

barbican



Classical Music

Concert programme

**Huang Ruo's
M. Butterfly**

Fri 25 Oct 7.30pm

Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 10.15pm, with a 20-minute interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

Huang Ruo's M. Butterfly

Fri 25 Oct 7.30pm, Hall

Huang Ruo composer
David Henry Hwang librettist

BBC Symphony Orchestra
Carolyn Kuan conductor
Kangmin Justin Kim Song Liling
Mark Stone René Gallimard
Fleur Barron Comrade Chin/Shu Fung
Kevin Burdette Manuel Toulon/Judge
Charne Rochford Marc
Ciara Hendrick Agent No 1
Peter Davoren Agent No 2
BBC Singers

James Robinson director
Kimberley Prescott revival director
Allen Moyer stage designer
James Schuette costume designer
Christopher Akerlind original
production lighting designer
Greg Emetaz projections designer

Huang Ruo *M. Butterfly*

There will be one 20-minute interval after Act 1

Production originally designed for and created by
The Santa Fe Opera

Co-produced by the Barbican
and BBC Symphony Orchestra

Recorded for broadcast in BBC Radio 3's Opera
on 3 on Saturday 9 November and available for
30 days after broadcast via BBC Sounds

BBC
Symphony
Orchestra



The City of London
Corporation is the founder
and principal funder
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David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, a smash-hit Broadway play turned movie, now metamorphoses into music theatre with this, the UK premiere of Huang Ruo's operatic reworking. Kangmin Justin Kim and Mark Stone reprise the roles they created to great acclaim in Santa Fe.

The Creators in Conversation

James Keller: The story that evolved into *M. Butterfly* took place from the 1960s to the 1980s and began to be told in newspapers in 1986. Attitudes about sexual fluidity, gender choices and cultural stereotypes have changed so much since then – even in the few years since you started working on this opera. How do you think such shifts may change how an audience approaches *M. Butterfly*?

David Henry Hwang: It is very satisfying that the culture has moved in this direction and that *M. Butterfly* can be an example for thinking about this. Another thing I feel good about is that *M. Butterfly* the play – which goes back to 1988 – was putting forward the idea that sexism, racism and imperialism are all related, which we would now refer to as intersectionality. Now that gender is so much more understood and central to cultural discussion, a challenge with *M. Butterfly* is that it doesn't become dated in some of the ways that Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is. Our opera does not look at gender in as binary a way as the original play did. The play was built around a very binary 'gotcha', where you think the character is a woman but it's a man. In the opera, we try to look in particular at Song Liling's identity as more fluid, as existing across a range rather than being simply binary.



Huang Ruo: I think that for opera companies today, just putting on operas such as *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot* without doing anything extra to address issues they raise – to me that doesn't reflect the society we are today. Yes, we created this opera in a kind of a different world, but this intention of Western bias has always been there in David's original story. That message was consistent. I feel this is a good time for the unleashing of *M. Butterfly*. Opera companies could conceive of programming it as a companion piece to *Madama Butterfly*, not necessarily in the same season but in adjacent seasons, as a kind of update. We should not reject the earlier operas, because they were created as they were for various reasons in an earlier era. Without them, we wouldn't see the image in the mirror that reflects what we are trying to address in our opera.

DHH: I used to say the play was a deconstruction, but I feel that that's a younger man's interpretation of what I was doing. Now I can describe it as a conversation, because these things we're discussing are about our relationship to – and appreciation of – classic works, and the complexity of feelings brought about by certain ideas and the fact of some things just being wrong. We know more now. I like to think that *M. Butterfly* uses a mirror reflection of *Madama Butterfly* as a starting point to create another love story, which is also complicated, problematic in its own way, but hopefully is able to rise to some of the emotional heights we experience when we watch and listen to the original opera.

JK: Do you think this opera could be presented in China?

HR: To me that is unknown. Even Adams's *Nixon in China* is not performed there. Things change rapidly, but for now we want to bring the opera out to the world, and let the power and strength of the piece withstand time so that people can see it eventually.

DHH: The last time I remember hearing about an attempt to do the play *M. Butterfly* in China was in 2009. It was produced in English by what I think was primarily a company of expats in a 200-seat theatre – so only for foreigners. There were to be five performance and it got shut down after three.

JK: David, in an afterword you wrote for the second edition of your play, in 1989, you said that *M. Butterfly* had been regarded by some as anti-American. How was that, since the United States only figures in the plot as the object of espionage by a French diplomat?

DHH: It was criticised as anti-American in some quarters. One critic wrote that if David Henry Hwang hates America so much, maybe his father should have stayed in China. It's what we now call white fragility. It is effective when an audience perceives the play as having to do with their own lives and their own culture. The play has been performed in three dozen countries and translated into many languages. We talked about the play not being done in China. The other country where it has never been produced is France: there are sensitivities on both sides of this story.

JK: Huang Ruo, your opera *Dr Sun Yat-Sen*, which was performed at Santa Fe Opera in 2014, exists in parallel versions – one with an orchestra of Western instruments, one with an orchestra of Eastern instruments. Do you envision a similar possibility with *M. Butterfly*?

HR: Actually, there are three versions of *Dr Sun Yat-Sen*, because in Santa Fe we used an orchestra of Western instruments plus some Chinese instruments. Santa Fe Opera kindly offered to let me do the same for *M. Butterfly*, but I decided it was not necessary. As I've got older, I've started to think differently about that. Instruments are the tools that are available, and I could envision creating the sound-world I wanted with either Eastern or Western instruments. Because there are many scene changes and the story is complex, I wanted to keep the sound-world consistent. I didn't want it to shatter into pieces of different sound-worlds, to become a world tour of sounds.

JK: Here we have a Chinese story refracted through Puccini's Japanese opera. Isn't there a certain friction between Chinese and Japanese cultures?

DHH: That is representative of its being written by an Asian-American through an Asian-American lens and recognising that the myths of stereotypes that relate to different Asian cultures are often conflated and confused. The core notion of the submissive Asian woman who is sexually available – that is not necessarily associated more with one East Asian ethnicity than another. And its apotheosis as a cultural icon is expressed through *Madama Butterfly*. That's why as a young person I knew it as a cultural stereotype even though I didn't yet know the opera. I think that conflation would exist in Gallimard's mind because, although he goes to China, he's entranced on a more general level by Eastern stereotypes through a Western lens about Asia. I remember sitting at an opening night of the play in Japan and thinking that this is a show about a Chinese spy and a French diplomat refracted through a Japanese story written by an Italian composer, and then brought together by a Chinese-American playwright. It is a mishmash of cultures.

M. Butterfly

An opera in three acts

1964–1986, Paris and Beijing

Act 1

Scene 1

*Projection A NY TIMES headline:
'May 11, 1986. France Jails Two In
Odd Case Of Espionage.'*

Fade in on a posh party. Paris. 1986.
French partygoers are laughing.

Partygoer No 2

And what of Gallimard?

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

Gallimard?

Ha ...

Partygoer Nos 1 and 4

Gallimard!

Ha Ha Ha ...

Ha Yi Ha Yi!

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

He still claims not to know! Ha?

Partygoer No 1

How can this be?

Partygoer No 3

Outrageous!

Partygoer No 1

Outrageous!

Partygoer No 2

Impossible!

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Impossible

Ha Ha Ha ...

Ha Yi Ha Yi!

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

He says it was dark.

Partygoer No 3

And she was very modest!

Partygoer No 1

He never touched her with his hands?

Partygoer No 4

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 4

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

Perhaps he did.

Partygoer No 3

And misidentified.

Partygoer No 4

The equipment!

Partygoer No 1

The equipment!

