

A Modern Woman From "Old Japan" Is Tamaki Miura



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Tamaki Miura as Herself and Tamaki Miura as "Madama Butterfly" Are One and the Same, as the Artistic Portraits Above Bear Witness

SHE looked as if she had just stepped down from a panel painted by some craftsman of Old Japan—a tiny, winsome figure in a kimono of dull blue, embroidered in great sprays that shaded through pink to misty blue, her dark hair rolled smoothly back in the Japanese mode. But the smiling eyes and cordial handclasp of Tamaki Miura, tiniest of prima donnas and the only operatic singer of Japanese birth, held a distinctly American greeting.

It was a scorching August day, but the dainty Japanese singer showed no traces of being disturbed by the heat. Perhaps it was her comfortable garb; or, it may have been her philosophic turn of mind. Mme. Miura combines the charm of Oriental repose with a mind that is twentieth century feminist in its point of view. It is this viewpoint of hers that has given America the opportunity of hearing an ideal *Butterfly*, for Mme. Miura does not need to act, she just IS *Butterfly*.

"This New York of yours to-day, it reminds me of Singapore," said Mme. Miura, when she had hospitably served tall, frosted glasses of iced tea, "this heat and the thunderstorms," she explained.

"When I was first married I went to Singapore. My husband is a physician and his work took him to one of the great plantations inland from Singapore. I stopped in Singapore for a time and then went up river to join my husband. Oh, I shall never forget it, the miles and miles of chocolate-colored water and the native captain praying to Mahomet when the storm arose one night! There were no other passengers on the boat and the natives were keeping a fast, so they did not eat in the day time, but had a feast each night at midnight.

Singing for the Coolies

"It is very different country in India; what you call primeval life. The jungle comes right up to the houses, and one night a tiger came and carried off my pet dog. And when I rode on the river in a *sampan* I always feared the huge crocodiles that followed. First I had no piano and I was so sad. Then one day I discovered in one of the houses a very old piano, and I was so grateful. I named it 'Gift of God.' Then I could practise. My husband and I would walk down to the river banks at sunset and I would sing, oh, very much I would sing, out by the chocolate-colored river in the sunset! It was the time of day when the coolies came back from their labor. There was a little, narrow path that led in from the fields and they would come along it, chanting their queer little songs. Then they would wait and listen while I sang

"Madama Butterfly" of Tokio Was Pioneer Singer Among Japanese Women—Determined on Musical Career in Spite of Parental Opposition—Exquisite Little Prima Donna of the Orient Believes "Woman's Place Is in the House," but She Means Opera House—Some of Her Early Experiences in India

to them. I do not think ever I have enjoy singing as I do to those peoples whose lives are so bare and dreary. It make me very happy."

Feminism in Japan

But why did not Mme. Miura stay in Japan to continue her singing while her husband was in India?

A sage little smile greeted the query. "In Japan it is not proper for married women to be—what you call?—before the public, yes? My parents and my husband's parents they think it a very great disgrace for me to sing; they say it not do honor to my husband's name. So I go to Singapore. When I think I may never sing again I grow very sad; almost I do not wish to live if I can not sing," and a wistful look clouded for a moment the charming little face. It gave way to a radiant smile, when I asked how she came to choose the career of a singer.

"Always I have sung—and danced," was the reply. "Then I decide, why not sing in public? So I do."

(It would seem that the simple feminine method of taking what one wants holds quite as good in Japan as America. But this is irrelevant, of course, and has nothing to do with the story.)

"I was, what you call, very great novelty, and when there are royal visitors from other lands then I am summoned to court to sing before the guests. I sing for the Duke of Connaught when England send him to visit Japan and also before the German prince, when he was guest of the Japanese court. Then I marry; follows my trip to Singapore. We are there ten months, when my husband finish the work he has to do and we return to Japan. My husband decide that he will study, research work, you say, in Berlin. I say I will go with him. Our parents become very much shocked. They say married woman should stay at home and wait patiently until husband returns, but I say I will go with my husband to Berlin—so I go," she added with the naive smile of a charming child.

Her Début in London

Mme. Miura and her husband reached Berlin about a month before the outbreak of the great war. They had decided to stop in Berlin, but their ambassador advised against it and they left

for London. In London the Japanese prima donna made her début at a concert in Albert Hall, at which the King and Queen of Great Britain were guests and at which Adelina Patti also sang.

