini's adversaries egged on rather than instigated the hostile audience reaction and saw this as something they could use to their advantage? Negative criticism, much of it consisting of concerns already raised with his previous operas, may very well have been «excuses», attempts to explain a «brutal» reception that blind-sided even the reviewers.[9] The audience's hostility may also have been exaggerated, as the reviews were not entirely negative. The «Corriere della sera» reported occasions where «l'applauso prorompe generale, caloroso, insistente».[10]

Another force, long ignored by scholars, may have contributed to the negative predisposition of the audience. A war had been brewing in the Far East since early February, in part because the Russians would make no concessions to the Japanese over Manchuria. Beginning on 5 February, only twelve days before the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* and after the performance had already sold out,[11] the front page of the Milanese newspaper «Corriere della sera» cited telegrams from Port Arthur and St. Petersburg (with a delay of only one day) and reproduced reports from English, French, and American newspapers (also from the day before). These signaled an «immanent» and «inevitable war» between the Russians and the Japanese (see the bottom of Figure 1,

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[5] BUDDEN, pp. 240-242.

[6] «Le Ménestrel», 28 February 1904. This reviewer did not blame a claque for the failure of the work.

[7] GIRARDI, p. 197.

[8] *Ivi*, p. 198. Interestingly Carner deleted the sentence on the Russians and Japanese in his translation of the passage, *Puccini*, p. 148.

[9] WILSON, *The Puccini Problem*, p. 98; GIRARDI, p. 196.

[10] G[IOVANNI]. P[OZZA]., *La prima di «Madama Butterfly» alla Scala*, «Corriere della sera», 18 February 1904.

[11] BUDDEN, p. 239.


Corriere della Sera, 14 Febbraio

Gli avvenimenti nei Balcani

Il contegno della Turchia e il generale Degiorgis

Ci telegrafano da Vienna, 13 febbraio, notte: In questi circoli diplomatici si nota una grande contrarietà e preoccupazione pel contegno della Turchia, che evidentemente rallenta quanto più può l'applicazione delle riforme. Finora non è ancora risolta la questione del generale Degiorgis. La Porta si ostina a voler nominare comandante della gendarmeria Mustafà Pascià o altro generale turco e a voler dare al Degiorgis solo il titolo e le funzioni di ispettore generale, così egli avrebbe un'autorità puramente fittizia.

Si ritiene imminente un nuovo energico passo delle Potenze presso la Porta; ma non si ha

Bollettino Militare

(Per dispaccio al Corriere della Sera) Roma, 13 febbraio, notte.

ARMA DEI CARABINIERI

Garelli, capitano nella legione di Bologna, e Savinelli, tenente nella legione allievi, sono collocati in posizione ausiliaria per ragione d'età. — Ile Bernardi, maggiore nella legione di Torino, è collocato in posizione ausiliaria. — Guerri, tenente nella legione di Napoli, è trasferito alla tenenza di Piazza Armerina.

ARMA DI FANTERIA

Prjolo Emanuele, maggiore nel 79, è revocato dall'impiego — Lolodice, capitano nel 54, e Sassone, id. applicato di stato maggiore al comando del XII corpo d'armata, sono collocati in aspettativa speciale per un anno — Baviola, id. nel 84, è collocato in aspettativa — De Dominicis, id. in aspettativa a Napoli, è richiamato al 12 bersaglieri

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

La prima rappresentazione di *Madama Butterfly* sarà dunque mercoledì venturo. Tutto è già pronto alla Scala: gli esecutori scenici, l'orchestra, gli scenari, i costumi, gli attrezzi. La prova generale si farà lunedì.

Non raccoglieremo le voci che filtrano dalle fessure degli usci del teatro chiusi e sprangati. Buone o cattive, vere o false, possono egualmente preoccupare lo spirito del pubblico in modo pericoloso. Diremo soltanto che non furono risparmiati studi e fatiche perchè la nuovissima opera dell'autore della *Bohème* ...

Anno 29 — Num. 37 — Milano, Lunedì, 8 Febbraio 1904 — Edizione del mattino

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

In tutta Italia centesimi 5 — Un numero arretrato centesimi 10

I due premi che il *Corriere della Sera* offre ai suoi abbonati sono: LA DOMENICA DEL CORRIERE settimanale di 16 pag. riccamente illust. a colori. — LA LETTURA rivista mensile illustrata di 112 pagine diretta da GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

PREZZO DELLE INSERZIONI:

Milano, 8 febbraio

EVIAZIONI

Le proposte per la Basilicata

Un Regio Commissario

Note vaticane

Il cardinale Rampolla

La rottura dei rapporti diplomatici fra Russia e Giappone

(Per telefono e per dispaccio al Corriere della Sera)

La rottura diplomatica

Corriere della Sera, 7 Febbraio

Il conflitto russo-giapponese

(Per telefono e per dispaccio al « Corriere della Sera »)

Tra la pace e la guerra

Da Vienna

Le passioni degli arciduchi

L'esile amoroso - Ferdinando Carlo in viaggio

Anno 29 — Num. 37 — Milano, Sabato, 6 Febbraio 1904 — Edizione del mattino

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

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PREZZO DELLE INSERZIONI:

Milano, 6 febbraio

Il progetto per la Basilicata

e i desideri di altre provincie

Il conflitto russo-giapponese

(Per telefono e per dispaccio al « Corriere della Sera »)

Anno 29 — Num. 36 — Milano, Venerdì, 5 Febbraio 1904 — Edizione del mattino

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

OGGI ESCE

La Domenica del Corriere

in tutta Italia 10 centesimi

PREZZO DELLE INSERZIONI:

La guerra inevitabile

(Per telefono e per dispaccio al « Corriere della Sera »)

Cessano le speranze

Le navi italiane nel Mar Giallo

Camera dei Deputati

Sofferenze d'italiani al Brasile

Costumi parlamentari in...

Fig. 1. «Corriere della sera», 5 February, 6 February, 8 February, 14 February 1904.

and read upward). Yet, even as a rupture in diplomatic relations was reported on the 8 February front page and the next day fears of the «dusk of peace» were announced, no one expected the Japanese to attack three Russian military ships at Port Arthur, one of the strongest fortresses in the world. On 10 February, then, the Italian press stunned everyone in vividly recounting the great naval battle in Port Arthur that had taken place two days earlier. The victory of the Japanese, and their subsequent attacks, began the first naval battle between modern fleets.

The war continued to dominate the front pages of Italian newspapers, together with regular telegrams from abroad and telephone calls within Europe on internal pages, and instigated discussion in the Camera dei deputati. Italy wished to remain prudently neutral. But then came the Japanese invasion of Korea, which with its huge running title in bold again took over the entire front page of the «Corriere della sera» on 11 February as well as much of the paper (Fig. 2). The heightened attention continued as Tsar Nicolas II declared war on Japan on 10 February and Russia attacked Japanese commercial ships off the Japanese coast on 11 February.

Although France, Russia's ally, and England, Japan's ally, both announced their neutrality, fear swept across Europe. Italians worried that the war would spread, as they had naval ships off Japan, Korea, and China. The Russians were totally unprepared, with only 50,000 troops in the Far East, while the Japanese seemed emboldened by their defeat of the Chinese in Korea in 1895. Recognizing that in thirty to forty years the Japanese had «passed from Asiatic barbarism to the most advanced European civilization» and now possessed an army and navy as good as their own, some saw this as «the yellow race threatening the white race for the first time since Genghis Khan [...]. If the Chinese should join the Japanese», as some predicted, their power would be «colossal», a «threat to the rest of the universe».[12]

From early February (and for the next few years), the «guerra russo-giapponese» remained a constant presence on the front pages of Italian newspapers, not only in Italy but also the United States. Also the second and fourth (i.e., last) pages included a recurring column, *Recentissime. La guerra russo-giapponese*, that summarized press reports on the war in Paris, London, and St. Petersburg. The Milanese musical public could not have escaped knowledge of the war. The upcoming premiere of *Madama Butterfly* was an-

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[12] G.D., *Le Péril jaune*, «Le Figaro», 24 February 1904, and E. LOCKROY, *Le Péril jaune* [opinions of various leaders], «La Revue russe», 9 June 1904, p. 7. The specter of this threat after Japan defeated China was raised in P. D'ESTOURELLE DE CONSTANT, *Le Péril prochain*, «Revue des deux mondes», 1 April 1896, p. 670. For the response of two French composers at the time, see my *Race, Orientalism, and Distinction in the Wake of the «Yellow Peril»*, in *Western Music and Its Others*, ed. G. Born and D. Hesmondhalgh, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 86-118.

Corriere della Sera, 17 Febbraio

Corriere Milanese

L'Esposizione di Milano del 1906

La ferrovia tra il Parco e la piazza d'Armi

Recentissime

Servizio particolare del Corriere della Sera

La guerra russo-giapponese

A Porto Arturo

Altri particolari degli attacchi navali

La gravità delle perdite giapponesi

Londra, 16 febbraio, notte.

DA VIENNA

Alla Delegazione ungherese

Dichiarazioni relative all'I

CORRIERE TEATRALE

Scala

DA LONDRA

La questione doganale alla Camera dei

Edizione del mattino

Anno 29° — Num. 48

Milano, Mercoledì, 17 Febbraio 1904

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

In tutta Italia centesimi 5 — Un numero arretrato centesimi 10

PREZZO DELLE INSERZIONI

I due premi che il Corriere della Sera offre ai suoi abbonati sono:

LA DOMENICA DEL CORRIERE

LA LETTURA

Milano, 17 febbraio

Il cotone in Italia?

Quesiti agrari

Note vaticane

La guerra russo-giapponese

A Porto Arturo

Anno 29° — Num. 47

Milano, Martedì, 16 Febbraio 1904

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

In tutta Italia centesimi 5 — Un numero arretrato centesimi 10

I due premi che il Corriere della Sera offre ai suoi abbonati sono:

Milano, 16 febbraio

Socialisti riformisti e rivoluzionari al Congresso regionale di Brescia

Deduzioni e insegnamenti

La guerra russo-giapponese

Riassunto delle operazioni — Vittorie e sconfitte incerte

L'assedio per mare e per terra

Fig. 2. «Corriere della sera», 15 February, 17 February 1904, pp. 1, 4.

nounced in the «Corriere della sera» on 14 February, directly next to a column on military matters (see the top of Fig. 1). This long preview article (more than two columns) recounted the story and included extended excerpts from the libretto, including the tragic ending. It provided enough information to alert audiences to the racial clash at the heart of the opera and, in the context of the war, may have planted seeds of resistance. On 15 February ticket prices and a list of foreign critics and musicians who would be attending the premiere (including Joly and Messager from Paris) were again framed by the most recent news of the conflict on two-thirds of the front page and other European responses to it in the «Recentissime» section. After a second Japanese attack on Port Arthur, the front page featured a map of the war zone on 16 February. That day too an Italian ship in Korea reported that all the telegraph stations in Korea were occupied by the Japanese military.

On 17 February, the day of the opera's premiere, the cast of singers appeared next to telegrams from Manchuria on the severity of Japanese losses in *Recentissime. La guerra russo-giapponese*. The following day, a three-column review of the opera aligned news of more torpedo attacks by the Japanese and anxiety expressed by Italian socialists (Fig. 3). Over the next few days, reports came in that the Pope was worried about Catholic missions in Manchuria; an Italian who had recently traveled to Japan announced that the Japanese were «as ferocious an enemy to the white race as a century earlier».[13] Newspapers remained full of discussions about the Russian-Japanese war as the opera was removed from the stage and Puccini went off to make revisions. The initial reception of *Madama Butterfly*, therefore, took place surrounded by shocking news of the war and in the context of extreme apprehension about East-West relations. I do not wish to suggest that the Milanese public had already taken a stand in the conflict when they entered the theater that fateful evening, but merely that a cloud of anxiety hung over everyone, as suggested in Giulio Ricordi's battle metaphor, and that this may have affected their behavior.