Partygoer No 3

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 4
This doesn't do much

Partygoer No 3
For the image of the French

Partygoers
As ladies men.
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1
Song Liling
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoers
Seduced him in Beijing

Partygoer No 3
Gallimard thought he'd found

Partygoers Nos 2 and 3
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2
A pretty little thing

Partygoer No 4
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1
For some exotic fling!

Partygoer No 4
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoers
A toast!

Partygoer No 4
Ha Ha Ha ...
A toast!

Partygoers
To Monsieur Gallimard!
Gallimard!

Partygoer No 4
Gallimard!

Partygoers Nos 3 and 4
Gallimard!

Partygoers Nos 2, 3 and 4
Gallimard!

Partygoers
Gallimard!
Vive la différence!

Scene 2

*M. Gallimard's prison cell. Paris. 1986.
Lights fade up to reveal René Gallimard,
50s, in a prison cell. He watches the
partygoers, as they fade out.*

Gallimard

Listen,
Listen to them,
They toast me,
Toast me mockingly.
From my cell, here,
On the outskirts of Paris,
I've become the latest fashion,
The center of attention,
The name all must know.
Patron saint
Of the socially inept.

But men of Paris,
Men around the world,
Can you really,
Really be so foolish?
If you really
Know my story,
You would be
Scratching at my door,
Begging to learn my secrets,
You would come to understand,
And perhaps,
Just a little,
To envy me.

For I, René Gallimard,
I have known
And been loved by
The perfect woman.

For I, René Gallimard,
Have been worshipped
And adored as
Few have ever known.
For I, René Gallimard,

Have lived like an emperor ruling
My kingdom.

For I, René Gallimard,
I have known
And been loved by
The perfect woman.
Ha...

The Humming Chorus

(off stage)

Ah...

Gallimard

In 1964,
France established an embassy in China.
I was sent soon afterward
with my wife, Florette.
Few from the West had seen
Beijing in decades,
Since Mao came to power,
Since the Middle Kingdom closed
its bamboo curtain on the world.

*A party. The Swiss ambassador's
home. Western Diplomats gather.
Gallimard and Florette join them.*

Western Diplomats

What are we doing in China?
Stuck in this hardship post?
The streets are drab,
People don't like us,
The Chinese food
Is better back home.

What are we doing in China?
I hear this place was once fun.
But now Chairman Mao
Imposes his will:
They wave his red book
And wear his Mao suits.

There's no dancing
Or nightclubs
Or movies
Or concerts
Or any chance
For hanky-panky
With the natives.

There's no dancing
Or nightclubs
Or movies
Or concerts

Or any chance
For hanky-panky
With the natives.

La La La...

What are we doing in China?
What are we doing in China?
China, China!

Gallimard

But this
This
This was the night when,
As a lowly bookkeeper,
At a party
During the reign
Of a hundred flowers,
The night when I first saw her.
The love of my life:
Song Liling.

*Song Liling enters, dressed as
Madama Butterfly. She performs
the Death Scene from the opera.*

*In any case, Gallimard watches
the performance, enraptured.*

Song

Un bel dì, vedremo
Levarsi un fil di fumo
Sull'estremo confin del mare.
E poi la nave appare.
Poi la nave bianca
Entra nel porto,

Song

Romba il suo saluto,
Vedi? È venuto!
Io non gli scendo incontro. Io no.
Mi metto là sul ciglio del
Colle e aspetto,
E aspetto gran tempo
E non mi pesa,
La lunga attesa.
E... uscito dalla folla
Cittadina
Un uomo, un picciol
Punto s'avvia per la collina.

Gallimard

Suddenly, I understood,
Not only the music but also the story:
An innocent Japanese girl,

Falls in love with an American sailor,
Who abandons her,
She can no longer live without him.

Song

Chi sarà? Chi sarà?
E Come sarà giunto
Che dirà? Che dirà?
Chiamerà Butterfly dalla
lontana.
Io senza dar risposta
me ne starò nascosta
un po' per celia
e un po' per non morire.

Gallimard

I believe this girl,
Believe her suffering,
Want to take her in my arms.
I believe this girl,
So delicate,
Even I can protect her.

I believe this girl,
Want to take her home,
Make her smile.
Ah...

Gallimard approaches Song.

Mademoiselle?

Song curtsys. Gallimard kisses her hand.

Gallimard

René Gallimard.

Song

Mademoiselle? How charming.

Gallimard

René Gallimard.

Song

Song Liling.

Gallimard

A beautiful performance,
The first time
I've seen the beauty
Of the story.
Of her death.
It's a pure sacrifice.
He's unworthy,
But she loves him

So much.

It's a pure sacrifice.

It's a very beautiful story.

Song

To a Westerner.

Gallimard

Excuse me?

Song

It's one of your
Favourite fantasies:
The submissive Oriental woman
And the cruel white man.

What would you say if a blonde beauty
Fell in love with a
Japanese man?
Who treats her cruelly,
Then, when she learns he has remarried,
She kills herself.
I believe you would consider this girl
A deranged idiot.

But because it's an Oriental
Who kills herself
For a Westerner
Ah! You find it beautiful.
Beautiful. Ah!

Gallimard

Well, I see your point ...

Song

I will never do
'Butterfly' again.
If you wish to see
The true butterfly,
Come to the Chinese Opera.
Ah...

Scene 3

Gallimard remains, as we transition to a Chinese opera house. Song enters, costumed as Zhu Yingtai, from the Yue opera 'The Butterfly Lovers'. She performs the death scene, where Zhu kneels at the grave of her lover Liang.

Song

(as Zhu)

This flower is ready

To meet her butterfly,
But her butterfly
Lies in this grave.
Wicked grave, open up!
Swallow me whole!
Take my spirit!
Carry me from
These bitter shores!

Song

I want us both to turn
Into butterflies.
Our love will never
Be forgotten,
As we will never forget.
Ah ...

Gallimard

This music, so strange
Carried me into
A new world,
Carried me into
A new world.
Carried me,
Carried me into her world.

The grave opens up. Song throws herself in. Two butterflies fly from the grave. Performance ends.

Gallimard applauds with the crowd, enraptured.

Song

You. White man.
I'm looking straight at you.

Gallimard

Me?

Song removes her costume and changes into simple baggy clothes. They are now backstage. The show is over.

Song

So you are an
Adventurous Imperialist?

Gallimard

I accepted your challenge.

Song

(relighting her cigarette)
Be a gentleman, will you?

Gallimard

I don't smoke.

Song

(lighting her own)
Your loss.
Had you lit my cigarette,
I might have blown
A puff of smoke
Right between your eyes.
Come.

They start to walk about the stage. It is a summer night on the Beijing streets.

Song

How I wish there were even
A tiny cafe to sit in.
With cappuccinos,
And men in tuxedos
And bad expatriate jazz.

Gallimard

You weren't even allowed
Into such clubs
Before the revolution.

Song

Oh how little you know,
A delicate Chinese woman
Always went where she pleased
For white imperialist men
Have always been fascinated.
We weave a spell
Do we not,
Leave you wanting
More.
Hah?

Gallimard

But that fascination is Imperialist, yes?

Song

Yes, always. But sometimes,
It is also mutual.
This is my flat.
Come another time,
And we will further
Expand your mind.

Song exits.

Scene 4

Marc enters.

Gallimard

In my dreams,
I'm visited by
An old friend from school.

Marc

Marc,
I was always the
Most popular guy.

Gallimard

You were.

Marc

You were always
Pathetic with women.
Happy your skin
Has cleared up.

Gallimard

Thank you.

Marc

But look at you now, René.
Here in the East, René.
Exotic women
Swarming round.
I've come across
Time and space
To congratulate you.

