

Madame Butterfly Libretto changes

BLO versions with changes in red

Original Versions Follow each example

Interesting to note that BLO made corresponding changes to the sung Italian

Butterfly

No one admits to being born a **foreigner**.

There isn't a vagabond who, to hear him, isn't of great lineage.

And yet I knew wealth,

But the hurricane uproots the oaks most sturdy oaks...

And we came here for a better life. True?

Butterfly

No one ever admits he was born in poverty.

There's not a beggar who, to hear him,

doesn't come of high lineage. All the same, I have known riches.

But storms uproot the sturdiest oaks...

and we became geishas to support ourselves.

Butterfly

How old are you?

Pinkerton

Guess.

Chorus Woman

Ten.

Pinkerton

Go higher.

Chorus Woman

Sixty.

Pinkerton

Go lower.

Twenty-One exactly; I am old.

Chorus Women

Twenty-one

Chorus Woman

The age of games...

Chorus Woman

...and of sweets...

SHARPLESS

How old are you?

BUTTERFLY
Guess.

SHARPLESS
Ten.

BUTTERFLY
Make it more.

SHARPLESS
Twenty.

BUTTERFLY
Make it less.
Just exactly fifteen;
I'm already old.

SHARPLESS
Fifteen!

PINKERTON
Fifteen!

SHARPLESS
The age for games...

PINKERTON

Butterfly

Yesterday I went up **in shame to the post office.**
With the world like this, I must adopt a renewed allegiance.
My Uncle Bonze didn't know I went, neither did anyone else here.
I follow my destiny, and full of humility
To the fate of Pinkerton I bow.
It is my destiny. In the same little church,
Kneeling with you I will pray to God himself
I'll be able perhaps to forget the war on my people.
...and wedding cake.

BUTTERFLY
Yesterday I went, alone and in secret, to the Mission.
With my new life I can adopt a new religion.
My uncle, the Bonze, doesn't know,
neither do my people. I follow my destiny

and, filled with humility,
I kneel before Mr. Pinkerton's God.
It is my fate.
In the same little church,
beside you on my knees,
I will pray to the same God,
and to please you I may perhaps be able
to forget my own people.
My dearest love!

Suzuki (*muttering to herself about Uncle Bonze as she is cleaning the club*)
**I believe in God, the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ...**

SUZUKI (*from inside the house*)
Izaghi, Izanami sarundasico,
Kami, Izaghi,
Izanami sarundasico, Kami.

Suzuki
Why does Uncle Sam provide our rent? [strange question to ask in an interment camp]

BUTTERFLY
Why does he arrange for the Consul to look after the rent?

Butterfly
The only thing I could do:
Go back to amusing the people with singing...
Even if my son dies...

BUTTERFLY
I could do one of two things:
go back to entertaining people
with my songs; or better, die.

Sharpless
He is ill?

SHARPLESS
It is his?

Finale BLO

Butterfly

My love, goodbye, goodbye, little love...
Go...play, play.

[As Suzuki arrives with Pinkerton, we see Butterfly realizes her son is dead, and takes the same tableau holding a baby blanket as the elderly Japanese lady, who suddenly appears again on stage right.]

Pinkerton

Butterfly Butterfly! Butterfly!

(first one: sees Butterfly for the first time; second one: sees his son for the first time; third one: realizes his son is dead) [As the final strains of Pinkerton calling out for Butterfly, the lights fade on the barracks and on the elderly Suzuki and Butterfly, hollow from the trauma and still reliving the son she lost at camp. Suzuki lights the single candle on the cake as Butterfly clutches the baby blanket, and pausing, blows out the candle.]

Finale Original

BUTTERFLY

Farewell, my little love!
Go and play.

(She picks up the child and sets him down on a mat; she gives him an American flag and a doll to play with and gently blindfolds his eyes. Picking up the knife she goes behind the screen. Then appearing from behind the screen with the white veil clasped round her throat, Butterfly staggers across the room towards the baby, and collapses beside him.)

VOICE OF PINKERTON

Butterfly! Butterfly! Butterfly!

(Pinkerton and Sharpless burst into the room, and run to her side. With a weak gesture Butterfly points to her child and dies. Pinkerton kneels down beside her, while Sharpless goes to pick up the child.)