With *Madama Butterfly* set in Japan and concerning intermarriage between an Eastern woman and a Western naval officer, the opera may indeed have disturbed even its most escapist listeners. As Michele Girardi points out, Puccini and his librettists sought to «stage an individual tragedy caused by a very real conflict between races». In order that it not be understood as «merely a psychological drama», the first act «had to supply all those elements that would make the clash between two cultures comprehensible». Almost half of it, therefore, was dedicated to «evoking Japanese color», some of it

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[13] FÉLIX, *A Rome, 24 février*, «Le Figaro», 25 February 1904.


Milano, Giovedì, 18 Febbraio 1904

Edizione del mattino

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

In tutta Italia centesimi 5 — Un numero arretrato centesimi 10

I due premi che il *Corriere della Sera* offre ai suoi abbonati sono:

LA DOMENICA DEL CORRIERE

LA LETTURA

PREZZO DELLE INSERZIONI:

Milano, 18 febbraio

Debiti comunali

La questione dei documenti

La guerra russo-giapponese

Concentrazione dei giapponesi in Corea

(Per telefono e per dispaccio al *Corriere della Sera*)

Nel Liao-tung

Camerlera suicida in un albergo

La prima di "Madama Butterfly" alla Scala

Corriere della Sera

Recentissime

La guerra russo-giapponese

Nel Liao-tung

I nuovi attacchi giapponesi

I resoconti retrospettivi

Particolari delle perdite giapponesi

La sala

In Manciuria

Triste condizione delle truppe in viaggio

Il Congresso soc

Fig. 3. «Corriere della sera», 18 February 1904, pp. 1-3.

with Japanese or Japanese-inspired melodies.[14] But by February 1904, the western dream of the exotic other as child-like and charming, as represented in Pierre Loti's novels, had turned into a nightmare worthy of the disbelief, derision, sneers and hisses hurled at the opera that fateful night. The production's attempts to mark the dawn with a menagerie of bird songs drew unfortunate attention to the pretense of realism, even if similar sound effects in the original Belasco play that Puccini so deeply appreciated had originally helped make this scene a great theatrical success.[15] Puccini's incorporation of Japanese melodies, which a reviewer compared to photos, also seemed like an attempt to document reality without necessarily understanding it.[16] A Milanese reviewer was right in asserting that Puccini's enthusiasm for the tragedy of Cio-Cio-San did not extend to its first audience, but I would argue – not necessarily because the opera did not live up to the authenticity of Japanese dramas presented by Sada Yacco.[17] If anything, the influence of Sada Yacco's performances on *Madama Butterfly* – Groos has pointed to Cio-Cio-San's unpredictable alternation between infantile and savage behavior and her ritual suicide – may have contributed to the Milanese public's resistance to the work. Reality turned out to be not as depicted on Japanese fans and vases, but as in kabuki theater instead: the Japanese *were* unpredictable and dangerous, capable of savage hostility.

With familiar racial stereotypes informing the first act, reviewers reported that «the real fracas was reserved for the second act», when the contrasts begin to break down. «An uproar of hisses, obscene sneers, and laughter» was unleashed when Cio-Cio-San introduced her son to the Consul, and «pandemonium» reached its height during the vigil when she awaits his father's return.[18] This response suggests that the Milanese public may have had their greatest difficulty in contemplating neither the juxtaposition of Eastern and Western cul-

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[14] GIRARDI, pp. 210-220.

[15] J. VAN RIJ, *Madame Butterfly. Japonisme, Puccini, and the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San*, Berkeley, Stone Bridge Press, 2001, p. 78.

[16] R[OMEO] C[ARUGATI], «La Lombardia», 18 February 1904, in *Fonti*, p. 471. At the time colonial photographs encouraged the illusion that Westerners controlled exotic locales. See my discussion of the use of photographs of music and musical instruments at the time in *The Utility of Musical Instruments in the Racial and Colonial Agendas of Late Nineteenth-Century France*, «Journal of the Royal Musical Association», CXXIX, 2004, pp. 124-176: 40.

[17] GROOS 3, suggests that the public's rejection of the opera in February 1904 might have been influenced by «prejudices about what a 'Japanese' opera should be» and they may have been «unready, or unwilling to appreciate the extent to which Puccini had gone beyond existing models, Japanese as well as Italian» (p. 69). Ironically, the French did not consider Sada Yacco's performances authentic, since in Japan there were no mixed troupes and the extremely concise productions resulted in «cinematographic tableaux» far shorter than actual kabuki drama. See J. TIERSOT, *Ethnographie musicale*, III: *Le théâtre japonais*, «Le Ménestrel», 25 November 1900, p. 372.

[18] Described in CARNER, *Puccini*, pp. 148f.

tures nor the suicide, but the potential of actual assimilation. The Japanese attack on Russia proved that the benefits of assimilating Western modernity could backfire, thereby threatening western assumptions of superiority and hegemony.

Contemporary perceptions of Japan, especially after the Japanese defeated the Chinese in 1895, may also have contributed to the laughter at the premiere. Writers who had lived in Japan, from the race theorist Léopold de Saussure to Pierre Loti (who returned there in 1900), commented extensively on the Japanese hatred of Europeans. Saussure predicted this could lead to «their massacre», and in 1900 Loti already imagined «war between Russian and Japan[...] soon and inevitable».[19] After 1868, the Japanese educational system promoted the appropriation and imitation of western material and industrial progress, but not its «moral civilization», especially when it came to the relationship between the individual and society. That Cio-Cio-San might want to climb the social ladder, leaving her poverty behind, through assimilation of western mores was understandable – nineteenth-century opera is full of such stories – but that a Japanese woman could be capable of romantic love defied European understanding.[20] As French scholars and critics put it in 1904, «the idea of love [...] hardly flowers among the Japanese. This individual sentiment does not fit into the frameworks of society». Moreover, Cio-Cio-San's actions suggested those of a «self-willing citizen», rather than a «fixed subject bound to a tradition»[21] – thereby breaking down one of the most important distinctions between eastern and western identity. The audience's hisses and laughter suggest that they construed her attempts at assimilation as implausible, if not ridiculous.

European Interdependence

The political context within Europe was complex, and Italy's position as yet unclear. No one knew who might be dragged into the conflict. Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary and had

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19 L. **de Saussure**, *Psychologie de la colonisation française*, Paris, Alcan, 1899, pp. 280, 291; Pierre Loti, letter of 5 October 1900 in *La Troisième Jeunesse de Madame Prune*, pp. 131 and 30-31, cited in M. **Matsuda**, *Empire of Love*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 171, 177.

20 That is, with the notable exception of the satirical dramas presented by the traveling troupe of the activist actor Kawakami Otojiro and his wife Sada Yacco. Yet, despite its wrenching romances that led to despair, Matsuda interprets love in these dramas as driven by loyalty rather than passion, and essentially patriotic, the work meant to shift attention «from colonial submission to imperial sacrifice – and imperial conquest» (*Empire of Love*, pp. 175f.).

21 A. **Bellesort**, *La Société japonaise*, Paris, Perrin, 1904, and V. **Bérard**, *La Révolte de l'Asie*, Paris, Colin, 1904, cited in **Matsuda**, *Empire of Love*, pp. 172f. For a brilliant discussion of the differences and role of love in Japan and France, see pp. 173-184.

no political interests in the Far East, despite having ships there. Crispi, Italy's Prime Minister, had seen Germany as an ally since Bismarck defeated the French in 1870. In 1896 the Italian army was defeated in East Africa, producing «popular aversion to colonial adventure for the next 15 years».[22] With this defeat came the end of Crispi's regime and a formal entente with France, strengthened by an economic agreement in 1899. At the same time, in 1896 France cemented a formal alliance with Russia and in 1898 Victor Emmanuel III, who had come to the throne in 1900 upon the assassination of his father Umberto, married Elena Petrovich, daughter of King Nicolas I of Montenegro, allies of their Romanov cousins. Seeking entente with Russia in July 1902, Victor Emmanuel visited the tsar in St. Petersburg and returned with vague promises of collaboration. Even if these went nowhere and threats by Italian socialists forced the tsar to cancel his scheduled trip to Italy in October 1903, thereby ending efforts to reach an entente with Russia, institutional forces in Italy would have been pro-Russian, as conservative newspapers such as the «Corriere della sera» suggest. Newspapers also noted that the Italians living in Siberia, who had helped build the railroad, roads, bridges, and factories there, felt well-treated by the Russians.[23] Italy also continued to see friendship with France, Russia's ally, as important. In October 1903, Victor Emmanuel met with French leaders in Paris and invited the French President to Italy.

In such a climate, the Japanese attack four months later had global implications. France had been a passionate advocate for Japan since the 1870s, but as Russia's ally it felt betrayed. The French middle-class had purchased the bonds that funded the Trans-Siberian railroad, implicating them in the attack on Port Arthur, the railroad's terminus. Since Italy had borrowed money from France to address its economic problems in the winter of 1901-02, Italy also had financial ties with France. This would have encouraged concern for France's position. Meanwhile, since 1896 Italy's relations with Britain, Japan's ally, had been at a low ebb, making it unlikely that Italy would side with the Japanese.[24] Tensions were so great about the «yellow peril» and the potential for further menace by the Japanese that in April 1904, only two months after the war had begun, England and France, long arch-enemies, signed their own Entente Cordiale. With this, Italian critics and their foreign correspondents called for an extension to Italy as «three sisters in democracy and liberty».[25]

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[22] C.J. LOWE and F. MARZARI, *Italian Foreign Policy, 1870-1940*, London, Routledge, 1975, p. 68.

[23] FÉLIX, *A Rome, 20 février*, «Le Figaro», 21 February 1904.

[24] LOWE and MARZARI, *Italian Foreign Policy*, p. 85.

[25] Malagodi, the London correspondent for «La Tribuna», 1 May 1904, and Barzini in «Corriere della sera», 30 October 1904, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 90.

On 25 April 1904, the entire front page of the "Corriere della sera» was devoted to the «grandiosa accoglienza in Roma al Presidente della Repubblica francese».

Italy's relationship with France was also deeply rooted in culture, reinforcing the political entente and inevitably leading to sympathy with French interests. As one historian put it,

> In the early years of the century French culture dominated educated Italians. The younger generation was soaked in French literature; Paris was its mecca. Italian democrats looked with admiration to the triumphant Dreyfusards, and the French quarrel with the Papacy, culminating in the separation of church and state, strengthened the mutual sympathy between anti-clericals in the two countries [...]. Eminent French writers, artists, and professors descended upon Italy [...]. Friends of France societies were organized all over Italy.[26]

Puccini, as we know, was among those who went to Paris to find inspiration. Of his twelve operas, five had libretti based on French sources and four were set in France, not counting the many French texts he started working on and later abandoned.[27] By 1903, Puccini had become so popular in Paris that *La bohème* and *Tosca* commanded the second highest receipts at the Opéra-Comique, after Massenet's operas but before *Carmen*, *Traviata*, *Mignon*, *Lakmé*, and *Pelléas*.[28] The French also had a close working relationship with Puccini's rival, Mascagni, together with his Milanese publisher, Sonzogno, whom they saw as responsible for promoting French opera in Italy.[29] On 14 February 1904, «Le Ménestrel» announced Sonzogno's annual opera competition. In expression of their friendship with the French, Sonzogno appointed Massenet as president of the jury. On 20 May they voted unanimously to give the prestigious award to a little-known French composer, Gabriel Dupont, awarding him 50,000 francs, four times the annual salary of the director of the Paris Conservatory.[30]

By the end of May 1904 and the second performance of *Madama Butterfly*, tensions were abating somewhat, even if the war continued to dominate

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[26] CH. SETON-WATSON, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870-1925*, London, Methuen, 1967, pp. 332f.

[27] French authors whose works Puccini considered setting to music include Zola *(La Faute de l'abbé Mouret)*, Daudet (*Tartarin de Tarascon*), Victor Hugo (*Notre Dame de Paris*), Pierre Louÿs (*Aphrodite*), Edmund Rostand (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), and Alexandre Dumas *(Les trois mousquetaires)*. S. HUEBNER, *Thematic Recall in Late Nineteenth-Century Opera*, «Studi puccinani», 3, 2004, pp. 77-104, examines Massenet's influence on Puccini, particularly in his *Manon Lescaut*.

[28] «Le Ménestrel», 6 November 1904, p. 359. Puccini's *Tosca* premiered at the Opéra-Comique on 13 October 1904, conducted by André Messager.