*He produces a bottle of wine,
they drink together.*

Gallimard

It's impossible.
I am a foreigner.

Marc

She cannot love you
It's taboo.
But something deep inside
Must surrender to you.
It is her destiny.

Gallimard

How do you imagine all this?

Marc

It's an old story
It is in our blood

In their blood also.
They spot a light in a window.

Marc

There, René!

Gallimard

It's her window.

Marc

Late at night,
It burns.
The light,
It burns for you.

*Gallimard dreams that he is peeping
into Song's window. She enters in a
sheer robe. Attends to her toilette,
prepares for her bath. Her robe comes
loose, revealing her shoulders.*

Marc

All your life you've waited
For a beautiful girl
Who would lay down for you.
All your life you've smiled
Like a saint when it's happened
To every other man you know.
You see them in magazines
See them in movies.

Song

Adesso voi siete per me
L'occhio del firmamento.
E mi piaceste dal primo momento
Che vi ho veduto.
Siete alto, forte.
Ridete con modi sì palesi!
E dite cose
Che mai non intesi.
Or son contenta.
Or son contenta.

Marc and Gallimard

And you wonder,
What's wrong with me?
Will anyone beautiful ever
Want me?

Song

Vogliatemi bene, un bene piccolino,
Un bene da bambino
Quale a me si conviene.
Noi siamo gente avvezza
Alle piccole cose,

Umili e silenziose,
Ad una tenerezza
Sfiorante e pur profonda
Come il ciel, come l'onda del mare.

Gallimard

As the years pass,
My hair thins
I struggle
To hold on to even
My hopes.

Marc

Stop struggling, René.
Your wait is over.

Song drops her robe. A second of her naked back, then lights down on her, as Marc exits.

Gallimard

Marc? Marc?

Scene 5

*We transition to Song's flat.
Gallimard enters.*

Gallimard

Tonight, I have finally been invited
To visit her flat.

Gallimard picks up a photo, examines it. Song enters, wearing a qipao, looking like Anna May Wong.

Song

Ask the servant for whatever you want.

Gallimard

Delightful.

Song

That is my father.

Gallimard

(Stunned by her beauty)
Mademoiselle Song!

She glides up to him, snatches away the picture.

Gallimard

I'm honoured
You've allowed me

To visit your home.

Song

Haven't you been poured any tea?

(to off stage)

Shu-Fang! Cha! Kwai-lah!

(to Gallimard)

I'm sorry.

You want everything to be perfect –

Gallimard

Please.

Song

– and before the evening even begins –

Gallimard

I'm not thirsty.

Song

– it's ruined.

Gallimard

(sharply)
Mademoiselle Song!

Song sits down.

Song

I'm sorry.

Gallimard

Why are you apologising?

Pause. Song starts to giggle.

Song

I don't know!
I am silly,
Lightheaded.
I promise not to apologise
For anything else tonight.

Shu-Fang, a servant, comes out with a tea tray.

Now I will pour
Myself for the gentleman!

Shu-Fang flees.

Song

There is an element of
Danger to your presence.

Gallimard

Oh?

Song

Perhaps I am slightly
Afraid of scandal.

Gallimard

What are we doing?

Song

I'm entertaining you.
In my parlour.

Gallimard

In France, that would hardly –

Song

France is a country
Of the modern era.
China's soul
Is firmly rooted
Two thousand years in the past.
Even pouring this tea
It has implications.
The walls and windows say so.
Even my own heart,
Strapped inside this dress
Even it says things,
Things I don't care to hear.
Hah.

*Song hands Gallimard a cup of tea.
Gallimard puts his hand over both
the teacup and Song's hand.*

Gallimard

This is a beautiful dress.

Song

Don't.
I don't know
If it looks right on me.

Gallimard

Believe me –

Song

You are from France.
With so many beautiful women.

Gallimard

Since when are French women – ?

Song

Oh! What am I trying to do?!

*Song rises, composes herself, then
turns towards Gallimard.*

Monsieur Gallimard, you should go.
Hard as I try to be modern,
To invite a man
Up to my flat, alone,
In the end, I fail.
In the end,
I'm a modest Chinese girl.

Gallimard

And irresistible.

He starts to kiss her.

Song

Please go now.
You are a cad!

Gallimard

What do you expect?
I'm a foreign devil.
Huh.

Gallimard and Song exit separately.

Scene 6

French embassy staff enter.

Gallimard

I determined to try
An experiment:
I stopped going to the opera.
That little butterfly
Had pushed me away,
If I ignored her now,
Would I find her indeed
Writhing on my needle?

*Song appears upstage. A staffer
hands a letter to Gallimard,
which he opens and reads.*

Song

Did we fight? I do not know.
Is the opera no longer

Of interest to you?
Please come – my audiences miss
The white devil in their midst.

*Gallimard discards the letter. A
staffer hands him another.*

Gallimard

A concession
But much too dignified
I continued to stay away.

A staffer hands him another.

Song

Is this your practice
To leave friends in the lurch?
Sometimes I hate you,
Sometimes I hate myself,
But always I miss you.

Gallimard

Why does she call me friend?
I don't want to be her friend.

Song

Your rudeness is beyond belief.
Don't bother to call.
I'll have you, have you,
Turned away, turned away.

I can hide behind dignity no longer.
What else do you want from me?
Come back.
I have already given you
My shame.

Lights down on Song. Staffers exit.

Gallimard

But I felt shame.
She was turning on my needle.
I had finally gained power
Over a beautiful woman,
Only to abuse it cruelly.
If there is a god,
Surely he must punish me now.

Toulon enters, takes a seat.

Toulon

Gallimard!

Gallimard turns to us as he crosses to Toulon.

Gallimard

Manuel Toulon,
Ambassador to France.

Toulon

I've liked you.
From the day you walked in.
No leader, but tidy and efficient.

Gallimard

Thank you sir!

Toulon

Our needs in China are changing.
We lost Indochina,
Which is most embarrassing.
We're going to be gathering
More information.
Vice-consul Lebon
Is being transferred.

Gallimard

(*To us*)
My immediate superior!

Toulon

And most of his department.

Gallimard

(*To us*)
Just as I feared!
God has seen my evil heart –
And he's taking her away just as ...

Toulon

But not you.

Gallimard

Excuse me, sir?

Toulon

I want you to replace Lebon
As vice-consul and lead
The intelligence division.
You've become aggressive, confident,
Hard-working, assertive.
And I hear that you
Get along with the Chinese.
Congratulations!

Toulon exits.

Scene 7

Gallimard

Vice-consul? Impossible!
As I stumbled out of his office,
I saw it written across the sky:
There is no god!
Wait, perhaps there is a god,
But that god is a man.
Yes, that god is a man
And he understands!
There is a god,
That god is a man,
Yes, yes, that god is a man
And he understands!
La ...
And he understands!
Ha Ha!

*Transition to Song's flat. She enters
in a sheer dressing gown.*

Song

Are you crazy?

Gallimard

Mademoiselle Song –

Song

To come here
At this hour?

Gallimard

It's the most amazing –

Song

Bang on my door?
Awaken my neighbours?
Gallimard
I've been promoted.
To vice-consul.
Are you my butterfly?

Song

What are you saying?
Don't you know already?

Gallimard

I want you to say it,
Want from you honesty,
There should be nothing false,
Between us
No false pride.

Song

Yes I am.
I am your
Butterfly.

Gallimard

Thanks to you
I was promoted tonight.
Thanks to you
My life is changed forever.
My little butterfly,
My little butterfly,
No more secrets.
I love you.

