opera...

The Boston Opera Group presents 'Butterfly'

By Bernard Hill

The Boston Opera Group, under the guidance of Sarah Caldwell, opened its fifth season with Puccini's "Madame Butterfly." Wednesday evening at the Harvard Square Theatre. With very few exceptions, the production merits the highest of accolades.

Whatever possible the cast was populated with Japanese, a happy event which gave realism and conviction to the overall production. This stage designed by Mike Cho Lee was effective and beautiful with a delicacy which was truly Japanese. The singing was intelligent - with enough emotion to be poignant without being melodramatic. The staging also benefited the acting, which was better than in many operas.

The opera was sung in English rather than the original Italian. This fact receives more comment, because opera in English is a matter still subject to controversy. The translation by Burks and Thomas Murtin was poetic and intelligible with none of the stylistic hurdles which have marred other operatic productions in English. Indeed, dramatically uphold-

...the opera benefits from the verisimilitude because the audience is drawn into the action. The result of it all is that the opera becomes a demure as well as aesthetic experience. Turio Testi and Jin-Chon song with clarity and careful orchestration and with all the subtlety of Japanese emotion. And the fact that she is Japanese gives her role the conviction which no Western singer could hope to duplicate. However, her vocal quality suffered somewhat from a lack of power, which accounted for her occasionally being overpowered by the orchestra. In the role of Pinkerton, Then-

as Hayward sings with a full resonant tone, and abundant power. This part, that of the end of the opera, is considered a difficult one to interpret. Hayward portrays Pinkerton as a sincere but misguided and who brings about a situation he is unable to resolve. His interpretation makes much of the part as can be done, and Hayward does it with conviction.

The part of Sharpless is general-

world in between — this is the domain of vehicles, weapons and systems produced by Ling-Temco-Vought. While LTV is a relatively new name to industry, the company is comprised of experi-

defined talents. Together these elements are meeting advanced challenges of military electronics, space, aircraft and missiles and have placed LTV in the enviable position of one of the nation's top ten defense contractors.

Today, LTV's activities include such programs as V/STOL, GRUSRADER, SCOUT, SATURN, ETA-40A, and a supersonic, low-altitude missile. In addition, the company is supporting the Navy, the U.S. Air Force and the Department of Defense and has placed LTV in the enviable position of one of the nation's top ten defense contractors.

The opera features a brilliant cast, from the disciplined yet exuberant singing of the orchestra. The only criticism here is that the volume of the accompaniment occasionally drowned out the singers.

As has been mentioned Ming Cho Lee's sets for Madame Butterfly are among the most exceptional that this opera has seen. The emphasis was not on artificial prettiness but on an authentic atmosphere which complemented the dream of acting. Boston opera-goers have come to expect a high degree of perfor-

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