[29] «Le Ménestrel», 13 November 1904, p. 375.

[30] «Le Ménestrel», 14 February 1904; 29 May 1904, p. 173; 5 June 1904, p. 181.

the front pages of Italian newspapers.[31] The Japanese had lost some battles but triumphed anew in late May, again making the headlines. Still, with the Russians in the midst of sending 250,000 more soldiers to Manchuria by the Trans-Siberian railroad, Europeans, while still fearful, at least began to feel that the situation was improving. Meanwhile, in the Camera, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out that the war was an occasion for Italians to extend their economic and commercial relationships with Russia.[32]

With an audience in a much smaller town[33] and perhaps now more accustomed to the war and ready to listen to the music, *Madama Butterfly*'s return to the stage on 28 May in Brescia was a «triumphal success». «Le Ménestrel» gleefully reported that the composer had 7 pieces encored and 24 curtain calls. Perhaps because the French press had earlier blamed the problem on the music, they now credited Puccini's revisions for the positive public reception, citing his shortening of the work, rearrangement of some sections, and addition of a new arioso for the tenor.[34]

While Puccini was revising his opera, the political situation may again have played a role. As the war dragged on, some Italians began to sympathize with the Japanese. In early March, Italian socialists organized anti-Russian demonstrations.[35] One historian explains this as a result of the Italians having been shunned by the Russian tsar in fall 1903; another points to the visit of the French President to Rome in April 1904 and the Entente Cordiale with Britain, which aroused popular support, but also some alienation.[36] The Japanese side of the story may also have emerged, including their assertion that the Russians were responsible for the breakdown in diplomatic relations and had fired the first shot.[37] Whether Puccini worked at all in response to the Japanese-Russian con-

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[31] Between 5 February and 29 May 1904, the war was discussed every day in the «Corriere della sera» on at least two pages.

[32] FÉLIX, *A Rome, 22 février*, «Le Figaro», 23 February 1904.

[33] CARNER, *Puccini*, pp. 152f., stresses that Puccini felt a smaller theater would be more appropriate for the opera. Much of the artistic world from Milan attended, but the general public would have been different.

[34] «Le Ménestrel», 12 June 1904, p. 190. CARNER, *Puccini*, p. 153, gives five encores and ten curtain calls.

[35] «Il sentimento in favore del Giappone aumenta di giorno in giorno in tutta Italia. Il partito socialista sta organizzando dimostrazioni anti-russe ma la polizia attivamente sorveglia affinché esse non abbiano luogo», *La guerra*, «L'Italia», 12 March 1904.

[36] Italian leftists wanted to make Italy into an image of democratic France, but saw no need for further alliance with her since, as an ally of tsarist Russia, France did not have the same internal policy as their external one. After the Loubet visit, many Italian Catholics, disturbed by French anticlericalism, became pro-German. See LOWE and MARZARI, *Italian Foreign Policy, 1870-1940*, p. 92, and SETON-WATSON, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism*, p. 334.

[37] For a Japanese perspective from 1905 and reproduction of diplomatic correspondence between Japanese and Russians Ministers beginning in July 1903, see B. KENTARO KANEKO, *Resources*

flict or ignored it entirely, he took a very different attitude toward the East and the West in the opera. Whereas earlier he and his collaborators had taken pains to «highlight the contrast between East and West», his revisions sought to downplay these cultural differences. Besides shortening or deleting the Japanese sections, he omitted offensive comments about the Japanese, shifted attention to the tragedy of the central character, and westernized some of her music.[38] Puccini's decision to cut references to the incompatibility of East and West resulted in a more sympathetic portrait of Cio-Cio-San, a tragedy of personal loss, at the same time as a greater emphasis on her desire for assimilation.[39]

This argument is important, for it draws attention to a concept the Japanese court shared with many westerners at the time. To understand this, we need to look to both the French, for whom assimilation was a central policy of republicans in government after 1870, and the Japanese Emperor after the Meiji restoration in 1868. In the following sections, I will suggest an important evolution in the understanding of assimilation, a concept distinct from imitation, adaptation, and appropriation because it goes to the heart of assumptions about identity. In the 1870s assimilation signified a utopian yearning to learn from a foreign culture for the sake of progress. In the 1880s and early 1890s those in power wished to instill it as a dream in those whose willing collaboration and cooperation they hoped to elicit in their imperialist expansion. This included colonialists and missionaries. After 1900, problems with assimilation within France (as evinced by the Dreyfus Affair), anxiety over the possibility of racial degeneration, and failed experiments in assimilation in the colonies (particularly Indo-China) transformed the concept into a kind of wishful thinking that many rejected on the basis of irreducible racial differences. This evolution lays a backdrop for understanding not only the various interracial narratives written in the west between 1897 and 1904, but also the attitudes audiences may have brought to *Madama Butterfly* productions. Because of close cultural ties between Italy and France at the time, and because what Italians knew about Japanese culture came largely from France,[40] examining French attitudes towards Japan and Japanese music will help us grasp how Japonisme may also have been construed in Italy.

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and Ideals of Modern Japan. The Russo-Japanese War and the Resources of Japan, and Appendix V in D. MURRAY, *Japan*, New York, Putnam, 1906, pp. 457-472.

38 BUDDEN, p. 235; ASHBROOK, *Reflections on the Revisions*, p. 162; CARNER, *Puccini*, pp. 429-432; and GROOS 2.

39 GROOS 3, p. 68, sees her suicide as intended to enable the assimilation of her son into American society.

40 WILSON, *The Puccini Problem*, points to this principally in the visual arts (p. 116). It would be helpful for someone to undertake an in-depth study of Japonisme in the Italian musical world of this period.

Utopian Yearning

As divided as they were on how to accomplish their political goals when fighting the monarchists for power in the 1870s, most French republicans ardently believed in the potential of environment to influence people and the ability of people, through education and reason, to adapt and change. They did not consider differences, whether cultural or racial, as categorically unbridgeable, believing that the attempt to assimilate provided access to a fuller range of experiences and could contribute to self-improvement. Such a belief was crucial to those who fought for free public education for the masses and wished to see white settlers thrive in the tropics. Looking to the Romans as their predecessors, republicans defined the French «soul» by its ability to assimilate differences. This was based on the notion of civilization as involving not only the recognition of change that can occur in contact with the Other, but also the embrace of difference as a way to increase the scope and capacity of one's own identity. Like Rousseau, they believed that civilized man is completed only through the Other.

For Saint-Simonians, some of whom came to power in the 1870s, this could go as far as racial fusion. Assimilation had been tried in Senegal, and for a certain period even intermarriage was encouraged, but most found this problematic. In an important treatise based on a study of Algeria, *De la Colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (1874), Paul Leroy-Beaulieu used the word *rapprochement* rather than fusion to describe his ideal of race relations in the colonies. By this he meant a «specific process of cultural change» rather than «physical union». He advocated transforming living conditions through the introduction of railroads, hospitals, and private property.[41] Thereafter assimilation came to be associated with bringing French rights and liberties to the unwashed at home and abroad. With the help of French laws, French education, and French culture, they hoped to turn people into French citizens.

Republicans who believed that this was possible deeply admired the Japanese. Whereas the Chinese tended to see themselves as the center of their own universe, the Japanese, beginning in 1868, seemed to mirror French Republican concerns. Rejecting feudalism and old myths about the shogun as a «temporal sovereign», the new order redefined civilization as the willingness to make changes, to seek knowledge wherever they could find it, and to appropriate the tools needed to effect such changes. Like French Republicans in

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[41] A. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 20-22.

government, the Japanese Emperor and his court were intent on progress and expansion, and sought to accomplish this in part through assimilating Western ideas. This led the Japanese to embrace not only modernization, but also universal education, military conscription, elected representative assemblies in each province beginning in 1879, and a constitution based on European models in 1889. To the extent that they were respectful of France's self-image and wished to assimilate important aspects of it, many French Republicans considered Japan one of the «great» peoples.[42]

This suggests that we take French Japonisme seriously, and as a force in French culture somewhat different from the more general term, Orientalism. In the 1870s, what the French knew about the Japanese was admittedly very superficial. It came largely from what was depicted on fans and vases.[43] Japanese decorative arts had been brought to Paris for the 1867 Exhibition and took many prizes at the one in 1878. By 1879 one could even buy such things at department stores. Yet this limited knowledge was not seen as a problem.

While commissioning very few new works each year, the State-subsidized Opéra-Comique and the Opéra wanted to support the fashion for Japan with works concerning Japanese subjects. As his biographers tell it, Du Locle, the director of the Opéra-Comique, commissioned a one-act work from Saint-Saëns and the librettist Louis Gallet. The two proposed a Japanese subject and Du Locle agreed. However, as putting Japan on stage «tout pur» made him a bit anxious, he suggested that they «mitigate» this danger by setting the work half in Holland, half in Japan.[44] *La Princesse jaune*, which premiered at the Opéra-Comique in 1872, set to music a tale of a Dutchman who falls in love with a Japanese figurine. In some ways the work is conventionally Orientalist: the main character, seeking to recover his lost youth, «desires the Orient» and conjures it in a dream induced by taking opium. In perhaps the first French work to explore the unconscious in music,[45] he imagines the figurine coming to life, and then confuses it with his beloved in real life. To signal Japan as the «lointain mystérieuse», Saint-Saëns incorporates a pentatonic scale (which he had previously

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[42] PH. BURTY, *Le Japon ancien et le Japon moderne*, «L'Art», 1878, pp. 241-244. Burty was reputedly the first to use the term «Japonisme» in 1872.

[43] As Judy Tsou pointed out to me, these images were often painted in Europe and then sent to Asia to be glazed (13 May 2005, Los Angeles). Moreover, in her *Critical Response to Japan at the Paris 1878 Exposition Universelle*, «Gazette des beaux-arts», CXIX/6, February 1992, pp. 68-80, Deborah Levitt-Pasturel notes, «While the Japanese government did send a small number of authentic artistic pieces [...] a large percentage of the goods displayed were manufactured specifically with a wealthy Western consumer in mind».

[44] See E. BAUMANN, *Les grandes formes de la musique; l'œuvre de Camille Saint-Saëns*, Paris, Ollendorf, 1923, p. 400, and J. GALLOIS, *Camille Saint-Saëns*, Brussels, Mardaga, 2004, p. 142.

[45] GALLOIS, *Saint-Saëns*, p. 143.

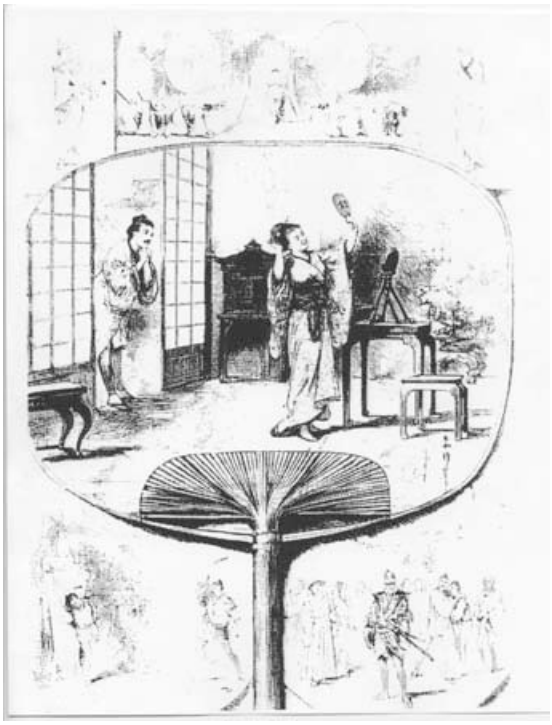


Fig. 4. LECOCQ, *Kosiki: fan comes alive*, «L'Illustration», 28 October 1876.