Song

You are the one
Who tore down my defense.
You are the one
Who laid my heart bare.
I am your butterfly.
I am your butterfly,
No more secrets.

Song

You are the one
Who tore down my defence.
You are the one
Who laid my heart bare.
I am your butterfly,
I am your butterfly,
No more secrets.
I love you.

Gallimard

Thanks to you
I was promoted tonight,
Thanks to you
My life is changed forever.
My little butterfly,
My little butterfly,
No more secrets.
I love you.

He starts to kiss her.

Song

Please
Let me keep my clothes.
Please
I'm a modest Chinese girl.

Gallimard

My poor little treasure.

Song

I am your treasure.
I'll do my best
To make you happy.
Turn out the lights.

Ah, beautiful night!
Look, we can see the stars,
Each one twinkling
As if to bless
This moment of our union.

Gallimard

Twinkling, as if to say,
The impossible can happen.

Song

As if to say
The whole world can be one.

Gallimard

As if to say
That oceans are no barrier.

Gallimard and Song

To love.

East can meet West,
Two souls in the dark,
Each seeing the other
As the other yearns to be seen.
Ah, beautiful night!
The stars gaze down upon us
And smile.
Ah.

*Gallimard turns off the lights. They
fall onto her bed. Fade to black.*

Act 2**Scene 1**

*Back to the posh Paris party.
Partygoers read more press accounts
about the espionage case.*

Partygoers

The Gallimard case
Ha Ha Ha ...
Is headed for trial.
Ha Ha Ha ...
Splashed on the front pages,
We can't get enough.

Ha Ha Ha ...
Ha Yi Ha Yi ...
Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

He thought himself

Partygoer No 4

Some great romantic.

Partygoer No 3

But his desires.

Partygoer No 1

Proved much too frantic.

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

Song Liling

Partygoer No 4

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

Seduced him in Beijing

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 4

René thought

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1

He'd found.

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

Some pretty little thing.

Partygoers Nos 1–4

For an exotic fling.

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 1

How could he imagine
This was a great romance?

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 3

Did Song put him
Into some exotic trance?

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoer No 2

The more we read
The more we learn

Partygoers

Ha Ha Ha ...

Partygoers

The more
Ha Ha
We laugh.

Ha Ha Ha ...

Ha Yi Ha Yi...

Ha Ha Ha ...

The more we laugh at the
biggest fool in France!

Gallimard ...!

Transition to Song's flat. She enters.

Song

We

Gallimard

Met

Song

We met

Gallimard

We met

Song

In my flat

Gallimard

In her flat

Song

When we could

Gallimard

Steal the time.

Song

We had to be

Song and Gallimard

Discreet,

Gallimard

No-one could know
Which made our love more precious.

Gallimard and Song are post-coital.

Song

I want to be part
Of what you know,
As you rule the world.
Tell me, what is happening
In France, or in Vietnam?

Toulon enters, and sits at a desk upstage.

Scene 2

Toulon's office. Toulon and Gallimard confer. Song remains onstage, watching.

Toulon

So, the Americans plan
To send troops to Vietnam!
How will the Chinese react?

Gallimard

Asians all want to be protected
By the strongest power.
You live with the Chinese.
Do you think they like communism?

Toulon

You, Gallimard,
You, live with the Chinese.

Gallimard

What?

Toulon

I must confess I have
A weakness for gossip.
Are you keeping

A native mistress?
Don't tell me,
It's really none
Of my business.

Gallimard

Well ... well ...

Toulon

I'm impressed.
You went into the streets
And hunted one down!
The rest of us
Must remain content
With expatriate wives.

Gallimard

I do feel fortunate, sir.

Toulon

So what do the Chinese think?

Gallimard

Deep inside, they miss
The old days:
Cappuccinos
Men in tuxedos.

Toulon

And what do we tell
The Americans?

Gallimard

Oriental will always submit
To a greater force.

Toulon rises from his desk.

Toulon

I'll note your opinions
In my report.
Americans always like to hear
How 'welcome' they will be.

Toulon exits.

Gallimard

Toulon knows!
And he approves!
It was easy to believe
That my future
Would always be bright.

*People's Liberation Army troops
enter, marching to celebrate October
1, China's National Day.*

PLA Troops

We are the People's
Liberation Army.
Marching to celebrate
The National Day.
Following our great helmsman,
Chairman Mao.
Chairman

Following our great helmsman,
Chairman Mao.
Chairman

Comrade Chin enters from amid the troops.

Chin

'The east wind rises
As the west wind falls!'
The east wind rises
As the west wind falls!

PLA Troops

We are the People's
Liberation Army.
Marching to celebrate
The National Day.
Following our great helmsman,
Chairman Mao.
Chairman

Chin and PLA Troops

The east wind rises as the
West wind falls
The east wind rises as the
West wind falls

PLA Troops

Following our great helmsman,
Chairman Mao.
We are the People's
Liberation Army.
Marching to cele -
As the west wind falls.

Chin and PLA Troops

The east wind rises as the
West wind falls
The east wind rises as the
West wind falls

PLA Troops

The east wind rises as the
West wind falls

Gallimard sees her.

Gallimard

No no! Why does she
Have to enter our story?

PLA Troops

The east wind rises as the
West wind falls

Song

Because this part
Is my story.

PLA Troops

The east wind rises as the
West wind falls

Gallimard exits.

Song's flat. Chin and Song confer.

Chin

So the Americans
Will send troops to Vietnam?

Song

170,000 soldiers
120,000 militia

Chin

How how how, do you remember
So much?

Song

I'm an actor.

Chin

It is good that you use
Your decadent skills
To serve the revolution.

Song

Even an actor
Can be of use
To our great helmsman, Chairman Mao.

Chin and Song

Follow the Communist party forever!
Follow Chairman Mao forever!

Chin

Now get out of my sight!
Dealing with Westerners
Is a decadent business.

Song

But it is joyful
To serve the state.

Chin

Comrade, do not forget:
There is no homosexuality
In China.

Song

I, I do not know
What you mean.

Chin

Good good good,
Continue in your ignorance.

Chin exits.

Song

Now, René.
Continue
Telling your story
To the world.

Gallimard crosses into ...

Scene 3

*Another embassy party. Gallimard
addresses a group of avid listeners.*

Western Diplomats

Now, another damn party
Living this 'no exit' life.
Intrigue and gossip
Are all that sustain us
Along with alcohol,
And adultery
But if not for these parties
You'd have to go home to your wife.
Drabness and boredom,
Conspire to drain us.
If only someone knew,
What we should do here now.

Gallimard addresses the diplomats.

Gallimard

So I, I tell the Americans,
Stay the course!
Asians are people too.
And need our protection
They want the good things
We can give them!
They want to please us,
They want to be us!

Western Diplomats

And this Frenchman
Is rising and planning
And charming and filled
With such confidence
He seems like he knows

And this Frenchman
Is rising and planning
And charming and filled
With such confidence
He seems like he knows

La La La ...

Now, another damn party,
Living this 'no exit' life.
'No exit' life!

Toulon enters.

Toulon

Gallimard!
Something I forgot to mention
At work.

Gallimard

(Moves towards Toulon)
Important, Sir?

Toulon

When you come in Monday,
Your office will be downstairs.

Gallimard

Why?

Toulon

Minor personnel shuffle.
Durand will be serving
For a time as vice consul.

Toulon starts to go.

Gallimard

Durand? I feel I deserve
An explanation!

Toulon

For Christ's sake!
The American war is a disaster!

Gallimard

I think the end is in sight.

Toulon

Paris has lost all faith
In US assurances,
And in yours.

*Toulon and Western Diplomats exit,
leaving Gallimard alone. He crosses to ...*

Gallimard

How can this be?
I can't be wrong,
Can I?

