

## Excerpt from On the wings of 'Butterfly' // Harrisburg Opera's back with Puccini tragedy

The Patriot-News, Harrisburg, PA

by DAVID N. DUNKLE

Date: October 2, 2005



Tami Swartz is performing "Butterfly" for the first time, but she has extensive opera experience, including a role in HOA's production of "Candide" in 2001.

The soprano has performed with opera companies across the country, and she was Elizabeth Tilton in the world premiere of "Mrs. Satan" with the Center for Contemporary Opera in New York City.

It was there she met Adam Klein, a tenor who now is her significant other and co-star in "Butterfly."

Klein, who also will direct, will reprise what, for him, is a familiar role, the American naval officer named Pinkerton who marries and then abandons Butterfly. He's done the role seven other times, in cities such as Dallas, Indianapolis and Boston.

"My voice, my stature and looks are kind of right for it, and I look good in a Navy uniform," Klein said by way of explanation.

He believes Pinkerton is a product of his times.

"You can view him as an insensitive gaijin [foreigner]," Klein said, "or you can see him as someone who thinks he's paying

for a temporary wife. The foreigners who went [to Japan] wouldn't have had these women without the Japanese brokers who sold them."

"Butterfly" has become a sort of study project Klein, and he plans to make HOA's version more historically accurate than the usual production.

For instance, he said, Western-style clothing already was prevalent in Japan at the time of Butterfly and Pinkerton.

They have a good resource in Frances Swartz, who grew up in the Japanese City of Kagoshima. The city is not far from Nagasaki, the setting for "Butterfly."

It was so close that she remembers seeing a glow in the sky on 1945 day when Nagasaki was hit by an atomic bomb. She later relocated to the United States and attended Messiah College. She said the landscape of Central Pennsylvania remind her of her homeland.

Tami Swartz said she has drawn strength from her mother, both as a singer and in preparation for "Butterfly."

"I heard her singing probably since I was inside her," said Tami Swartz. "She was my first teacher. And through her, I have a better understanding of what it means to be Japanese."

DAVID N. DUNKLE: 255-8266 or [daviddunkle@patriot-news.com](mailto:daviddunkle@patriot-news.com)

IF YOU GO "Madama Butterfly," 7: 30 p.m. Thursday and Saturday, Whitaker Center, 222 Market St., Harrisburg. The Harrisburg Opera Association production stars Tami Swartz in the title role, with Lara Wilson, Adam Klein and Timothy Lafontaine. English translations will be offered via electronic supertitles. Tickets are \$35 and \$25 (\$20 for students, seniors, groups of 10 or more). Box seats are \$50. Call 214-2787 or visit [www.whitakercenter.org](http://www.whitakercenter.org).

## **Press Release: August 2005**

**By Tami Swartz and Adam Klein**

### **Why Butterfly?**

Why with all the *Madama Butterfly's* including Harrisburg Opera's production in 1999, would HOA want to produce it now? Why would HOA patrons want to come see it again after only 6 years? What does it mean for those who have never seen it and why should they?

- Because there has likely never been a more historically accurate version of *Madama Butterfly*.
- Because there has never been a *Madama Butterfly* with surtitles so close to the original meaning of the dialogue on stage.
- Because there has probably never been a production of *Madama Butterfly* with such a great cast of acting singers.

When Butterfly debuted a century ago, Japonisme had brought the flavor of the Japanese culture to the west, but got many of the details wrong - details that left uncorrected merely served to prolong general western ignorance of eastern ways. Godzilla, baseball and sushi are not the sum total of Japanese civilization. By subtly correcting certain historical, cultural and linguistic inaccuracies we will now be able to give you a more accurate window into the world when American and Japanese relations were new and when prejudices between the cultures were blatant. And indeed, Puccini's semi-fictional window opened a century ago still echoes into the present. With this production we hope that you will better see the differences, and ironically enough, the similarities between two proud cultures and see the importance of understanding between diverse societies.

Additionally, accurate surtitles have been created for this production to further your understanding of the drama that is being played out on the stage. Not only do they depict the true meaning of the Italian dialogue, but they also now reflect the prosaic differences in the characters' speech patterns.

Finally, the dramatic element has been heightened by finding true singing actors for the roles. Seldom will you see assembled an opera cast whose vocal talent is so equally complimented by their theatrical ability. Sometimes you might forget that they're singing...and they look good, too!

We at Harrisburg Opera Association hope you will honor us with your presence. We look forward to entertaining you and sincerely hope that you will enjoy our unique production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

Kind Regards,

Tami Swartz and Adam Klein