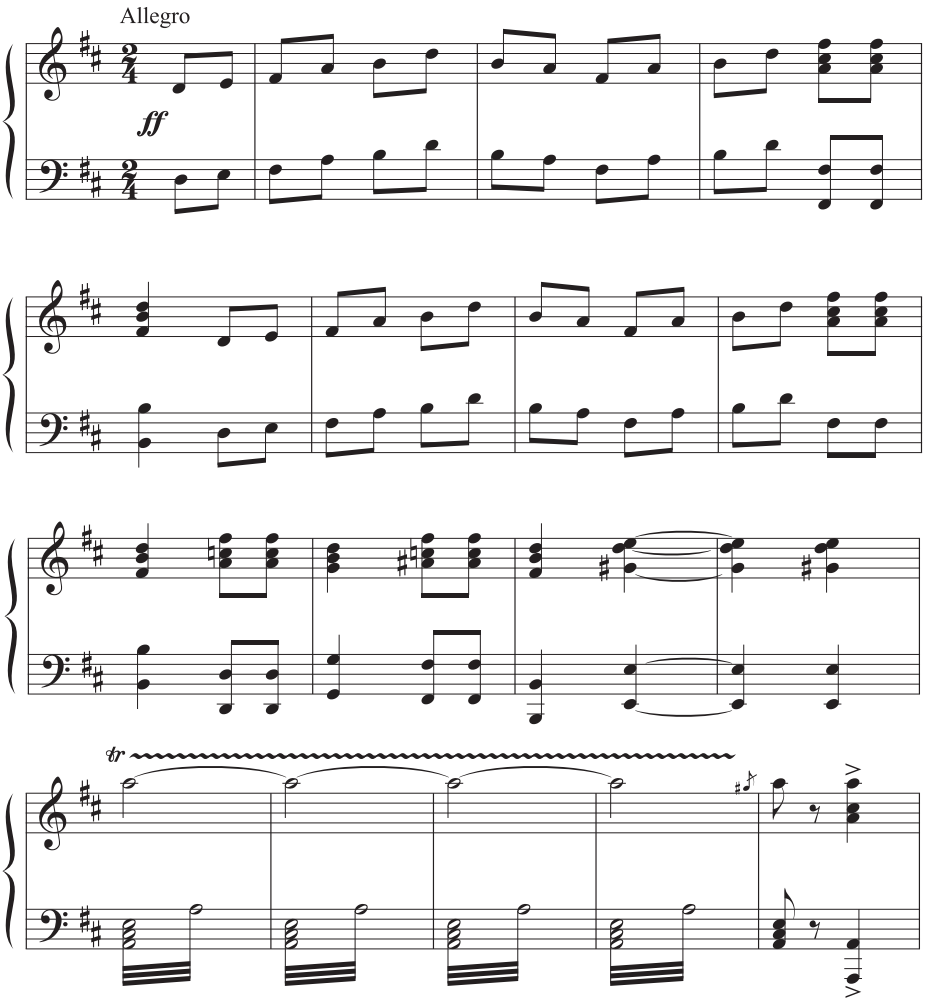
used in his march for military band, *Orient et Occident*). The work had five performances, but some demeaned it as «japonaiserie».[46]

In 1876 the Théâtre de la Renaissance mounted Charles Lecocq's three-act opera-comique, *Kosiki.* An image of it in «L'Illustration» depicts a fan coming to life (Fig. 4). The story and music revolve around the idea of embracing pleasure and enjoying life after the imposed mourning following a ruler's death. Kosiki, his daughter, befriends and then falls in love with an acrobat. To encode the work's Japonisme, besides the costumes and frequent mention of the Buddha, there is also pentatonicism in a Japanese chorus (Ex. 1). The work was so popular that the next year the amateur wind band of the Bon marché department store performed excerpts in one of its in-store concerts (10 February 1877).

Only a week after the premiere of *Kosiki*, the «Journal de musique» published a short essay by the poet Théodore de Banville explaining the significance of 'Japonisme' for French artists. It had given the French a «blood transfusion», healing them from «the most horrible anemia» caused by the Moral Order, a political compromise between republicans and monarchists in France in the 1870s that promoted art expressing high ideals and grandeur. Bemoaning that not only men, but also women, dress increasingly in dark colors, and apartment decor is increasingly somber, Banville explains the appeal of a different notion of art:

Japonisme has conquered and saved our old world, subdued and dulled [*abêti*] by what one could call «Quakerism». Because of rational and bourgeois civilization,

[46] G. BERTRAND, writing in «Le Ménestrel», 16 June 1872, pp. 235f., and P. BERNARD, writing in the «Revue et gazette musicale», 16 June 1876, pp. 185f.



Ex. 1. LECOCQ, *Kosiki*, *Choeur des japonais*.

[...] we forbid color everywhere, even in paintings, imagining that harmony can only be obtained by transpositions of grey [...]. [In Japanese art] a search for the beautiful, the refined, and the charming does not exclude, as we have believed, the grandeur of a composition and the nobility of poses.

Praising the Japanese as a «very civilized» people of «knights and poets», who have not yet become so knowledgeable as to lose the sense of nature, he points out that they have not forgotten that a «flower can be as terrifying as a lion, a monster as charming as a rose» and – saving his punch line to last,

an attack on history painting practiced the Academy – «the design of a dress as interesting as the history of a people».[47] Color and linear design might not be the same as content and emotion, but the French felt they had much to learn from the Japanese in these domains.[48]

It also did not matter to the French that they knew little of substance about Japanese music. Throughout the 1870s, the only discussions in the professional musicians' journal, «Le Ménestrel», are two very short reviews. The first, in 1875, discusses four classes of performers, gives vague comments about instruments and modes, and concludes that, like Chinese music, it was «ear-splitting [*déchire les oreilles*]». Most significantly, «Le Ménestrel» asserts that the Japanese «find European music even more awful than we find theirs detestable».[49] In 1878, the second comment – from a book on Japanese music by Alexandre Kraus, an aristocratic Italian instrument collector – mentions the pentatonic scales as responsible for a new kind of color in music; however, it focuses on instruments.[50] At the time, musical instruments were understood as emblematic of national identity and, along with flags, were collected by explorers and soldiers.

In 1879, the Opéra premiered *Yedda*, a three-act pantomime ballet subtitled «légende japonaise». Co-written by Phillipe Gille, who later co-wrote the libretto for Delibes' *Lakmé*, together with the composer/conductor Olivier Métra, it attempted to bring together everything that was known about Japan from visual sources, «particularly the pomp of processions, the gardens, and the birds depicted on screens and china».[51] A «Journal de musique» reviewer called it a «voyage to Japan in an orchestral armchair, round trip in two hours, a real train of pleasure».[52] As in Saint-Saëns' opera, the story is essentially a westerner's dream, but in this case the dream is also that of a peasant to assimilate into the upper class through marriage. As such, it was a pretext for wishful thinking about change in France. Yedda (an inhabitant of Yeddo, i.e., Tokyo) is engaged to marry her peasant boyfriend. A «pas japonais» from Act I – presumably Japanese in its costumes if not particularly in its music – would have been danced by peasants to set the scene (Ex. 2). In Act II, Yedda listens to a magical nightingale and meets the Mikado when he visits her village near Mt Fuji.[53] Of course, there is a «temptation scene» and they fall in

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47 TH. DE BANVILLE, *Le Japonisme*, «Journal de musique», 4 November 1876, pp. 3-4.

48 These ideas led to a major influence of Japanese art on French engravers through the turn of the century.

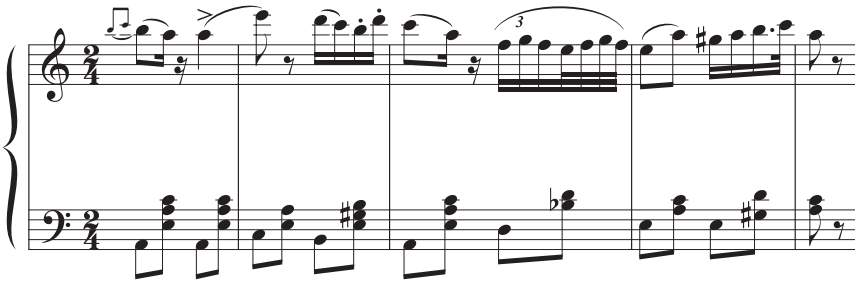
49 *Nouvelles diverses*, «Le Ménestrel», 6 November 1875, p. 390.

50 G. CHOUQUET, *La musique au Japon*, «Le Ménestrel», 2 June 1878, p. 213.

51 *Yedda*, «Journal de musique», 25 January 1879, p. 2.

52 *Ibid*.

53 An image of this was reproduced in «L'Illustration», 25 January 1874.



Ex. 2. MÉTRA, *Yedda*, *Pas japonais*.

love. Act III, by contrast, is set in the Mikado's palace, where the courtiers perform a «Dance of the Butterflies».When the fiancé kills himself, Yedda also dies – the price of adultery. Still, her fantasy might have found sympathy with French republicans, who only that month had won control of the Senate and forced the conservative President Mac-Mahon's resignation, finally making it possible to install a new republican orthodoxy that would make social mobility more possible. The ballet went on to sixty performances.

In *Lakmé*, arguably more of a precedent for *Madama Butterfly* than *Yedda* and popular in Italy beginning in 1884, the librettists concocted a story in which an exotic beauty falls in love with a western soldier. This was based in part on *Le mariage de Loti*. When the British soldier Gerald has to return to his troops, Lakmé kills herself, singing, «You have given me the sweetest dream [...] here, far from the real world». As in *Yedda*, the assumption that the dream could be mutual was based on faith in the universality of love. The universality of character too, or at least the connection to Japan, was underlined when, in a Parisian salon soon after the premiere, Mlle Van Zandt performed the Bell Song from *Lakmé* in Japanese traditional attire.[54] As many have pointed out, even if the composers incorporated exotic-influenced melodies elsewhere in these operas, Lakmé, like Madama Butterfly, inevitably sings in a western style when expressing her love, as if western music – and, by inference, western culture – are the only ones that could be imagined as shared universally.[55]

But there is more to these dreams than love. When *Lakmé* was written in 1883, France was in the midst of a return to significant imperial expansion.

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[54] This was part of a «grand fête japonaise» to benefit charity at the home of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia in Paris. It also featured Ernest Dhervilly's play, *La belle Sainara* and Gaston Serpette's operetta, *Tige de lotus*. See «Le Ménestrel», 27 May 1883, p. 208.

[55] In *The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter*, «Opera Quarterly», X/2, winter 1993-94, p. 48, J. PARAKILAS points out that «Lakmé and Gerald sing three love duets in the course of the opera, and in all of them Lakmé, like Carmen in her love duet with Escamillo, picks up Gérald's tunes as if she were the girl next door». See also GROOS 3, p. 66.

With a republican majority in government for the first time and a new republican president, the French were searching for an alternative power base and claims to grandeur strong enough to replace the aristocratic dynasties and glories of the distant past. That same year they established a French Department of the Colonies and the next year annexed Annam and Cambogia as colonies. French leaders recognized that assimilation depended on recognition of some difference from the colonialist's perspective to render assimilation desirable, as well as something shared with the exotic Other to make assimilation possible. The dream of colonialists, as expressed by Lakmé, was that the exotic Other desired them as much as they were desired by the West.

These works are important to any understanding of Japonisme. First, they suggest that Pierre Loti's novel, *Madame Chrysanthème*, published in 1888, was written in the context of previous Japanese subjects in western literature and music.[56] Second, they tell us that Japonisme meant more than just a fashion for the exotic. Certainly Parisians had a taste for it in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as reflected in both works for the stage and various «Japanese festivals» in private salons. Such performances helped establish emblems of Japanese culture, such as fans, acrobats, Mt Fuji, nightingale songs, and butterfly dances. But works such as *Yedda* and *Lakmé*, particularly with a westerner performing Lakmé in a Japanese kimono, also suggest that politics and the whole question of assimilation are part of the meaning of Japonisme.