Scene 4

*Song's flat. She emerges in nightclothes,
over which she's thrown a negligee.*

Song

Oh! René we didn't –

Gallimard

'Make arrangements?'
I decided to visit.

He grabs Song roughly.

Song

Have you been drinking?

Gallimard

I want to see you naked.

Song

I thought you understood my modesty.
Respected my shame!

Gallimard

Stop it! Just stop it!

*He throws the incense burner to
the ground, smashing it.*

I'm sick of the poetry,
The submissive language,
The soft lights, the silks,
Meant to seduce.

Song

How can you say this?
My heart is true
It speaks to yours
Hearts do not lie.

Gallimard

What is true?
What have I seen?
Have I been wrong?
And been deceived?

Song

We know each other
Know our desires
And we have made
The world we need.

Gallimard

I am so sick
Of 'inscrutable Orientals!'
Who are you?
Take off those robes!
I'm ordering you!

Song

It's all I ever wanted.
For you to see me
As I am.
So come.
Strip me.

Gallimard

What is true
What have I seen?
Have I been wrong?
And been deceived?
I'm so sick
Of 'inscrutable Orientals!'
Who are you?
Take off those robes!
I am ordering you!

Song

We know each other,
Know our desires,
And we have made
The world we need.
It's all I ever wanted
For you to see me
As I am

So come.
Strip me.
Whatever happens,
You have willed it.
Our love is now
In your hands!

Gallimard starts to cross the room.

Gallimard

Did I not undress her
Because I knew,
Somewhere deep down,
What I would find?
Happiness is so rare,
Our minds can turn
Somersaults to protect it.
Ah ...

But then I saw Pinkerton,
Stalking towards his Butterfly,
To reward her love
With his wicked hands.
With his cruelty.

By the time I reached her,
Pinkerton
Had vanished from my heart.
To be replaced by something new,
Something unnatural,
Something very close
To love.
Ha ...

He grabs her around the waist.

Gallimard

Butterfly, forgive me.
For everything
From the start.
I want ...
I want ...
I want to ...
Marry you!

Song

René ...
I'm ...
I'm ...
I'm ...
I'm pregnant.

Scene 5

Song moves into a scene with Chin.

Song

I need a baby.

Chin

Any particular baby?

Song

Report to Comrade Chin:
Last night, he told me
To strip.

Chin

Careful, comrade.

Song

And I took a chance

Chin

Before you say something
I cannot hear!

Song

If I can present him
With a baby.
A Chinese baby
With blond hair
He will commit
To the revolution!

Chin

The trading of babies has to be a
Counterrevolutionary act!

Song

I need one
In seven months.
Make sure it's a boy.

Chin and Song exit.

Gallimard enters.

Gallimard

Soon the world will see,
I was right all along,
Soon they will learn
To love the East
With a love,
With a love like mine.

*Off stage, we hear a baby's cries.
Song enters, with their child.*

Song

Chi vide mai a bimbo
Di Giappon occhi azzurrini?
E il labbro?
E i ricciolini d'oro schietto?
Ah.

Love can make miracles happen.

Gallimard holds his son.

Gallimard

My old self feels
Like a distant memory.

*They kiss. The 'baby' cries. Song
exits with the infant.*

Toulon

(off-stage)
Congratulations, Gallimard!

Toulon enters.

Toulon

You're getting what we all want
You're going home.
All that you predicted
Here in Asia
Simply has not happened.

Gallimard

You're wrong! Short-sighted! You're wrong!

Toulon

Cheer up! Cheer up!
You'll finally get to eat
A salad once again, once again!

Toulon exits.

Gallimard

I'm leaving China!
I can take her with me.
I'll divorce my wife,
We can live together,
She'll be my bride!
La
We'll no longer have to hide.

I, I, rushed to her flat,
To share the good news ...

*Suddenly, a Revolutionary Opera Company
rushes onto the stage. They are costumed*

and perform in the style of the eight modern operas from the Cultural Revolution.

Revolutionary Opera Singers

Defeat the Imperialists,
Those vicious wolves!
Vanquish the decadence
Of the western criminals!
We'll rescue our comrade
From the foreigner's clutches!
Set him on the glorious path
Of world revolution!

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Defeat the Imperialists,
Those vicious wolves!
Vanquish the decadence
Of the western criminals!
We'll rescue our comrade
From the foreigner's clutches!
Set him on the glorious path
Of world revolution!

*Gallimard finds himself caught
up in the opera performers, as if
swallowed up by an angry mob.*

*The Revolutionary Opera Chorus strikes
a tableau. In the clear, Gallimard cries:*

Gallimard

Butterfly!
Butterfly!
Butterfly!

Revolutionary Opera Singers

The east wind rises
As the west wind falls.
The east wind rises,
As the west wind falls!

Act 3

Scene 1

*The Revolutionary Opera Company enters.
Now they drag Song into their performance.
She wears an androgynous Mao suit.*

*Comrade Chin enters with a banner
reading: 'The actor renounces
his decadent profession!'*

Chin

Actor-oppressor,
For years you have lived
Above the common people
And looked down on their labour.
While the farmer ate millet –

Song

I ate pastries from France.
I was a plaything
For the Imperialists!
Engaged in the
Lowest perversions
With China's enemies!

Chin

I saw them together!

*Opera singers look over, disgusted.
As the movement resumes, they 'beat'
her, using the movement language
of the revolutionary operas.*

Chin

So what do you want to do now?

*Opera singers unveil a banner: 'The actor is
rehabilitated!' Song remains kneeling before
Chin, as the singers march around them.*

Song

I want to serve the people.
I want to serve the people.
I want to serve the people!

Revolutionary Opera Singers

We charge forward as one,
To destroy the root of evil,
To rescue our comrade
From the foreigner's clutches!
Set him on the glorious path
The inevitable road
Bound for world revolution!

*Revolutionary singers exit,
leaving Chin with Song.*

Chin

Let me see your hands.

Song holds them out for her inspection.

Goddamn! Still so smooth!
You're no good to the revolution.

Song

I served the revolution.

Chin

You served only
Your own perversity!
You might convince others,
But I was there.

Song

I want to prove it's only
The chairman I love.

Chin

You're going to France.
Find your consul's house,
Make him pay your expenses.

Song

No.

Chin

And give us weekly reports
Useful information!

Song

It's been 10 years.
He won't even remember me!

Chin

You'd better hope he does.
Or you will die here,
As a labourer, in the fields
Of Qinghai.

Chin exits.

Song

Where do I go?
What do I seek?
How do I find?
How do I love?

Do I pretend
To know the truth?
Do I know the truth
And so I pretend?

The love of a butterfly
Always changing
From crawling
To confinement

To fluttering
Then to die

I am a human
Who dreamt of being a butterfly
Then I awoke
As a butterfly
Who dreams of being
Of being human

I go
I seek
I find
I love.

I pretend
To know
Pretend to know the truth
I know the truth
And so I pretend.

The love of a butterfly
Always changing
From crawling
To confinement
To fluttering
Then to die

I awoke
As a butterfly
Who dreams of being human.
I am a human
Who dreams of being butterfly.

Scene 2

*Gallimard enters. He looks older,
more frail, like the man we met at
the start of the show in prison.*

The Humming Chorus

Wu ...

Gallimard

And what was waiting for me
Back in Paris?
Friends and relatives.
A little accounting,
Keeping track of traffic violations.
I would tell others
Of my lost love
That in China,
That in China,

I was different
From all other men.

That in China,
That in China,
I was different
From all other men.

