

Discussion date, September 20th at 4pm.

Please R.S.V.P. - Zoom contact Info will be E-mailed in response.



ARIZONA OPERA VALLEY FRIENDS

Opera Comes to Valley Friends

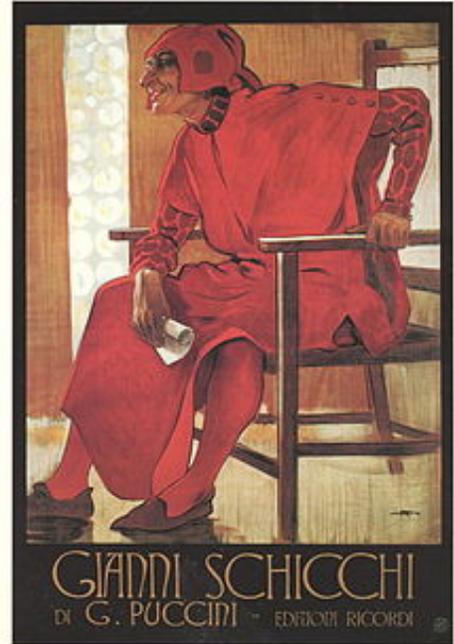
A happy hour at your home

Discussion Moderator: Kyle Homewood

Program Notes: Gary Newman

Gianni Schicchi

Opera by Giacomo Puccini,
Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano
(after a passage from Dante Alighieri's
narrative poem *Commedia Part 1: Inferno*)
Composed 1917-18



Original Cover from the Ricordi Score

The YouTube performance we are using for our discussion was recorded at
Portland State University in 2018.

<https://youtu.be/ltF5ilglbRU>

Cast:

Buoso Donati	Gina Rizk	Simone	Jonathon Roberts
Zita	Shainy Manuel	Rinuccio	Alex Trull
Betto di Signa	Eric Standifird	Marco	Adam Ramaley
La Ciesca	Jin Wang	Gherardo	Luke Smith
Nella	Rebecca Yakos	Gheradino	Ismael Perez
Gianni Schicchi	Darian Hutchinson	Lauretta	Hope McCaffrey
Maestro Spinelloccio	Nick Wavers	Ser Amantio di Nicolao	Zachary Gaumont
Pinellino	Joe Soto	Guccio	Evan Shenk

Director: Christine Meadows

Conductor: Ken Selden

Orchestra of Portland State University Opera

Synopsis

This dark comedy reflects on the greed of a family wanting to profit from the death of a relative. Originally set in Florence in 1299 at the house of Buoso Donati, this production brings the timeframe forward to 1934.

Buoso Donati has died, his family are in attendance but are most interested in the will and are concerned about the rumors his fortune has been left to the Monks. Simone (his eldest son) is consulted. If the will is already with the notary, it is hopeless, however, if it is in the room there may be hope. Rinuccio finds the will and says he will hand it over if his aunt Zita agrees to his marrying Gianni Schicchi's daughter Lauretta. They send for Schicchi, the will is read and the rumors are true.

The will could still be altered. Rinuccio says that Gianni Schicchi is the only man who can help, however, the family is disgusted since he is a peasant and his daughter could never be a Donati. (1) Rinuccio insists that Florence is all the better for men like Schicchi.

Schicchi arrives, he quickly understands the family's difficulties, a row develops between him and Zita and he tries to leave. (2) Lauretta intercedes and threatens to throw herself into the Arno river if she cannot marry Rinuccio.

Schicchi sends Lauretta away and asks the family who else knows Buoso has died. During the interrogation, Buoso's doctor knocks on the door. Schicchi impersonates Buoso and sends the doctor away by declaring he has recovered. The plan is hatched, the notary will be sent for, Schicchi will impersonate Buoso and dictate a more favorable will.

The family are overjoyed and each make a bid for Buoso's property. A bell tolls, could this mean that Buoso's death is known? The family panic and agree that Schicchi should have the final say about the disposal of Buoso's fortune.

(3) Schicchi is put into disguise and lays on the deathbed. Before the notary enters he issues a warning ... anyone altering a will suffers the amputation of a hand and exile. The family is determined and the notary and witnesses are ushered in. Following some formalities, the family await their reward, but Schicchi has other plans for Buoso's money and the future happiness of Lauretta and Rinuccio (4).

Key Arias (approximate times in this production):

(1) Firenze e come un albero fiorito Rinuccio	<i>Florence is like a blossoming tree</i> (15'30")
(2) O mio babbino caro Lauretta	<i>Oh my dear papa</i> (21'30")
(3) Spogliati, bambino Nella, La Ciesca, Zita	<i>Undress, little boy</i> (37'00")
(4) Lauretta mia, staremo sempre qui! Rinuccio, Lauretta	<i>My Lauretta, here we'll always stay</i> (52'00")

Background

Gianni Schicchi is the last of the three operas in Puccini's *Il Trittico*. *Il Tabarro* (The Cloak) and *Suor Angelica* (Sister Angelica) open the trio. The operas were meant to be performed together in one night and initially Puccini would not give permission for individual performances, but eventually relented. *Il Trittico* was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera N.Y. (December 14 1918), followed shortly after by premiers in Rome and London. In all cases the reviews were mixed, with Gianni Schicchi generally getting the more favorable reaction. It's likely that this opera was most popular because it contains more memorable arias, the composer making sure that you had a tune or two in your head as you make your way home from the theatre.

After a less than positive review from his friend Toscanini, Puccini refused to allow him to conduct the London premiere. Toscanini had said the operas were "too Verissimo". Verissimo (realism), is the Italian name given to a European movement which espoused naturalism in literature, the French author Zola was the dominant figure in this movement. The term spilled over into music and was initially applied to Mascagni's opera *Cavaleria Rusticana* (1889) which was very successful and spawned a series of shorter operas from other composers. These works followed general naturalistic tendencies, introducing characters from lower social strata, embracing strong local color, violence and passion. Many composers saw this new style as a way out of the shadow still cast by Verdi. Musically, the movement owes something to Wagner, with the orchestra more focused on emotions and the use of leit-motives (musical phrases reflecting feelings and passions used repeatedly through-out the opera). Vocal lines were more conversational, with less stilted verse and fewer 'stand still and sing' arias.

Once Mascagni had pointed the way, Puccini became the unquestioned genius of the form. The Grove Dictionary of Music states, "if these motifs do not carry the same systematic psychological overtones of a Wagnerian music drama, Puccini showed great skill in bringing them quite naturally into the heart of his formal numbers as in 'Che gelida manina' (your tiny hand is frozen - *La Boheme*) and 'Firenze e come un'albero fiorito' (Florence is like a blossoming tree - Gianni Schicchi)".

The Covent Garden Music Director, Sir Antonio Pappano, said of the *Il Trittico* operas "Puccini ... is not pre-occupied with melody, he is creating a world that will mesmerize, hypnotize the audience watching". You can hear much more from him in a talk he made during performances of the operas in 2012, where he points out influences from Debussy and others. The talk focuses on *Il Tabarro*, but applies to Gianni Schicchi.

<https://youtu.be/rge6GaAizm4>

(Link to Pappano's talk on *Il Trittico*)

Enjoy the opera via YouTube (link on page 1) anytime prior to the Zoom meeting. Join us armed with your comments about the performance, production, music, story-line, and the morals expressed. If you have questions, bring them on, we'll try to answer them. We'd love to know what you think about the experience, what we can do to improve it and if you'd like to do this again.