Bringing Japan to Paris

Japan could remain a function of French fantasies until Frenchmen actually went to Japan and wrote about the experience. Well before Pierre Loti shared the diary of his visit in the form of a novel, Emile Guimet and the lithographer Félix Régamey traveled to Japan in 1876. In 1878 they published *Promenades japonaises*. On the title page is Mt. Fuji, a reference to Hiroshige's woodblock prints so popular at the time. In the first sentence the authors praise the Japanese for getting rid of the feudal Shoguns. This may have reminded the two die-hard republicans (Régamey was a friend of the radical-left Gambetta)[57] of how republicans were on the verge of disempowering the mon-

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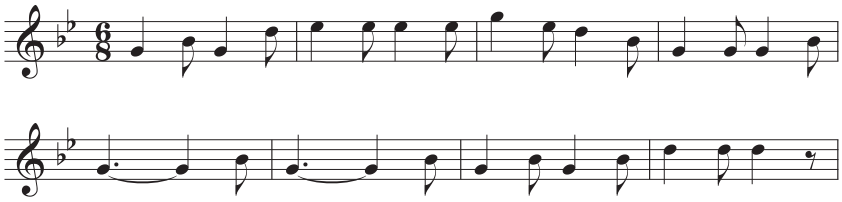
[56] Here I take issue with Carner, *Puccini*, p. 410, among others, who imply that Loti's novel started the fashion.

[57] Along with publishing a series of books on Japan and its customs, Félix Régamey was also author of a biography of Gambetta, published two years after he died in 1884, and two books on education, a prime republican concern: one on a Japanese *lycée* [high-school] and another on how drawing was taught in the USA.



Ex. 3. GUIMET – RÉGAMEY, *Promenades japonaises*, 'Japanese music'.

archists in France. Throughout the book, focus is on the present and the new Japan. Aspects of life that the Japanese assimilated from the West receive more attention than remnants of traditional society. First, they clarify that since the Mikado renamed the city, Yeddo is now called Tokyo. Then, riding by train from Yokohama to Tokyo, they comment on Japanese railroads. Later we learn that on the voyage from San Francisco, Guimet and Régamey met a Japanese man who was returning from studies in the United States where he had earned a degree in engineering. Even if they see cameras as «the most flattering specimens of European civilization», they disdain Japanese photographers who see nothing wrong with taking portraits in front of holy temples.

Guimet and Régamey also document what they learned about Japanese theater and music, pointing out, perhaps surprisingly, that the public in temple theaters was composed mostly of women and children. With few exceptions, the musicians they experienced were women, drummers as well as shamisen players, perhaps because these provided the entertainment in tea houses the Frenchmen frequented. While they admit to understanding little about the «indecisive tonalities and incoherent rhythms» of Japanese music, they found it went well with the graceful gestures of the dances. Between describing the fourth and fifth courses of a meal, they include a transcription of two lines of music (Ex. 3), noting that it is only approximate [«*à peu près*»], since western notation cannot capture «Japanese intonations», especially when singers «persist in indeterminate notes».[58] To explain Japanese art, they point to differences of race, climate, and education – a conclusion that would have supported the monogenist theory of human diversity.

Pierre Loti's popular novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, published ten years later, takes a very different approach, casting its gaze on Japanese otherness and bringing a fascination with Loti's own perceptions that comes in part from incorporating excerpts from the diary he kept during his 1885 visit. In many

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[58] E. GUIMET and F. RÉGAMEY, *Promenades japonaises (1878)*, Paris, Charpentier, 1880, pp. 1, 5, 7, 60, 94, 100, 153, 154, 157.

ways, his sensibility resembles that of Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs*. Everything is both «curious» and familiar: «all these houses, men, or beasts [...] that I had beheld painted on blue and pink backgrounds of fans or vases now appeared to me in their hard reality». Loti expresses surprise that even the words learned out of dictionaries «should mean anything». His conclusion: «this tiny, artificial, fictitious world, which I knew already from paintings of lacquer and porcelains [...] is so exact a representation». He focuses similarly on his own preconceptions of their music:

> Even the woman's melancholy voice, still to be heard behind the paper partition, was so evidently the way they should sing, these musicians I had so often seen painted in amazing colors on rice-paper, half closing their dreamy eyes in the midst of impossibly large flowers. Long before I came to it I had perfectly pictured this Japan to myself.

Loti knows the stereotypes that his readers would expect: the diminutive dancing girl compared to the «night butterfly» who rolls her eyes like a «timid kitten» with a «coaxing air of childishness». When he meets his first intended, Mlle Jasmin, he exclaims, «Why I know her already! Long before setting foot in Japan, I had met with her on every fan, on every teacup». When he sets up with Chrysanthème, he describes their house as he had «fancied it in many dreams of Japan before his arrival» and imagines his new «wife», «chosen to amuse him», to have «no thoughts whatsoever». Chrysanthème brings along little, «knowing that our married life would be of short duration». The only thing he admits to liking about the country is its «babies». By the end of the novel, he has figured out that he should refer to Chrysanthème's instrument as a shamisen instead of a guitar, and listening to her play, he feels momentarily «almost at home». When he parts he tells her she had been «pleasant enough» in her «Japanese way» and that he «perchance may yet think» of her at some point. Yet when pulling out of the harbor, he throws the dried lotus (perhaps a reminder of her) into the sea.[59] The relationship between them may have been of mutual consent, sex for money, but without love there is only marriage of convenience, not assimilation.

I recount details of this famous tale because it makes a strong argument against not only the desirability of assimilation, but also the very possibility of it, despite the well-acknowledged Japanese appropriation of many aspects of western civilization documented by Guimet and Régamey. In an essay on Japanese women published in 1890, Loti expresses an explicitly polygenist perspective, writing that «the yellow race and our own are the two opposite

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[59] P. Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème*, trans. L. Ensor, New York, Boni and Liveright, n.d., pp. 14, 19, 24-25, 36, 47, 49, 97, 142, 149, 194, 196, 232.

poles of the human species» and that «we can never fully penetrate the mind of a Japanese or a Chinese». Here he admits finding Tokyo full of Europeanized women, including the Princess (whom he met), and explains that to find a woman «*comme il faut*», he had to go «far from the recent railroads and all the imports of modern civilization where the age-long immobility of the country has not been disturbed».[60] Loti's narratives thus represent a perspective on race and Japonisme in the 1880s that is diametrically opposed to that of Guimet and Régamey, even if both reflect direct experience of Japan.

In 1888, the same year Loti's novel was published, the Théâtre de l'Odéon put on *La marchande des sourires*, a five-act play by Judith Gautier, another author who specialized in texts inspired by exotic places. It incorporated incidental music by Bénédictus, including charming butterfly and nightingale songs. The prologue, written by the poet Armand Silvestre, announces a «terrible drama», but also points out that it could take place in Paris. This time, however, it is not love that is universal, but women's «cruel and conquering power», responsible for betrayal and death across two generations. The prologue invokes the audience's nostalgia for an older Japan before it erased «every trace of its past that was so beautiful». The implication is that the story is in some ways authentic, to be embraced as «the last flower» of a dying people. Like Loti, Gautier refuses to embrace the «new Japan» even as she dedicates the play to the Japanese Minister to Paris, a Marquis, his title, like others, Europeanized by the Emperor after 1868.[61]

Such Japonisme, disdainful of contemporary realities, cannot be understood without acknowledging the debates over French colonies and the policy of assimilation. Whereas *Lakmé* was written during the height of imperialist expansion in 1883, these texts reflect the rising anticolonialist sentiment that grew significantly after the French suffered heavy losses in Tonkin in 1884. In December 1884 the Duke de Broglie, Prime Minister under the Moral Order and one of the leaders of those hoping for a return to monarchist government, argued in the Senate that colonial policy was a luxury forbidden to a France weakened after the Franco-Prussian war. With another crisis in Tonkin came serious division among republicans, and in March 1885 a new government. The colonies turned out to be a difficult testing ground for the republican the-

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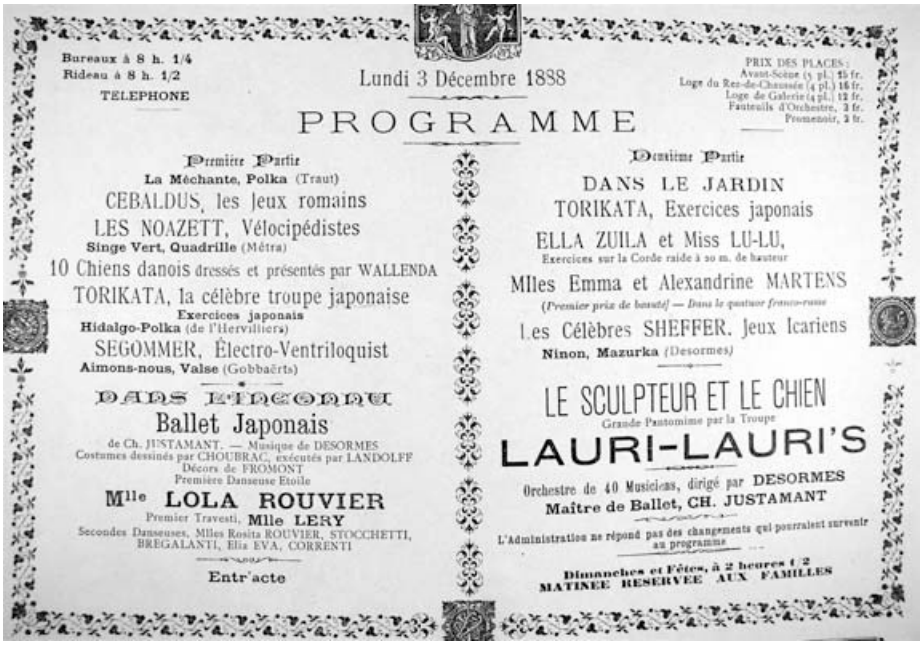
[60] P. LOTI, *Japanese Women in 1890*, in LOTI, *Carmen Sylva and Sketches from the Orient*, trans. F. Rothwell, New York, Macmillan, 1912, pp. 180f., 191, 213. The only stereotype he is willing to question is the notion that Japanese wear colorful clothing – these are reserved for the upper classes on State occasions or dancers and courtesans (p. 197).

[61] VAN RIJ, *Madame Butterfly*, p. 51, suggests that Puccini's librettist Luigi Illica was familiar with Judith Gautier's work and may have been inspired by certain scenes in writing Act II of *Madama Butterfly*. He sees this as the possible source of Butterfly's fantasy of meeting the emperor on the road and showing him her son.


Bureaux à 8 h. 1/4
Rideau à 8 h. 1/2
TELEPHONE

Lundi 3 Décembre 1888

PROGRAMME

PRIX DES PLACES :
Avant-Scène (5 pl.) 25 fr.
Loge du Rez-de-Chaussée (4 pl.) 16 fr.
Loge de Galerie (4 pl.) 12 fr.
Fauteuils d'Orchestre, 3 fr.
Promenoir, 2 fr.

Première Partie

La Méchante, Polka (Traut)

CEBALDUS, les Jeux romains

LES NOAZETT, Vélocipédistes

Singe Vert, Quadrille (Métra)

10 Chiens danois dressés et présentés par WALLENDA

TORIKATA, la célèbre troupe japonaise

Exercices japonais

Hidalgo-Polka (de l'Hervilliers)

SEGOMMER, Électro-Ventriloquist

Aimons-nous, Valse (Gobbaërts)

DANS L'INCONNU

Ballet Japonais

de Ch. JUSTAMANT. — Musique de DESORMES
Costumes dessinés par CHOUBRAC, exécutés par LANDOLFF
Décors de FROMONT
Première Danseuse Etoile

Mlle LOLA ROUVIER

Premier Travesti, Mlle LERY

Secondes Danseuses, Mlles Rosita ROUVIER, STOCCHETTI, BREGALANTI, Elia EVA, CORRENTI

Entr'acte

Deuxième Partie

DANS LE JARDIN

TORIKATA, Exercices japonais

ELLA ZUILA et Miss LU-LU,

Exercices sur la Corde raide à 10 m. de hauteur

Mlles Emma et Alexandrine MARTENS

(*Premier prix de beauté*) — *Dans le quatuor franco-russe*

Les Célèbres SHEFFER, Jeux Icariens

Ninon, Mazurka (Desormes)

LE SCULPTEUR ET LE CHIEN

Grande Pantomime par la Troupe

LAURI-LAURI'S

Orchestre de 40 Musiciens, dirigé par DESORMES

Maître de Ballet, CH. JUSTAMANT

L'Administration ne répond pas des changements qui pourraient survenir au programme

Dimanches et Fêtes, à 2 heures 1/2
MATINÉE RESERVÉE AUX FAMILLES

Fig. 5. Folies-Bergère program, 3 December 1888.

ory of «universalism». The notion of treating indigenous peoples as «equals», that is, of trying to assimilate them into the French system of government and create for them institutions and laws analogous to those of France, was neither simple nor evident. France's «civilizing mission» tended to ignore national as well as racial differences, those very aspects to which Loti draws attention.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, thanks to places like the Folies-Bergère, Parisians were increasingly exposed to Japanese people (Fig. 5). Wishing to capitalize on French fascination with Japanese acrobats and ballet-pantomimes on Japanese subjects such as *Dans l'inconnu* by the Folies-Bergère conductor, Desormes, composers again took to setting Japanese tales to music, among them Gaston Serpette's *Mé-na-ka*. Some also began to challenge Loti's disdain for contemporary realities. A ballet-pantomime accompanied by music, Laurent Grillet and Raoul Donval's *Papa Chrysanthème*, subtitled «*fantaisie japonaise et nautique à grand spectacle*», parodied Loti's novel at the Nouveau Cirque, as depicted in the drawings published by the populist newspaper, «Le Petit Journal» (12 December 1892) (Fig. 6).[62] The public loved it, in part because it featured their best clown, Chocolat, a black African

[62] JEAN SANS TERRE, «*Papa Chrysanthème*», «Le Petit Journal», 12 December 1892.