No-one listened
They all walked away.
This was the ultimate cruelty
I can talk and talk
And to anyone listening,
It's only air
Too rich a diet
To be swallowed
By a mundane world.
Why can't anyone understand?
That in China,
That in China
I once loved
And was loved by, very simply
The perfect woman.

Song enters, dressed in a simple dress.

Song
(Hums 'Un bel di')
Hah...

Gallimard
Not again.
My imagination is hell.
Am I asleep this time?
Or did I drink too much?

Once again, she visits me
From the cavern of my memory.
Once again, she will vanish
Leave me clutching at the air.

*As their duet concludes, Song
touches Gallimard.*

Song
René?

Gallimard
Butterfly? I never doubted you'd return.

Song
You hadn't forgotten?

Gallimard
I've forgotten everything.

Song
Ah ...

Gallimard
There wasn't enough room
In this hard head
Not for the world and you
No there was only room for one.

He holds her.

Gallimard
The world came back to life
I could once again believe
That the future
Would always be bright
And so it was
For years and years
And years and years

Song
To love,
To love, my heart is true,
East can meet West
Miracles happen,
For years and years and
Years and years and years.
And years.

*Song steps away, as two French DGSI
counter intelligence agents enter.*

Agent No 1
René Gallimard?
We're from the DGSI.
Please come with us.

Gallimard
I am a member
Of the Diplomatic Corps.

Agent No 2
We're placing you
Under arrest.
On the charge of espionage.

Gallimard
This must be a mistake.

Agent No 1
We're already questioning
Your accomplice,
Monsieur Song.

Agent No 2

Monsieur Song Liling.
Is making
A full confession.

Gallimard

No no no
You can't be correct. Who? Who?

Agent No 2

Your housemate.
Monsieur Song.

Gallimard

You've got the wrong person.
Song Liling is a woman.
A Chinese woman.

Agents laugh as they take Gallimard away.

Ballet: in full view of the audience, with assistance from the ensemble, the singer playing song transforms from a 'woman' into a 'man', wearing a chic Armani suit.

Once his transformation is complete, Song turns to the audience.

Song

I was surprised
That he remembered,
After all our time apart.
He applied
For the boy and me
To emigrate to France.

There I became
A minor celebrity,
Performing demonstrations
As 'cultural exchange'.

Then there was the spying.

Scene 3

*We're in a French courtroom.
Toulon enters, as a judge.*

Song

René got a job as a courier,
Handling sensitive documents.
Which he would photograph,
And I'd pass on
To the Chinese embassy.

Judge

There is one thing the court
And all of France
Would like to know.

Song

Fire away.

Judge

Did Monsieur Gallimard
Know you were a man?

Song

He never saw me
Completely naked. Ever.

Judge

But surely, he must've ...

Song

It was my job
To make him think
I was a woman.

Which wasn't so hard.
My mother was a prostitute
Before the revolution.
She taught me a few things
About western men.

Judge

Would you care
To enlighten the court
With this secret knowledge?
I'm sure we're all very curious.

Song

I'm sure you are.

Men always believe
What they want to hear.
The West believes
It is masculine –
Powerful, strong –
So the East is feminine,
Submissive lotus blossom
Or wily dragon lady.

The West believes
The East wants to
Be dominated
Because a woman
Cannot think for herself.

Judge

How does any of this explain
How you fooled Monsieur Gallimard!

Song

One, he wanted to believe
His fantasy woman
Was actually a woman.

Two, I am an Oriental,
And being an Oriental,
I can never be
Truly a man.

Judge

Just answer my question:
Did he know you were a man?

Song

You know, your honour,
I never asked.

Scene 4

*Guards lead Gallimard from his cell to
a holding room, where Song awaits.*

Guards exit.

Song

They have left us here,
So you can see the truth.
Come get your butterfly.

Gallimard

I don't want you!
Not like this!

Song starts to remove his clothes.

What are you doing?

Song

You asked me to strip, remember?

Gallimard

That was years ago!
And I took it back!

Song

No, no
No, no
You postponed it.

Postponed the inevitable.
Today, the inevitable
Has come calling.

Song is down to his briefs.

Gallimard

Stop!
I know what you are!
A man!
A man!

Gallimard

I knew all the time somewhere
That my happiness was temporary,
My love a deception
But my mind kept the
knowledge at bay.
To make the wait bearable.

Song

You don't believe that,
You only saw me
Through the fog
Of your own fantasies.

Song

Monsieur Gallimard – the wait is over.

Gallimard

Ha Ha Ha...

*Song drops his briefs. He is naked. Slowly,
we and song come to the realisation that
what we had thought to be Gallimard's
sobbing is actually his laughter.*

Gallimard

You're a man!
Only a man.

*Suddenly embarrassed, Song
puts his trousers back on.*

Song

'Only a man?'
How can you speak of me this way?
What about this?

Gallimard

Ha ...
He starts to dance as in the opera.

Song

It's the same skin

You've worshipped for years.
Touch it.

Gallimard

It does feel the same.

Song

Now close your eyes.

Song covers Gallimard's eyes with one hand with the other, Song draws Gallimard's hand up to his face. Gallimard, like a blind man, lets his hands run over Song's face.

Gallimard

This skin, I remember.
The curve of her face,
The softness of her cheek,
Her hair against the back of my hand ...

Song

I'm your butterfly.
Under the robes,
Beneath everything,
It was always me.
So open your eyes and admit,
That you adore me.

He removes his hand from Gallimard's eyes.

Gallimard

You, who knew every inch
Of my desires
How could you
Have made such a mistake?

You showed me your true self
When all I loved was the lie
I loved the lie
A perfect lie,
Which you let fall
To the ground,
Where now it is old
And soiled.

I'm a man
Who loved a woman
Created by a man.
Everything else,
Simply falls short.

Song

So you never loved me?
Only when I was playing a part?

Gallimard

Tonight, I've finally learned
To tell fantasy from reality.
And, knowing the difference,
I choose fantasy.

(to off stage)

Guards! Take him away!
Take him away!

Song

I'm disappointed in you, René.
In the crush of your adoration,
I thought you'd become
Something more
More like, a woman.
But no.

Men, you're like the rest of them.
Who would rather destroy the world
Than see outside the limits
Of your own mind.
You have so little imagination!

Gallimard

I am pure imagination.
And in imagination,
I will remain.
I will remain.

Guards enter, escort Song from the holding room.

Song

You will be sorry!
You will be sorry!

Gallimard

I'm already sorry
Exactly as sorry
As a butterfly.
Hah ...

Song exits.

Scene 5

Gallimard

Now I will return
To the world of fantasy,
Where I first met her.

Dancers enter, carrying a kimono and make up. They assist Gallimard in his transformation.

Gallimard

I have a vision of the Orient
Of slender women in qipaos and kimonos
Who die for the love
Of unworthy foreign devils.
Who are born and raised
To be the perfect women.
This is a dream,
This is a vision
Which has become
The whole of my life.

Dancers help him make up his face.

I have finally faced the truth
And the truth demands a sacrifice.
For my mistakes:
The man I loved
Was a cad, a bounder.
He deserved nothing,
But instead, I gave him
All my love.

Love was my undoing
Love warped my judgement,
Love blinded my eyes
Love rearranged
The very lines on my face
Until I could look
In the mirror
And see nothing,
Nothing but,
Only a woman.

Dancers help him put on the butterfly wig. Then they hand him a knife.

‘Con onor muore
Chi non può serbar vita con onore.’

He sets himself center stage, in a seppuku position.

The love of a butterfly
Can withstand many things,
Unfaithfulness, loss,
Even abandonment.
But how can it face
The one sin that implies the others?
The devastating knowledge that,
Underneath it all,

The object of her love
Was nothing more,
Nothing less than
A man.
The object of her love
Was nothing more,
Nothing less than
A man.
Ha Ha.

