

**Opera Circle presents *Madama Butterfly* (June 13):  
catching up with tenor Isaac Hurtado**

by Mike Telin



When Opera Circle presents Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* on Saturday, June 13 at 7:30 pm in the Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square, the outstanding American tenor Isaac Hurtado will return to the [Opera Circle](#) stage performing the role of B.F. Pinkerton.

Hurtado has received praise for his Opera Circle performances in the role of the Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and for his gripping performance in the title role of Massenet's *Werther*. We caught up with [Issac Hurtado](#) by telephone and began by asking him how he prepared to perform the role of the American naval officer, who, at least by

modern standards, makes a questionable moral decision when he decides to abandon Butterfly.

Isaac Hurtado: I think it is a little bit tricky, because if you only look at what Pinkerton does, he is awful. But if you listen to his music, which is what is coming from his heart — he does have some of the most romantic music ever written, especially during the act I duet — I feel that, at least in the moment, he's very sincere. He's also swept away by the exotic atmosphere of the geisha.

Also, a lot of American officers do the same thing, so he doesn't think it's a big deal. Eventually he realizes that it is, but it is too late. Still, I don't consider Pinkerton to be a good guy — he exhibits some extreme selfishness.

*Mike Telin: Do you find Pinkerton to be a challenging character to portray?*

IH: It is hard to be as callous as Pinkerton comes across in the opera. But you do get a little swept away by the great music that Puccini gives him. I recently performed the role

with Piedmont Opera in North Carolina, so this is my third production of *Butterfly* and I really love it.

MT: I want to congratulate you for all of the success you're having at the *Utah Vocal Arts Academy*.

IH: Thank you. We recently acquired a larger space, which we needed because we have been getting a lot of students, developing more programs, and holding workshops. Things are going well, and it's been a fun adventure.

*MT: You have already mentored a number of award-winning students. Do you teach singers of all ages?*

IH: I do, but one of my focuses is high school students because usually at that age, if they can sing, they focus on musical theater or pop music. But there are always the kids who are meant to be classical singers who don't have an outlet to study. So I've been getting a lot of these kids, and when you give them the proper training, they're capable of doing some good things. I'm happy to say that some of the best recruits are coming out of our school because we are giving them conservatory training at the ages of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen.

*MT: I saw on your website that you've recently formed a new trio, "[ULTMI 3 Tenors](#)."* What I've seen and heard online sounds great.

IH: We are having fun. Tyler Nelson and Brian Stucki are guys like me — none of us wants to be singing and traveling all year long because we all have kids — so we divide our time between teaching and singing in the trio. It also allows each of us to be selective about the three or four operas we perform every year.

Tyler is a lighter, almost Rossini tenor, Brian is the versatile middle voice, and I have the darker voice of the group. Brian also plays the cello and does some arranging. We used to compete for roles and teaching positions all the time, and I eventually said, 'you know what, we would sound great together, so let's see what we can do as a group.'

We're getting ready to go into the recording studio, and we've been courted by a few TV shows, so we're in the middle of seeing exactly where all of this leads. It's a lot of fun.

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