Papa Chrysanthème

Aimez-vous le Japon ? On en met partout en ce moment, et la fureur du jour c'est le délicieux petit ballet-pantomime que le Nouveau-Cirque a représenté sous ce titre bizarre : *Papa Chrysanthème.*

Vraiment les croquis qu'en a faits l'autre soir notre dessinateur sont jolis, jolis, et méritent d'être placés sous les yeux du lecteur. Ceux qui connaissent déjà *Papa Chrysanthème* et son petit monde japonais seront enchantés de le revoir avec toutes ces bonnes têtes. Ceux qui ne les connaissent pas les trouveront d'un japonisme amusant. Les deux êtres ci-dessus vous représentent Chocolat et Kiu-Fiu, le valet de chambre et la femme de chambre de M. Chrysanthème, un homme très bien, doublé d'une femme très bien aussi, Mme Chrysanthème, laquelle est représentée par un clown impayable dans ses minauderies. Ce couple de Tokio reçoit la visite d'un vieux savant, que représente l'excellent Medrano. Tout ce

le pif du nègre aujourd'hui célèbre de la rue Saint-Honoré, et le papa Chrysanthème explique enfin à ses amis qu'il attend le retour de son fils, parti pour l'Europe où il étudie le grec, le latin, l'anglais, l'espagnol... et aussi la chorégraphie, comme on le verra tout à l'heure, avec une jeune personne des plus aimables. Le fils à papa se présente à nos yeux, ayant à son bras la jeune Parisienne, car c'est de Paris qu'arrivent nécessairement les deux voyageurs.

La danse de la jeune almée qui arrive des Batignolles devant le mikado ravi est d'une grâce parfaite. On voit lui succéder un combat de coqs, — l'un vrai et l'autre en imitation, — désopilant de vraisemblance, puis la nuit se fait, sous le prétexte d'une pile épouvantable que le fils Chrysanthème vient d'administrer au souverain du Japon, et nous voyons se dérouler au clair de lune, sur l'eau qui vient inonder la piste, le plus joli ballet nocturne qu'on ait jamais vu à Paris. Ces libellules japonaises sont vraiment d'une poésie qu'on n'est pas habitué de trouver au cirque. Il y avait là une idée que M. Donval a fort adroitement su exploiter. Le passage de la fiancée du Japon sur les feuilles de nénuphars, au milieu de l'eau verte et toute bai-

temps, de ces trouvailles qu'il faut croquer et noter, car elles relèvent du crayon du dessinateur autant que de la plume de l'humoriste.

Jean sans Terre.

LES TRIBUNAUX

LA SUCCESSION D'UN CUISINIER

M. Félix Durijot, rentier, et ancien propriétaire d'un restaurant du Palais-Royal, mourait le 4 octobre 1884.

Par son testament, il laissait sa fortune, environ 250,000 francs, à ses deux neveux, à charge par eux d'exécuter toutes les clauses de ses dispositions dernières.

Parmi celles-là s'en trouvait une des plus singulières et dont voici le texte exact :

Voulant être utile, après ma mort, à mes concitoyens, écrivait l'excellent Durijot, et trouvant que les épitaphes où sont célébrées les vertus du défunt ne servent à rien, j'ordonne que la mienne soit remplacée, sur mon monument funèbre, par un cadre en bronze couvert d'un grillage et fixé au haut d'une colonne de marbre qui portera simplement mon nom.

Chaque jour, par les soins de mes héritiers, une RECETTE DE CUISINE très lisiblement écrite sera glissée dans la rainure du cadre. J'en laisse à cet effet trois cent soixante-six que l'on trouvera dans ma caisse. Au bout d'un an, on recommencera ; et ainsi de suite.

Comme cela, tout en allant visiter leurs morts, les personnes désireuses de s'instruire pourront rapporter du cimetière d'utiles renseignements.

Fig. 6. GRILLET, *Papa Crysanthème*, «Le Petit Journal», 2 December 1892.

who'd been with them for years, and Kiu-Fiu, a man dressed as a Japanese woman. They are servants of a Japanese couple who live surrounded by a collection of bizarre insects – an opportunity to make fun of servants and the scale of the world they thought the Japanese inhabited. The couple explain to an older visitor that they are awaiting the return of their son who has been in Europe studying Latin and Greek, English and Spanish. When he appears, we see he has brought back a girlfriend from Paris who, to gain their favor, performs a «gavotte» in dotted rhythms, a dance popular in Paris at the time. The drawing in «Le Petit Journal» makes her look like Loie Fuller, an American dancer who had just begun her wildly popular show at the Folies-Bergère that fall. In the second tableau, the Mikado makes an appearance and, in a kind of opium dream, his courtesans, joined by the fiancé, dance a slow waltz on water lilies floating on real water. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec painted this scene in his «At the Nouveau Cirque: Five Stuffed Shirts», possibly making fun of the elegantly dressed audience that frequented that circus. *Papa Chrysanthème* lasted for months.[63] Audiences apparently made no fuss about its reference to the possible marriage of the young Japanese man to his Parisian girlfriend, and seemed to enjoy the flattery implied by their embrace of the most recent Parisian fashions.

André Messager, who had also written a ballet-pantomime in 1891, likewise focused his attention on a «lyric comedy» based on Loti's novel. *Madame Chrysanthème* premiered on 26 January 1893, but was not well received. This work is closer to Loti than *Papa Chrysanthème*, but makes significant changes. Nowhere in the libretto is there any mention of the vases and fans to which Loti so often compared his experiences, although the scene that «Le Figaro» selected to reproduce on 8 February 1893 was the very one in which Pierre refers to Japan as «the land I've dreamed about». Whereas Loti leaves Pierre's birthplace vague, the librettists Hartman and Alexandre refer explicitly to «faraway Brittany», perhaps because for many French of the time Brittany signified the oldest part of the country and its racial origins. The references to Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer* and Pierre's song from Brittany situate the work musically more in France than Japan, as does the depiction of Chrysanthème. She resembles Ambroise Thomas's popular Mignon, a child of unknown parents and abandoned, someone who encourages the desire to protect her – none of this from Loti's novel. Perhaps the most significant alteration is the attention this work devotes to what was only mentioned in Loti's novel – Pierre's jealousy. This change not only humanizes Pierre, but

[63] «At the Nouveau Cirque: Five Stuffed Shirts» (circa 1892), Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1895 Louis Comfort Tiffany used this painting for the stained glass composition *Au Nouveau Cirque, Papa Chrysanthème* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) exhibited in Paris that year.

also forces the authors to humanize Chrysanthème. The result is more predictable. Like Lakmé, she falls in love with her exotic lover, although she is not forced to pay with her life.

With the recent discovery of two texts by an eye-witness describing the origins of John Luther Long's short story,[64] we can see that some amount of reality lies at the basis of *Madama Butterfly*. Loti's novel indeed was less of a model than we have assumed. Scholars have also found resemblances between Puccini's opera and certain of Messager's scenes; Puccini knew Messager and the latter was interested enough to attend the Milanese premiere.[65] But did Puccini know other critiques of Loti's novel, in particular that of Régamey, who offers the most radical rereading of the story, inverting Loti's premise? Régamey takes Chrysanthème's perspective through a diary she may have kept, entitling his novel, *Le cahier rose de Mme Chrysanthème*.[66] The focus here is on the woman's suffering. As in Messager, it ends with her tears.[67] As Matt Matsuda points out, «Régamey's Chrysanthème stakes out a feminine role as the true Japan [...] she is a true woman, passionate unto self-destruction [...] as well as the gauge of a shifting civilization».[68] To the extent that this also describes *Madama Butterfly*, it suggests that Puccini and his librettists recognized the Japanese assimilation of western mores and emotions more in the tradition of *Lakmé* and critiques of Loti's novel.

Racial distinction and national identity

By the 1890s, it became no longer fashionable to refer to the Japanese of fans and vases. When they took on the Chinese in a war over Korea's independence and defeated them at Port Arthur in 1894, the Japanese showed that modern technology could be used to defeat a country previously thought to be far more powerful. Even those most resistant to accepting the merits of their modernization had to admit that Japanese society had proven itself no longer stuck in the endless immobility of tradition. Only months before they defeated the Chinese, «L'Illustration» depicted Japanese soldiers on the fields

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64 *Fonti*, pp. 19-24; Groos, *Madame Butterfly: The Story*, «Cambridge Opera Journal», III, 1991, pp. 125-158. Girardi, p. 209, suggests that the wife of the Japanese ambassador to Rome told Puccini of a similar story «that really happened».

65 Carner, *Puccini*, p. 414.

66 This appeared in a special issue of «La Plume» (15 October 1893) dedicated to *La femme au Japon*.

67 Budden, p. 230, notes that in this version the lieutenant seems «stupid, insensitive, and cowardly».

68 Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, pp. 181-184.

playing bugles, instruments associated uniquely with the West and, for the most part, Western soldiers.

The musical world subsequently paid more attention to Japan than it had in the 1870s and 1880s. Popular magazines published musical scores and stories based on Japanese subjects. In 1895 a family magazine, «Magasin des demoiselles», published a march, *La Japonaise*, whose four-measure phrases and four-phrase sections could easily have been played by military bands. In rondo form, the opening material comes back fortissimo at the end, expressing a kind of triumph, albeit with limited materials. In the chic «Figaro illustré», the background of the opening lithograph of *Les Yeux fermés*, a pantomime by Régamey with music by Charles Malherbe, there are smokestacks, their billowing clouds blocking view of the palaces and temples of the capital. One of two characters in the story, the female, is blind, perhaps an itinerant singer, giving the author a way to ignore what was going on in the country and focus on love.

In March 1895, «Le Ménestrel» published its first article on Japanese music, in part to flesh out for their readers a recent report that the Japanese were introducing western music in their schools and that the new Tokyo Conservatory had been sending students to Europe to «perfect themselves in our musical art». The short essay, again a book review, has two perspectives.[69] Like Gautier, the author bemoans the demise of traditional Japanese culture, emphasizing which instruments are specifically Japanese, not descendents of the Chinese whom they «are in the midst of subjugating» in the war. He suggests that «true Japanese song» is a product of «the national spirit», which he essentializes as naive and expressing a feeling for nature. Included is a short monophonic musical example, again in a very straight-forward 4/4. At the same time, he points out that Japanese military bands are organized as in France, using drums and trumpets. When it comes to music performed on the ships such as those that «have just given the Chinese a harsh lesson», he notes that traditional songs are forbidden in such contexts, replaced by military music as on French ships.