The love of a butterfly
Survives many hardships.
Mocked and rejected
Reviled and scorned.

But there comes a time
When even a butterfly
Sees through,
The mist of her heartbreak
The one she has worshipped
Was nothing more,
Nothing less than a man.
Ah ...

He sets the tip of the knife against his body.

My name is René Gallimard
Also known as Madame Butterfly.
Ha ...

Gallimard turns upstage and plunges the knife into his body. He collapses into the arms of the dancers, who lay him reverently on the floor.

Song enters as a man, finds the dead Gallimard.

Song

Butterfly! Butterfly! Butterfly!

Chorus

(off stage)

Ha ...
Ah Da Ah Da!

Libretto by David Henry Hwang,
based on his play



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Carolyn Kuan

Recognised as a conductor of extraordinary versatility, Carolyn Kuan has enjoyed successful associations with leading orchestras, opera and ballet companies and festivals worldwide. She is particularly renowned in contemporary music and has given many premieres. She has been Music Director of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra since 2011.

Her North American engagements have included performances with the Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Omaha, San Francisco, Seattle and Toronto Symphony orchestras; Florida and Louisville orchestras; New York City Ballet; Colorado Festival and Glimmerglass Opera Festival; and New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera and Washington National Opera. In the 2021/2022 season she made her debut with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Ohio, and returned to conduct the Opera Theatre of St Louis in *Harvey Milk* and Santa Fe Opera to conduct Huang Ruo's *M. Butterfly*.

Recent international engagements have included concerts with the Bournemouth, São Paulo State, West Australian and Yucatan Symphony orchestras, Borusan Istanbul and Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestras, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Residentie Orkest and Royal Danish Ballet. She made her debut

with English National Opera in Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* in the 2021/2022 season.

While maintaining a solid connection with traditional repertoire, she has cultivated a unique expertise in Asian music and contemporary works. From 2007 to 2012 she directed the annual San Francisco Symphony Chinese New Year concert. For the Seattle Symphony, she helped launch the hugely successful *Celebrate Asia!* programme with community leaders representing eight Asian cultures. She has led world premieres for music from Japan, and has conducted multimedia productions of the *Butterfly Lovers Concerto* and *A Monkey's Tale* as part of Detroit Symphony's World Music Series.

Carolyn Kuan is the recipient of numerous awards and was the first woman to be awarded the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Fellowship by the Herbert von Karajan Centrum and American Austrian Foundation in 2003, resulting in her residency at the 2004 Salzburg Festival. Winner of the first Taki Concordia Fellowship, she has received additional awards from the Women's Philharmonic, Conductors Guild, and Susan W. Rose Fund for Music. She graduated *cum laude* from Smith College, received a Master of Music degree from the University of Illinois and a Performance Diploma from the Peabody Conservatory.



Kangmin Justin Kim

Countertenor Kangmin Justin Kim is one of the most sought-after singers of his voice type, having earned accolades in roles ranging from Baroque repertoire to contemporary music.

In 2022 the Korean-American singer created the title-role in the world premiere of *M. Butterfly* at the Santa Fe Opera, receiving outstanding reviews. Another breakthrough performance was his 2019 debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where he became the first male singer in the company's history to appear as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Performances this season include Acis (Porpora's *Polifemo*) at the Opéra de Lille led by Emmanuelle Haïm; Orfeo (Handel's *Parnasso in festa*) with La Cetra and Andrea Marcon in Basel; *M. Butterfly* here at the Barbican; Ruggiero (*Alcina*) in Brno; the world premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Die dunkle Seite des Mondes* at the Staatsoper Hamburg; Vinci's *Artaserse* at the Chicago Haymarket Opera; and *Four Seasons* with Boston Lyric Opera and New York City Opera, as well as Baroque concerts at the Karlsruhe Handel and the Weiwuying festivals.

Recent highlights include house debuts at the Staatsoper Hamburg as Sesto (*La clemenza di Tito*) and Despina (*Così fan tutte*); at Dallas Opera as Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*) and at the Opéra du Rhin as Nerone (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*). He also performed Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* with Cecilia Bartoli in staged performances at the Wiener Staatsoper and Opéra de Monte-Carlo, as well as in concert in Luxembourg, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Köln; sang Ruggiero (*Orlando furioso*) at La Fenice; Nerone with English Concert Opera at the Auditorio Nacional in Madrid and the Palau de la Música in Barcelona and the Gingerbread Witch (*Hansel and Gretel*) at the Staatstheater Wiesbaden.

He has worked with such prestigious conductors as Leonardo García Alarcón, Harry Bicket, Gianluca Capuano, William Christie, Diego Fasolis, Ádám Fischer, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Andrea Marcon, Marc Minkowski, Raphaël Pichon, Emmanuel Villaume, Omer Meir Wellber and Simone Young.

Kangmin Justin Kim was born in South Korea and grew up in Chicago. He studied voice, opera, and musical theatre at the Northwestern University in Evanston and the Royal Academy of Music.



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Mark Stone

Mark Stone is an English Heldenbaritone, acclaimed for his performances of Wagnerian roles such as Alberich (*Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*) at Longborough Festival Opera, Wotan (*Die Walküre*) for Trondheim Opera and Gunther (*Götterdämmerung*) at the Grand Théâtre de Genève. He works extensively in Germany, including at the Hamburgische Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Staatsoper Hannover, and the USA, including at Santa Fe Opera and Opera Philadelphia, where he is also renowned for his performances of contemporary works such as the title-role in *Nixon in China* and René Gallimard in the world premiere of Huang Ruo's *M. Butterfly*, a role he reprises tonight.

This season he also sings the title-role in *Der fliegende Holländer* for Trondheim Opera and Klingsor (*Parsifal*) at the Hamburgische Staatsoper. On the concert platform, he will sing *Totentanz* with Thomas Adès and the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and sing in Sir George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*, in a performance with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, conducted by the composer.



Fleur Barron

Singaporean-British mezzo-soprano Fleur Barron is in demand as an interpreter of opera, symphonic works and chamber music ranging from the Baroque to the contemporary. She is currently Artistic Partner of the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias in Oviedo, with which she will curate/perform multiple projects across several seasons. She is mentored by Barbara Hannigan.

This season sees her perform in Mahlerian repertoire across a series of important symphonic debuts: *Das Lied von der Erde* with Daniel Harding and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra on tour across Germany, with Harding and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm and on tour to Spain, with Kent Nagano and the Hamburg Staatsorchester at the Elbphilharmonie and at the Oregon Bach Festival; *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with Nathalie Stutzmann and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Mahler's Symphony No 2 with the Orquesta de Valencia; *Rückert-Lieder* with PhilZuid; and *Kindertotenlieder* at the Concertgebouw's Mahler Festival with Julius Drake. Other orchestral engagements include Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, Saariaho's

Adriana Songs with the Turku Philharmonic and orchestrated Schubert songs with the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias.

She also takes on three new opera roles: Concepcion (Ravel's *L'heure espagnole*) with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra under Ludovic Morlot, as well as a studio recording; tonight's Comrade Chin/Shu Fung (*M. Butterfly*) here at the Barbican and Galatea (Handel's *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*) with La Nuova Musica at Wigmore Hall. This season she also releases her debut orchestral disc – Ravel with Morlot – and makes her Carnegie Hall recital debut as part of a tour with pianist Kunal Lahiry, as well as joining regular collaborator Julius Drake for concerts at Wigmore Hall and in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Madrid, Manchester and Oviedo.

