



Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Bewitched the West

Lesley Downer

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A critically acclaimed author tells the enthralling true story of the real Madame Butterfly, a woman who became the most celebrated geisha in Japan and the first to tour the West.

At twenty-nine, she captivated the world's stage. From San Francisco to New York, Paris, and Berlin, audiences thrilled to her mesmeric acting and exquisite dancing. She performed for the American President and for the Prince of Wales in London. Picasso painted her. Gide, Debussy, Degas, and Rodin were among her devoted fans. She was Sadayakko, Japan's most notorious geisha—and its first international superstar.

In Italy, Puccini was working on *Madame Butterfly*. He had the plot for his opera, but he had yet to see a real live flesh-and-blood Japanese woman—until Sadayakko arrived with her troupe of traveling actors.

Madame Sadayakko is the true story of this extraordinary woman—muse to writers, artists, and fashion designers. Her adventures lift the veil on the secretive world of the geisha and reveal a missing piece of history from the turn of the last century, when Japanese women wore bustles and learned the waltz and women in the West wore Sadayakko kimonos.



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