In August 1895, «Le Figaro» decided that since the Japanese were becoming known as warriors and diplomats in addition to artists, it was time the French public became more aware of their music (Ex. 4). Explaining that traditional music was never written down and than the Empress and most modern Japanese composers had taken to studying western harmony, they decided to publish two kinds of music. The first is a hymn that school children sang for the Mikado when he returned to the capital after signing the peace treaty

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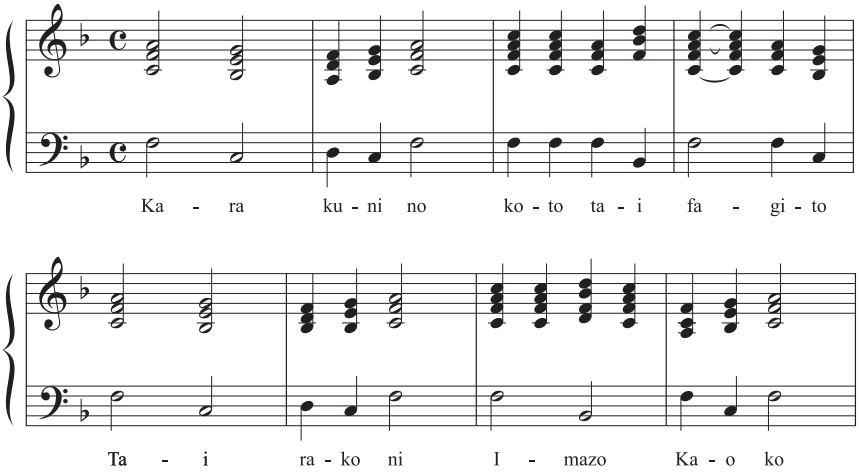
[69] O. BN., *La Musique japonaise*, «Le Ménestrel», 10 March 1895, pp. 76f. This time an Englishwoman, Mlle Smith, is summarizing the book.



Ex. 4a. *Hymne*, Chanté par une Ecole japonaise à l'occasion du retour du Mikado dans sa Capitale après la signature du traité de paix avec la Chine, «Le Figaro», 4 August 1895.

with China. Its four-square rhythms and simple harmonies exemplify the extent of Japanese assimilation of western musical models. The second is a Japanese song by a famous Japanese poet-composer, an example of traditional music but presented as a «Franco-Japanese collaboration» with an accompaniment by a professor from the Paris Conservatory.[70]

The war had drawn attention to an issue that was increasingly important to those focused on nation building: the validity of polygenism. Intellectuals espousing this perspective rejected the idea that man is everywhere equal. Those not interested in assimilation, like Gustave Le Bon, believed that the nature of a people – its soul, or its «forms of thought, logic, and above all character» – is both fixed and homogeneous, not alterable by education or intelligence. Music, like language dialects, was increasingly brought in to support this theory as well as the categorization of races as primitive, inferior, average, and superior.[71] With the war, old essentialisms about the Japanese returned, especially when examining indigenous popular song, a genre the French took as emblematic of racial identity all over the world.[72]

Since the French understood nearly everything associated with a culture as the «fruit of a civilization», by 1900 even its acrobat exercises in the circus

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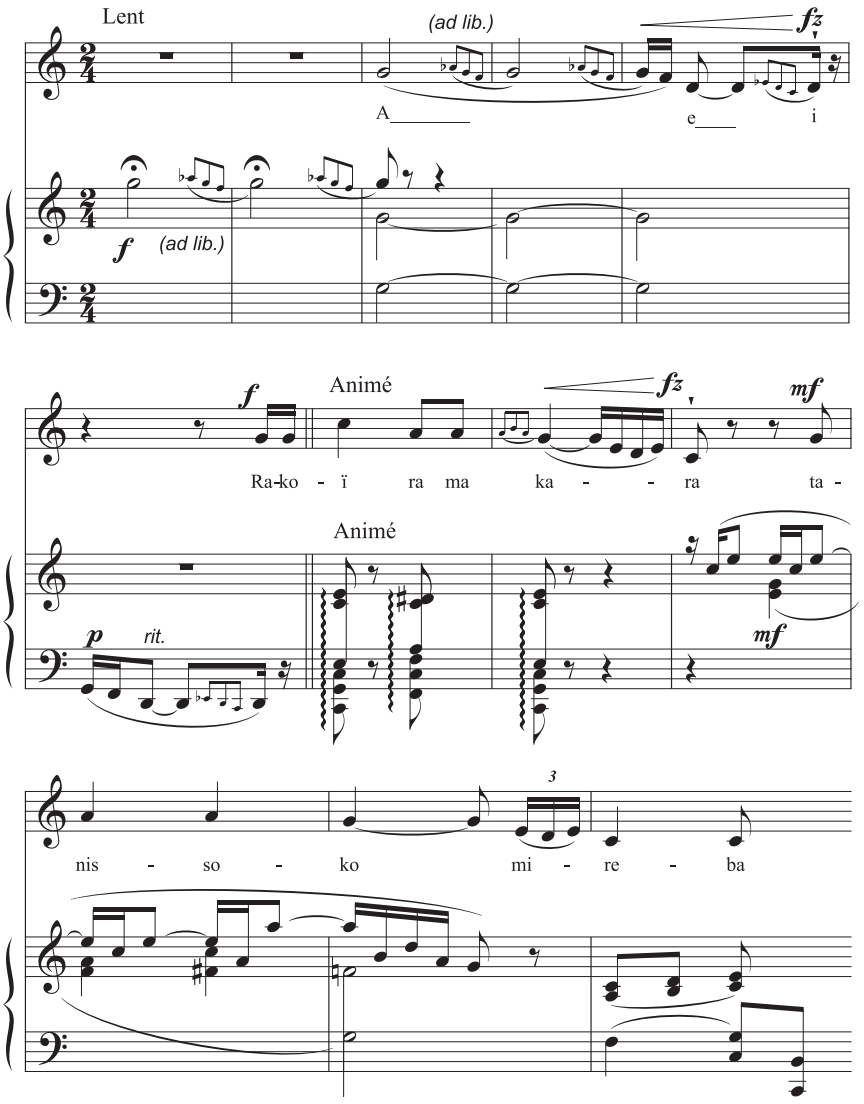
[70] *Notre page musicale*, «Le Figaro», 21 August 1895.

[71] G. Le Bon, *Les lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples* (1894), translated as *The Psychology of Peoples*, New York, 1924, pp. 37, 126.

[72] See my *Race and Nation: Musical Acclimatization and the Chansons Populaires in Third Republic France*, in *Western Music and Race*, ed. J. Brown, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.



Ex. 4b. *Mélodie Japonais pour chant*, de Motoyosi Saïzau, Accompagnement adapté par M. Henri Lavignac, «Le Figaro», 4 August 1895.

and music hall were seen as opportunities to contemplate performers as racial specimens – Russians, Americans, Romanians, and especially Japanese.[73] The style of Japanese acrobats was so distinct, with its emphasis on horizontal and vertical exercises, that it comprised a category all its own. One reviewer refers

[73] G. STREHLY, *L'acrobatie et les acrobats*, Paris, Delagrave, 1903, pp. 12, 269.

explicitly to race as the reason this style remained stable for so long and thus why Japanese routines resembled one another. The Torikata troupe, featured on Folies-Bergère programs, was famous specifically for exercises in which they hung over the orchestra seats on three bamboo poles without any protective net.

Direct encounters with Japanese musicians and dancers in performances by Sada Yacco's troupe at the 1900 Paris Exhibition coincided with a shift among the French from focusing on similarities and what could be shared to acknowledging differences and racial distinctions.[74] Building on Le Bon's theories, Léopold de Saussure's *Psychologie de la colonisation française dans ses rapports avec les sociétés indigènes* (1899) renewed criticism of the application of assimilation to education, institutions, and language. In an entire chapter on «the case of Japan», he argues that although the French who promoted «the doctrine of assimilation and the equality of the races» often looked to Japan as a model example, the Japanese never assimilated western morals. Without these, there was only imitation, not true assimilation. And if the Japanese adopted some western customs, particularly in the military, it was to «better struggle against the spirit and beliefs of the West». Japanese culture, then, is not a «mixture», but a «superimposition of modern civilization over a hereditary foundation of ideas absolutely opposed to ours». Attempts at assimilation, Saussure concluded, have led to a crisis producing more hatred toward Europeans.[75]

The gradual shift from assimilation to association in French colonial policy had a significant impact on colonial attitudes. The 1900 Colonial Congress, increasingly anti-assimilationist, unanimously voted that indigenous institutions and customs should be respected and maintained as much as possible. The 1900 History of Music Congress called for an international society to gather popular melodies in all countries using the phonograph to record them. The hope of capturing and understanding something authentic in a distant culture was thus tied to an acceptance of the near impossibility of true assimilation.

Tiersot's «ethnographic notes» from the 1900 Exhibition, published in «Le Ménestrel» throughout that fall, reflect these changes. He claimed to be seeking a music not «contaminated by European influences» and wanted to study «exclusively the races most different from ours and the people most

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[74] The American dancer Loie Fuller, made famous by her serpentine dances at the Folies-Bergère beginning in 1892, sponsored Saddo Yacco's troupe. She designed the lighting for the spectacle and publicized it.

[75] SASSURE, *Psychologie de la colonisation française*, pp. 277-279, 284, 291.

distant from us».[76] This included Japan. He soon realized he understood almost nothing. His first analytical piece concentrates on two instruments, the koto and the shamisen, but his transcriptions capture none of the floating rhythms he otherwise tries to describe. He had to get performers to play selections for him repeatedly before he could grasp enough to notate. His second example notates a butterfly dance with staccatos and arching lines resembling those in Lecocq's *Yedda*, but in a modal mixture of hypodorian and dorian (Ex. 5).

In the spirit of letting the music speak for itself, he does not compose a Western accompaniment. Tiersot later discusses what the French had known about but tended to ignore, that is, the manner in which music was taught in Japanese schools following western models. Sada Yacco's performances come in the last reviews and, to help the French understand the nature of the tragedies represented, he compares them to the theater of ancient Greece – a high compliment indeed. He also refers to an 1885 study of Japanese theater by Guimet and Régamey.[77] After all this, Tiersot has to admit he finds Japanese music not as accomplished as the other Japanese arts and its dance much better than its theater.

In 1904, just after the war had begun and Puccini's opera was premiered, «Le Ménestrel» published frequent reports about Japanese music. In the spirit of the neutrality that France had declared, the journal interspersed seven such reports on Japan with several on Russia. On March 13, predictably, they note that most westerners who have heard Japanese music find it «barbarous» or «at least very primitive». Even the Japanese national anthem is «without value». They go on to cite the many warrior songs with texts oriented to motivating soldiers to take on the Russians. On 20 March, they cite the perspective of a Russian newspaper that likewise finds the music «appalling noise». On 1 May they describe Sada Yacco's efforts to contribute to the war by traveling among the soldiers, studying them to create a series of military dramas that would enflame Japanese patriotism. In both Yokohama and St. Petersburg audiences could go to the theater to see plays based on the battle of Port Arthur, obviously from two different perspectives. In November, with the Japanese winning, the topic of assimilation returns with the punch line: they've appropriated our music and look what they're capable of. In Tokyo, the Japanese Beethoven Society was praised for its concerts of German classics as well as Liszt and Strauss. On one occasion, the principal Tokyo orchestra

