



*San Francisco Opera's 1924 production of Madama Butterfly, designed by Chiura Obata.
A photograph of Obata's drawing of the set for Cio-Cio-San's bedroom.*

Obata was concerned that the set accurately reflect traditional architectural forms in Japan .

All the elements of a "typical" Japanese interior are carefully delineated in the drawing: sliding door panels (*fusuma*) painted with bamboo; transoms (*ranma*) carved with butterflies;

a *tokonoma* alcove, where a hanging scroll is displayed; an elevated *tatami-mat* area, facing the *tokonoma*; and a latticed *ensō* (round window) and sliding *shoji* panels at the back.

There is also a Buddhist altar at the left rear, where Cio-Cio-San keeps the knife, and two other pieces of furniture are indicated, a two panel folding screen (*byōbu*) and a freestanding wood chest of drawers (*tansu*).

Courtesy the private collection of the Obata family.



Photograph of the 1931 San Francisco Opera production of *Madame Butterfly*.



Photograph of the 1934 San Francisco Opera production of *Madame Butterfly*.

The exterior of Cio-Cio-San's bedroom, seen at far left, and the backdrop, showing a view of hills across Nagasaki Bay, were probably designed by Obata, then re-used in subsequent performances.



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA EDUCATION



Soprano Thalia Sabanieva as Cio-Cio-San

Sabanieva performed the role of Cio-Cio-San in San Francisco Opera's 1924 production of *Madama Butterfly*. The photograph is inscribed to Mr. and Mrs. Obata and dated to October 5, 1924. According to one account, the Obata's went to visit Sabanieva at her hotel, and even took her out for a meal of sukiyaki.

Courtesy the private collection of the Obata family.