Born in Northern Ireland to a Singaporean mother and British father, Fleur Barron grew up in Hong Kong and later New York. She holds degrees from Columbia University and Manhattan School of Music.

Kimberley Prescott

Tonight's revival director Kimberley Prescott has mostly worked in opera in her 30-year career as a stage manager, assistant director and director. Although she has stage managed plays, musical theatre, puppetry and dance in places such as Baltimore Center Stage, Arena Stage, Alley Theatre, Houston Ballet and LaJolla Playhouse, the majority of her work has been at companies such as Washington National Opera, LA Opera, Palm Beach Opera, WolfTrap Opera, Atlanta Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Seattle Opera, where she worked on the 1995 Wagner *Ring* cycle.

Internationally she has worked in Canada, England, Italy, France, Germany and Ireland. Houston Grand Opera was her home company from 1994 to 2006, where, as production stage manager she oversaw over 50 productions, including 13 world premieres. Since 2008 she has been production stage manager for Opera Theatre Saint Louis where she has managed, among others, world premieres of *Champion*, *Twenty-Seven*, *Golden Ticket*, *Shalimar the Clown* and *Fire Shut up in my Bones*. She was assistant director to James Robinson for the Santa Fe Opera premiere of *M. Butterfly* in 2022.

She has also taught stage management at Webster Conservatory and lectured at Missouri State University.



Kevin Burdette

An alumnus of the Juilliard Opera Theater and the University of Tennessee, Kevin Burdette is a former member of the Opéra National de Paris Young Artists' Programme and San Francisco's Merola Opera Program.

The works he performs this season span nearly 300 years, from *Messiah* with the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra to Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners* in its North American premiere with Opera Philadelphia. In addition, he revisits the roles he sings tonight in *M. Butterfly*, as well as that of Death in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the New World Symphony, conducted by Stéphane Denève.

He maintains a close relationship with the Santa Fe Opera, having appeared over many seasons in works such as *La fille du régiment*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La grande-duchesse de Gérolstein*, *The Last Savage*, *The Golden Cockerel*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Candide*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Le Rossignol* and the world premieres of *M. Butterfly*, Morrison's *Oscar* and Higdon's *Cold Mountain*.

Recent operatic engagements include returns to the Metropolitan Opera, Barcelona's

Gran Teatre del Liceu; Washington National Opera, Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, San Diego Opera, Atlanta Opera and Opera Philadelphia.

On the concert stage, he has sung in *Messiah* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; performed Wim in the American premiere of Philippe Manoury's *60ème parallèle*, with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and Kent Nagano and sung Verdi's *Requiem* with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. Elsewhere, he has sung the role of Time in Gerald Barry's *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, sung Liszt's *Missa solemnis* with the American Symphony Orchestra and Stravinsky's *Renard* with both Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Utah Symphony Orchestra.

Kevin Burdette is a recipient of the Richard F Gold Career Grant Award, awarded by the Shoshana Foundation, and the Dr Marcia Robbins-Wilf Award, presented by New York City Opera.



Charne Rochford

Born in London, Charne Rochford is gaining a reputation as one of Britain's most promising Heldentenors. His wide range of roles includes Siegmund, Tristan, Tannhäuser, Achilles, Cavaradossi, Bacchus and Siegfried.

Recent engagements include *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall, an opera gala at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, and *Tristan und Isolde* with the Ealing Symphony Orchestra.

He is equally experienced on the concert platform, where his engagements have included Verdi's *Requiem* with the Orchestre Symphonique Genevois at Victoria Hall; Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* at Opera Holland Park with Fifth Door Ensemble; Mahler's *Das Klagende Lied* with the LPO and Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* under Vladimir Jurowski.

Additionally, his extensive concert repertoire includes Britten's *Saint Nicolas*, Handel's *Messiah*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* and Beethoven's *Symphony No 9*, among many others.

He made his cinematic debut at the Venice Film Festival as Second Officer in *The Magic Flute* directed by Kenneth Branagh, conducted by James Conlon.

In 2014 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music and in 2019 was appointed musical director of St Ives Choral Society, Cambridgeshire.

Current and future engagements include a recital with composer Howard Blake at the Chelsea Arts Club, the roles of Don José with the Malaga Symphony Orchestra and Turiddu at Lincoln Cathedral, and Mahler's *Eighth Symphony* at the Bridgewater Hall.

BBC Symphony Orchestra

For over 90 years the BBC Symphony Orchestra has been a driving force on the British musical landscape, championing contemporary music and giving voice to rarely performed and neglected composers. It plays a key role in the BBC Proms, performing regularly throughout each season, including the First and Last Nights.

The BBC SO is Associate Orchestra at the Barbican, where it presents a distinctive season of concerts. Concerts this season with its Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo, with whom the orchestra has a long-standing and widely acclaimed relationship, include four Mahler symphonies, Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with Sir Stephen Hough, Doreen Carwithen's Concerto for piano and strings

with Alexandra Dariescu, the UK premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Hush* and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with the BBC Symphony Chorus, dedicated to the late Sir Andrew Davis. The BBC Symphony Chorus also joins the BBC SO for Haydn's 'Nelson' Mass with soloists Cecilia Ranganwasha, Jennifer Johnston and Derek Welton and Bartók's *Cantata Profana*, conducted by Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevska. Total Immersion days are dedicated to Pierre Boulez and to electronic music, featuring works by Steve Daverson and Shiva Feshareki. *Wild Isles* features highlights on the big screen from the BBC series with live orchestral accompaniment conducted by series composer George Fenton.

The BBC SO makes appearances across the UK and internationally, and gives free concerts at its Maida Vale studios. The vast majority of the BBC SO's performances can be heard on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Proms – offer innovative education and community activities. Together they play a leading role in the BBC Ten Pieces and BBC Young Composer programmes, including work with schools, young people and families in East London ahead of the BBC SO's move to its new home in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.

BBC Singers

The BBC Singers has held a unique place at the heart of the UK's choral scene since 1924, collaborating with many of the world's leading composers, conductors and soloists. Awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Ensemble Award in March 2024, it is also celebrating its centenary in the 2024/25 season, which it launched with a sold-out concert here at the Barbican with BBC Symphony Orchestra.

The choir is based at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios and records music for broadcast on BBC Radio 3, alongside work for other network radio, television and commercial release. It also presents an annual series of concerts at Milton Court Concert Hall, performs free concerts in London and appears at major festivals in the UK and abroad.

The BBC Singers promotes a 50:50 gender policy for composers whose music it performs, and champions composers from all backgrounds. Recent concerts and recordings include music by Roderick Williams, Iain Farrington, Soumik Datta, Joanna Marsh, Reena Esmail and Sun Keting; it has recently collaborated with Anna Lapwood, Abel Selacoe, Clare Teal, Laura Mvula and the South Asian dance company Akademi. The choir recently joined voices from the popular children's programme *Hey Duggee* to release a Christmas single, and appeared as guests on *Hey Duggee's 'The Choir Badge'* episode in 2023.

As part of the BBC's plan to open its new BBC Music Studios at East Bank, the BBC Singers works closely with the local community through a programme of local music education, outreach events and live performances.

The BBC Singers appears annually at the BBC Proms. Alongside its celebrated annual performances at the First and Last Nights, the 2024 season also saw it perform with Sinfonia Smith Square at the CBeebies Proms, in Beethoven's Ninth by heart with Aurora Orchestra, Bruckner motets with Principal Guest Conductor Owain Park, and a late night with Eric Whitacre for a premiere of his brand new work, *Eternity in an Hour*, as well as celebrating its centenary with Chief Conductor Sofi Jeannin in Bristol.

Find out about forthcoming concerts and where to hear the BBC Singers at bbc.co.uk/singers

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