"They were charming to me, those English," said the little song bird, who seems quite unconscious of the fact that her exquisite art has aroused admiration not only on the part of royalty, but from operagoers everywhere in England and America. "Then, when I made my début in 'Madama Butterfly'—it was at the London Opera House, for Covent Garden was closed that year—the King and Queen came again to hear me. Oh, yes, I love 'Butterfly' very greatly. You see I am what you call 'specialist'; I do not like to do many rôles, no. That is not Japanese way; I must be myself, I must be natural, so when I sing 'Butterfly' I am myself—and people are most kind, they seem happy when I sing, and I am happy if I give them pleasure.

"Besides *Butterfly* I sing *Iris* and, of course, many arias from other operas. The 'Caro Nome' I like best of Italian arias. Japanese songs I sing after they have melody composed for them. The Japanese native music lacks melody. I am sorry to say this, for I love the art of Japan. We draw, we paint, yes, but we do not compose music—yet. Some day, perhaps, but not yet."

Mme. Miura has a great desire to take American singers back to Japan, that her compatriots may learn to know and love the music of other lands.

American Triumphs

"Just now they do not like my way of singing, my people do not," she explained. "They say it is not Japanese way, but they will like it, in time, when they have heard many of your singers."

Mme. Miura's American début was made two years ago with Max Rabinoff's operatic forces. Her tour with the Boston Opera Company has given operagoers in many parts of this country the opportunity of hearing this delightful *Butterfly*. On Aug. 20 she goes to Washington to appear in concert before the Japanese Commission at the Japanese Embassy. It will be her second appearance at the Capitol this year, as she was one of the principals at the opening of the National Sylvan Theater in Washington this summer. Plans are under way for several guest appear-

ances for the Japanese prima donna at Ravinia Park during this month and early September. On Sept. 20 Mme. Miura goes to Mexico City, where she will appear in *Butterfly* and *Iris* with the Mexico City Opera Company. On her return in October she will again join the Rabinoff forces for a season which promises to be one of unusual brilliance. MAY STANLEY.

TRIBUTE TO MC CORMACK

Testimonial from "Lambs" as Mark of Appreciation of Tenor's Aid

A delegation from the Lambs' Club of New York motored up to John McCormack's place in Connecticut one sultry afternoon last week for the purpose of formally presenting to the distinguished tenor a beautifully engrossed set of resolutions, adopted at a recent meeting of the Board of Governors. Mr. McCormack is not a "Lamb," but when the club needed some money a short while ago and proceeded to raise it by holding a public gambol, he offered his services; hence the set of resolutions, which, to quote the words of the spokesman for the delegation, De Wolf Hopper, "but faintly convey how very grateful the members of the Lambs feel toward Mr. McCormack for his splendid and generous act."

Accompanying the resolutions was a sheet containing the autographs of 874 members of the club. Mr. McCormack intimated that he would order a frame for this unique souvenir immediately. "Don't do it just yet," interjected Willie Collier, "there are about thirty or forty more names to be added. Some of the boys are in Australia, some in South America and some in France. It will take time to hear from them all, but the name of every 'Lamb' must get in there."

Music at Onteora

Perry Averill, baritone, assisted by Elena de Olloqui, pianist, gave the following program at the largest musical gathering of the summer at the country house of Mrs. Alfred Bishop Mason (Mary Knight Wood, the composer), at Onteora, Sunday morning, July 29: Beethoven's "Adelaide" and Grieg's "The First Primrose" and "On the Hills," Mr. Averill; Chopin's Etude No. 3, "Hark! Hark! the Lark," and "Maiden's Wish," Miss de Olloqui; Thomas's "Si j'étais Roi" and "Le Bonheur et l'Amour" and Hüe's "J'ai pleuré en Rêve," Mr. Averill; Debussy's "Reflets dans l'Eau" and two "Danzas" by Granados, Miss de Olloqui; Mary Knight Wood's "Song of Joy," "Prayer for Sleep" and "Love Song of Egypt," Mr. Averill. Mr. Averill's accompaniments were played by Mary Knight Wood, the hostess.