

A Grand Opera: Grace Eun and Dohee Kim Share Role in “Madame Butterfly”

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Promotional art for Madame Butterfly, which will be presented by Lyric Opera Northwest on March 13 and 15 at Moore Theatre.

Giacomo Puccini’s opera **Madame Butterfly** again graces Seattle’s stages: Lyric Opera Northwest will present two performances on March 13 and 15 at the Moore Theatre.

In this presentation, the role of Cio-Cio San (Madame Butterfly) will be shared by Grace Eun and Dohee Kim, and both are enthusiastic about their upcoming performances.

“I performed *Madame Butterfly* in 2006 with the Lyric Opera Northwest for my debut,” said Kim. “It is so meaningful to me to perform the debut opera again after 10 years.”

Likewise, Eun is looking forward to the challenge. “Madame Butterfly is one of the most beautiful, long, and difficult operas for an accomplished soprano.”

Both performers are compelled by the tragic emotion of Cio-Cio's story. "This grand opera has intimate, emotionally-charged exotic music with Japanese folk tunes throughout, which no other opera has," said Eun.

"A lot of roles in opera face a sad end," said Kim. "But Cio-Cio San has the most dramatic fate."

To perform such a role successfully, Eun and Kim have faced both professional and personal challenges. "The show is very long and Cio-Cio is on the stage almost the whole time," Eun said. "It's not only vocally demanding, but physically as well."

This places heavy requirements upon the performers during rehearsal. "One can't speak much because it's very bad for singing this strenuous of music," Eun said. "One has to make sure she's well-nourished, and has exercised, rested, slept enough, just like an athlete."

Kim also emphasized the importance of balance between home and work. "Being a mom of two boys has been the biggest challenges of my career," she said. "I have always tried to keep both my performing career and family life the best, but it would have not been easy without support and sacrifice from my family members."

This production brings together many performing artists whose careers have developed alongside each other, including Mary Mariko Ohno of the Kabuki Academy, who will direct the kimono movement of Eun and Kim.

Eun said that Ohno is a "favorite of the Japanese community," and that collaborating with her "will also be a special treat."

For her part, Ohno is looking forward to working on *Madame Butterfly* again. "This is my second time, conducting their movements with kimono, with this production," Ohno said. "Last time was 2006, and I did dance by myself on the same stage of *Madame Butterfly* with an orchestra. It was such an honor."

Ohno enjoys directing as much as she has enjoyed performing. "It is very joyful time, showing them the correct ways of walking or moving with kimono, using fan or parasol gracefully," she said. "This is my mission, sharing traditional Japanese culture and performing arts with them."

She hopes that *Madame Butterfly* will be another avenue for Seattlites to learn about Japanese culture. "Being a Goodwill Ambassador from Japan, my dream

really came true,” Ohno said. “I’ve been enjoying teaching and sharing Japanese dance, shamisen music, culture, and language for over 30 years with hundreds of enthusiasts all over the USA. My Kabuki Academy door is always open and welcoming everybody.”

Kim said the same of Lyric Opera Northwest. “For more than a decade, we have been working hard to enrich the quality of life in the area.”

And Eun believes that this production is an ideal avenue to support these goals: “The story of *Madame Butterfly* is a classic not to be missed.”

Madame Butterfly will be presented by Lyric Opera Northwest on March 13 and 15 at Moore Theatre, 1932 Second Avenue, Seattle. For more information, visit www.lonw.org/events.html.