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## An Interview with Richard Troxell

*“Chanteur d’Opéra”*

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Published on: January 6, 2008

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Excerpt from the interview with Richard Troxell in conjunction with his performance as Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton in the Opéra de Montréal’s production of *Madama Butterfly*. Mr. Troxell was interviewed by Jacques Héту for the French language magazine *ResMusica*. (RM)

*RM:* In Frédéric Mitterand’s film of *Madame Butterfly*, you interpreted the role of Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton with so much talent and conviction that you seemed to own the role. Since the release of the film, do you have the same conception of this character who always seems a little ambiguous to us?

*Richard Troxell:* The character has not changed much. One can’t take away his unpleasant side, but he does not have a bad character. He loves life. He loves women. He chooses Butterfly because she is different from the other *geishas*. Is it love? Probably not, but she pleases him, and that is enough. He doesn’t have a clue about the harm that he might be doing.



*RM:* Despite the warnings of his friend Sharpless, it seems that sexual desire is stronger than everything. It is the fantasy of the conquering white man who sails the oceans. Exotic women rhymes with erotic women. How can one humanize this character?

*RT:* He doesn’t take seriously the warnings of his friend Sharpless that the result of his marriage to Butterfly might be damaging to her. He is only thinking at that moment of being in the arms this beautiful Butterfly. It is only when he returns after several years that he realizes he has broken this woman. It is terrible, and he knows it and is remorseful.

*RM:* And does Puccini’s music make this drama even more intense?

*RT:* The music reflects the psychology of the characters. It’s the framework for the characters and, at the same time, expresses their state of mind.

*RM*: Richard, you seem to have an affinity for the French language. You have sung Hoffmann, Don José, Roméo, Christian in *Cyrano* and just recently *Zampa* by Ferdinand Hérold. What would be the role you would like to undertake?

*RT*: I like to sing in French. I like to take risks. The most difficult thing in *opéra-comique* is the spoken text. I will reprise the role of Zampa next year at the Opéra-Comique and a DVD is expected later on. I find the music fascinating and the character very interesting to play. It's a magnificent work. One is hard pressed to explain why it has disappeared from the repertoire.

*RM*: You are coming back to Canada in 2009, to Ottawa to sing the role of Lenski in *Eugene Onegin*. Is this a challenging role for you?

*RT*: I have already sung Lenski. I love *Eugene Onegin*. It's a captivating opera and the characters are real. I love the challenges of the role. I find that the Russian language, just like Italian, lends itself very well to singing.

*RM*: What is your favorite musical instrument?

*RT*: The cello.



Richard Troxell as Zampa at Opéra-Comique, Paris  
Photo credit: Agathe Poupenev



Richard, Lisa, Wilder, and Shane on a family vacation in Montana.

*RM*: What is your idea of happiness on earth?

*RT*: My family. My wife. I have two boys seven and eleven years old.

*RM*: On a desert island, what musical works would you bring?

*RT*: All the work of J. S. Bach.

*RM*: Outside of music, what are your favorite pastimes?

*RT*: I like to keep moving. I love bike riding.

*RM*: If you were an animal, which one would you be?

*RT*: A bird. An eagle.

*RM*: If you were a soprano, which role would you like to sing?

*RT*: The role of Violetta. It's a role that has it all.

*RM*: What opera character would you like to be?

*RT*: Rodolfo in *La Bohème*.

*RM*: Who is the person who has affected you the most in real life?

*RT*: Martin Luther King.



*RM*: What musician would you most like to meet?

*RT*: Mozart.

*RM*: What are the qualities you admire most in others?

*RT*: A sense of humor but especially honesty.

*RM*: What faults in others do you most easily forgive?

*RT*: All faults, even if it is difficult at times when you can sense egotism or nastiness in someone.

*RM*: How would you like to die?

*RT*: In a *tsunami*.

*RM*: In Paradise, your first words to God?

*RT*: Why?