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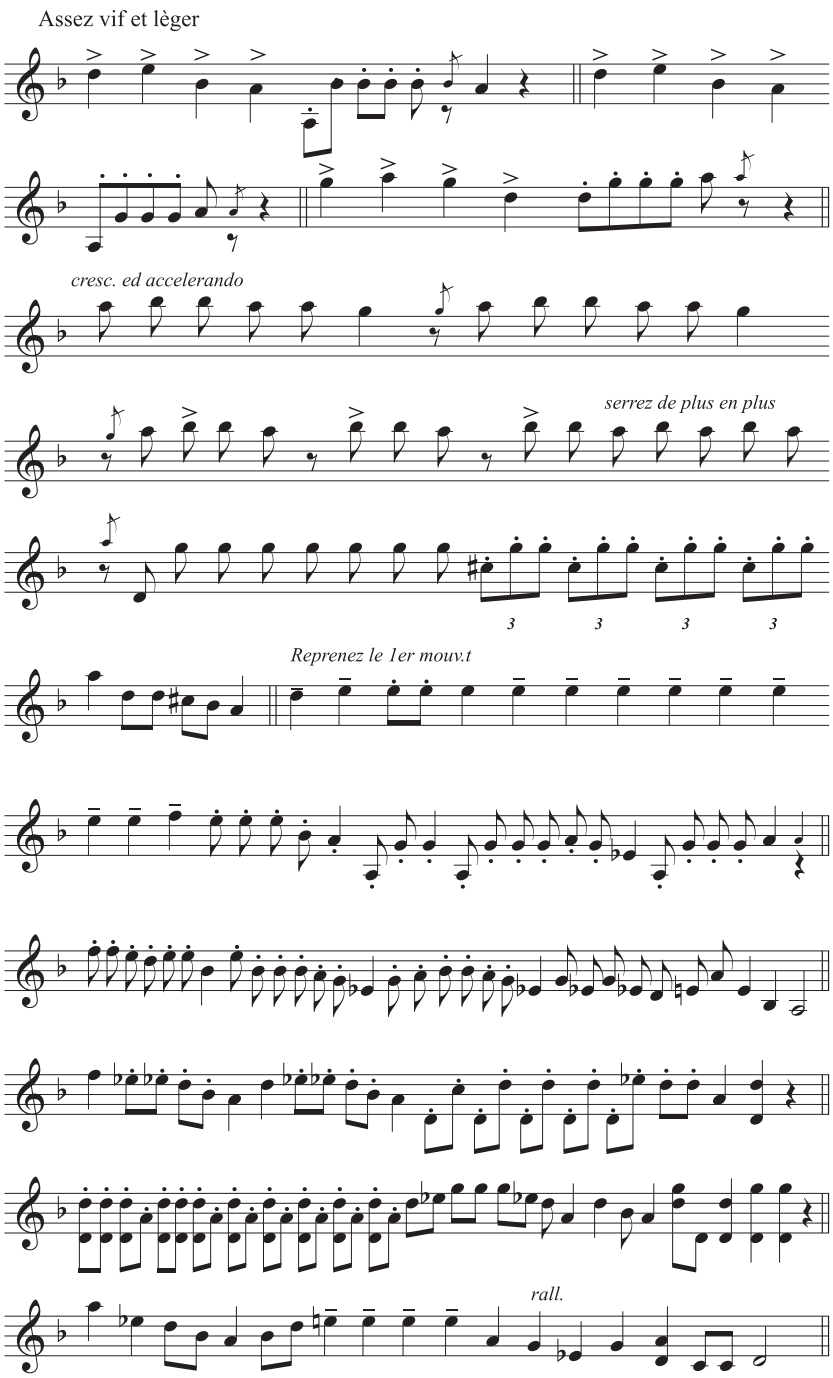
[76] J. TIERSOT, *Ethnographie musicale, Notes prises à l'Exposition universelle de 1900*, «Le Ménestrel», 14 October 1900, p. 324.

[77] See their essay in the *Bulletin du cercle Saint-Simon*, 1885, pp. 108-111.



Ex. 5. TIERSOT, *Notes d'une ethnographie musicale*, *La Danse du papillon*.

set Japanese victory songs to triumphal music from Handel's *Judas Machabeus*, and on another, someone modified Goethe's *Faust*, casting a European as Mephisto while Gretchen, leaving behind the West, gives her hand to a victorious Japanese soldier returning from Manchuria. This appropriation of western stories and western music for Japanese purposes points to the increased capacity for individual agency in Japan after 1900.

In many ways, Puccini's opera sits on the liminal boundary between the old and new worlds, with Cio-Cio-San caught in the middle. As Groos points out, Puccini gives her a variety of introductory melodies, «signifying different possibilities for the construction of her character and her fate». Her willingness to embrace Christianity and the west requires that she turn away from her Japanese group identity, that she act on her own will.[78] After 1872 the Japanese would have defined themselves in terms of family. Even to prepare for military conscription, «'being Japanese' was legally defined through enrollment in the family registration system».[79] But in 1899 Japan passed its first citizenship laws. Of course, these had a gender bias, since women were not expected to go to war and continued to have limited rights. Still, might an awareness of such assimilation of western mores in Japan (and perhaps the desire for citizenship among Japanese women) have affected the construction of Cio-Cio-San's character, especially when she proclaims herself an American citizen, melodically recalling the «Star-Spangled Banner»?

When we examine its changing meanings in France, Japonisme emerges as far more than an innocent fashion. If Italians looked to the French for most of their knowledge about Japanese culture, they surely were aware of changes in French attitudes toward Japan after 1895, especially their increased distrust and hostility to the possibility of assimilation. Puccini, like Gautier, may have looked to the Japanese aesthetic to inspire an impressionist approach to color and design, but he was not oblivious to what Japan had come to connote by 1900. His powerful intimate tragedy may have been an attempt to humanize a people whom too many westerners understood through stereotypes, their apparently passive, delicate women only as «dolls». But with the war forcing audiences to come to grips with the consequences of Japanese assimilation of western industrial progress, the realities of assimilation suddenly metamorphosed from an ideal into a threat. Understanding the political context is thus crucial to any full understanding of the conception, creation, and reception of the opera.

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[78] GROOS 3, pp. 64-68.

[79] T. MORRIS-SUZUKI, *Becoming Japanese: Imperial Expansion and Identity Crises in the Early Twentieth Century*, in *Japan's Competing Modernities. Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900-1930*, ed. S.A. Minichiello, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1998, p. 160.

CODA: ANOTHER POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

In reality, given the common practice of soldiers and merchants taking temporary «wives» while in Japan, there were probably many people on whom *Madama Butterfly* could have been based. One of these, Kuraba Tomisaburo, did go to the United States in the early 1890s and spend two years studying at the University of Pennsylvania, recalling the son in *Papa Chrysanthème*. He returned to Japan without graduating and chose to spend his life in Nagasaki, albeit with a complicated mixed identity.[80] Jenny Correll and her husband were living in Nagasaki between 1892 and 1897 and may have known about him or others when they witnessed a similar affair that Jenny recounted to her brother John Luther Long upon her return to the States in 1897, adding an ironic wrinkle to the source upon which Belasco based his play and Puccini his opera.[81] That both Belasco and Puccini decided to concentrate on the vigil and end the work by suicide suggests that after 1900 the utopian promise of assimilation idealized by missionaries and colonialists such as the French was beginning to be questioned, and the possibility of its illusion mourned as a tragedy. That Puccini and his librettists chose to end the work in this way, rather than as in Long's short story or the Loti novel, suggests that he was taking a stand on this problem in his *Madama Butterfly*.

It is likely that audiences were touched by the potential of Cio-Cio-San's dream of assimilation into American society in particular. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thousands of Italians as well as Asians fled poverty at home to search for work in America, often helping to build the country's extensive railroad lines. In 1907, my great-grandfather was among them. Italian-Americans understood each other's needs and desires. They produced their own newspapers to help immigrants both stay connected to their homeland and integrate into the new community. Every issue of the newspaper «L'Italia», published in Chicago, listed the arrival or departure dates for dozens of ships coming to and from Italy (Fig. 7).[82] It devoted three

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[80] As Jan van Rij points out in *Madame Butterfly*, Tomisaburo (b. 1870), son of Thomas Glover and Kaga Maki, was registered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1891. After returning to Japan, he maintained a Japanese address in the 1890s but also, until his father died, «registered in the annual lists of foreigners in Japan under the name T.A. Glover». Because of similarities to the story, Van Rij sees him as the model for Cho-Cho-San's son in John Luther Long's *Madame Butterfly* (pp. 123-128). However, GROOS, *Madame Butterfly: The Story*, argues that this connection to Glover is highly unlikely (p. 126, n. 3). It has also recently been refuted by Nagasaki historian B. BURKE-GAFFNEY, *Starcrossed: A Biography of Madame Butterfly*, Berkeley, Eastbridge, 2004, pp. 158-190.

[81] VAN RIJ, *Madame Butterfly*, pp. 111, 116.

[82] The White Star Line had a direct service between Naples or Genoa and Boston that took eleven days. The Compagnie Fabre, Linea Amburghese Americana, Linea Postale Italiana, and

full columns of «Le Associazioni Italiane di Chicago» as well as three more of «gli avvisanti dell'*Italia*». There, new arrivals could find Italian doctors, pharmacies, churches, and even music teachers. Moreover, articles regularly addressed the state of immigration into the United States, reporting, for example, that it had decreased 15% in the first six months of 1904 as compared with 1903.[83]

Not surprisingly, in 1904 the Russian-Japanese war made the front pages of «L'Italia». From 6 February until the end of April, «La Guerra» appeared in bold letters on the front page at the top of the first two columns. This featured not only news about the war, but also Italians' response to it. The paper also understood Italian immigrants' love of opera and the role music could play in nationalist pride. In January 1903, before international politics became so worrisome, Verdi and Mascagni made their front page. For the premiere of *Madama Butterfly* in Milan, «L'Italia» cited from Ricordi's journal, «Musica e musicisti», and excerpted the libretto. A few days later it announced the second performance in Brescia in May; it also informed Italian-Americans not only that Puccini would change the opera into three acts, but also what specific revisions he was making: «darà maggior sviluppo alla parte del tenore; sopprimerà l'episodio dell'ubbriaco; accorcerà la scena della cerimonia nuziale, rendendola meno ridicola, nonché quella del figlio; variando, fors'anche, la chiusa del dramma»,[84] news to which readers of the «Corriere della sera» were not privy.

What is even more remarkable, that very day, 19 March, the Grand Opera House of Chicago featured a *Madame Butterfly* by the Blanche Bates Company (see top right of Fig. 7). The leader of this troupe, an American actress, specialized in the plays of David Belasco. Her first major success was as Cho-Cho-San in his *Madame Butterfly* (1900), then in his *Darling of the Gods* (1902), another Japanese melodrama based on a John Luther Long novella.[85] Bates performed Belasco's *Madame Butterfly* and *Darling of the Gods* through early April. Chicago audiences could also see *The Sho-Gun*, a Japanese operetta, at the Studebaker theater that spring. The Grand Opera may have put aside opera and musical comedy to perform the Belasco plays both in re-

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the Prince Line sailed between Naples and New York in twelve days. The Anchor Line also sailed between Naples and California.

[83] *L'immigrazione agli Stati Uniti*, «L'Italia», 11 June 1904; *L'immigrazione nell'America*, «L'Italia», 10 December 1904.

[84] «*Madama Butterfly*» *di G. Puccini*, «L'Italia», 5 March 1904; «*Madama Butterfly*», «L'Italia», 19 March 1904.

[85] In November 1904, Belasco began to write for her *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905), which Puccini later also set to music. See CH. OSBORNE, *The Complete Operas of Puccini*, New York, Da Capo, 1983, p. 180, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blanche_Bates.

sponse to the western world's preoccupation with conflict in the Far East and in anticipation of Puccini's opera. Given Puccini's international orientation and how closely Italian-Americans followed his *Madama Butterfly*, down to its revisions, we should not ignore that American immigrants were also part of the political subtext of the opera.

We are only now beginning to come to grips with the difficulties American immigrants had in achieving assimilation.[86] If Belasco and Puccini were aware of this, did they think, especially after anxiety about the Japanese calmed down, that Italians with relatives in the United States and especially Italian-Americans might identify with Cio-Cio-San? Puccini's character was exotic, but she was also like Italian immigrants and many others, who, while rooted to their culture's traditions, wished to emerge like a butterfly, transforming one life into another and leaving everything behind for a new life abroad, even if they might meet devastating rejection and never achieve full assimilation. Cio-Cio-San reminded these immigrants of their difference, their otherness, and the cruel realities of contemporary life.[87] As such, the opera is a metaphor for the modern diaspora. Its tragic ending suggests that, as with so many immigrants, actual assimilation often has to wait for the next generation.

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[86] For a recent example of such scholarship, see CH. HIROSHI GARRETT, *Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America's Borders with Musical Orientalism*, «Journal of the American Musicological Society», LVII, 2004, pp. 119-174.

[87] S. HOSOKAWA, *Nationalizing Cho-Cho-San: The Signification of Butterfly Singers in a Japanese-Brazilian Community*, «Japanese Studies», XIX, 1999, pp. 253-268, discusses the Japanese immigrant community's response to the opera in Brazil, especially when featuring a Japanese singer in the principal role. He concludes, «Exoticism is usually taken as the product of Other; nationalism as the product of self. But the reality is contrary: exoticism is made by the difference in self and nationalism is formed by the presence of Other» (p. 267).