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Puccini's

Il Trittico

Il Tabarro / Suor Angelica / Gianni Schicchi

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with Music Highlight examples

Puccini's

Il Trittico

Il Tabarro

Suor Angelica

Gianni Schicchi

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a prelude.....

to OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY's

Il Trittico

Puccini intended the three one-act operas that comprise *Il Trittico* ("The Triptych" or "Trilogy") to be based upon Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, their themes forming a coherent narrative sequence. Although it requires much imagination, the congruity of the three segments of *Il Trittico* in relation to Dante's epic can be explained in the following manner: *Il Tabarro* portrays infernal horror (*Inferno*); *Suor Angelica* divine grace (*Purgatory*); and *Gianni Schicchi* a form of redemption (*Paradise*). In that sense, to fully appreciate the essence and unity of the underlying themes of *Il Trittico*, the three operas must be experienced as a totality.

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY explores each of Puccini's masterful one-act operas of *Il Trittico*. *A Commentary and Analysis* provides insightful drama and character analysis, together with the *Principal Characters*, *Brief Synopsis*, and *Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples* of each opera.

The *Libretto* for each opera has been newly translated by the Opera Journeys staff with specific emphasis on retaining a literal translation, but also with the objective to provide a faithful translation in modern and contemporary English; in this way, the substance of each opera becomes more intelligible. To enhance educational and study objectives, the *Libretto* contains musical highlight examples interspersed within each drama's exposition. In addition, the text includes a selected *Discography*, *Videography*, and a *Dictionary of Opera and Musical Terms*.

The opera art form is the sum of many artistic expressions: theatrical drama, music, scenery, poetry, dance, acting and gesture. In opera, it is the composer who is the dramatist, using the emotive power of music to express intense, human conflicts. Words evoke thought, but music provokes feelings; opera's sublime fusion of words, music, and all the theatrical arts provides powerful theater, an impact on one's sensibilities that can reach into the very depths of the human soul.

Puccini's *Il Trittico* is certainly a magnificent operatic invention, a towering tribute to the art form as well as to its ingenious composer.

Burton D. Fisher

Editor

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY

Il Trittico

(“The Triptych”)

Three one-act operas in Italian

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

Il Tabarro (“The Cloak”)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami

Suor Angelica (“Sister Angelica”)

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Gianni Schicchi

Libretto By Giovacchino Forzano

Il Trittico premiere:

Metropolitan Opera, New York

December 1918

About Giacomo Puccini

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was the heir to Italy's cherished opera icon, Giuseppe Verdi. He became the last superstar of the great Italian opera tradition in which the art form was dominated by lyricism, melody and the vocal arts.

Puccini came from a family of musicians who for generations had been church organists and composers in his native Lucca, Italy, a part of the region of Tuscany. His operatic epiphany occurred when he heard a performance of Verdi's *Aida*; it was the decisive moment when the eighteen-year-old budding composer became inspired toward a future in opera. With aid from Queen Margherita of Italy that was supplemented by additional funds from a great-uncle, he progressed to the Milan Conservatory, where he eventually studied under Amilcare Ponchielli, a renowned musician and teacher, and the composer of *La Gioconda* (1876).

In Milan, Ponchielli became Puccini's mentor; he astutely recognized the young composer's extraordinarily rich orchestral and symphonic skills and his remarkable harmonic and melodic inventiveness, resources that would become the hallmarks and prime characteristics of Puccini's mature compositional style.

Puccini's early experiences served to elevate his acute sense of drama, which eventually became engraved in his operatic works. He was fortunate to have been exposed to a wide range of dramatic plays that were presented in his hometown by distinguished touring companies. He saw works by Vittorio Alfieri and Carlo Goldoni, as well as the French works of Alexandre Dumas (father and son) and those of the extremely popular Victorien Sardou.

In 1884, at the age of 26, Puccini competed in the publisher Sonzogno's one-act-opera contest with his opera *Le Villi* ("The Witches"), a phantasmagoric romantic tale about young women who die of lovesickness because they were abandoned. Musically and dramatically, *Le Villi* remains quite a distance from the poignant sentimentalism which later became Puccini's trademark. Although Puccini lost the contest, La Scala agreed to produce *Le Villi* for its following season. But more significant to Puccini's future career, Giulio Ricordi, the influential publisher, recognized the young composer's talents and lured him from Sonzogno, his rival and competitor.

Puccini became Ricordi's favorite composer, a prized status that resulted in much peer envy, resentment, and jealousy among the young composer's rivals. Nonetheless, Ricordi used his ingenious golden touch to unite composer with librettist, and he proceeded to assemble the best poets and dramatists for his budding star, Puccini.

Ricordi commissioned Puccini to write a second opera, *Edgar* (1889), a melodrama involving a rivalry between two brothers for a seductive Moorish girl that erupts into powerful passions of betrayal and revenge. Its premiere at La Scala was a disappointment: the critics praised Puccini's orchestral and harmonic development since *Le Villi*, but considered the opera mediocre. Even its later condensation from four to three acts could not redeem it or improve its fortunes, and it is rarely performed in modern times.

Ricordi's faith in his young protégé was triumphantly vindicated by the immediate success of Puccini's next opera, *Manon Lescaut* (1893). The genesis of the libretto was itself an operatic melodrama, saturated with feuds and disagreements among its considerable group of writers and scenarists that included Ruggero Leoncavallo, Luigi Illica, Giuseppe Giacosa, Domenico Oliva, Marco Praga, and even Giulio Ricordi himself.

The critics and public were unanimous in their praise of *Manon Lescaut*, and in London the eminent critic George Bernard Shaw noted that in this opera, “Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals.”

For Puccini’s librettos over the next decade, Ricordi secured the talents of the illustrious team of the scenarist Luigi Illica and the poet, playwright and versifier Giuseppe Giacosa. The first fruit of their collaboration was *La Bohème* (1896), drawn from Henri Murger’s vivid novel about life among the artists of the Latin Quarter in Paris during the 1830s, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (“Scenes of Bohemian Life”).

The critics were strangely cool at *La Bohème*’s premiere; several of them found it a restrained work when compared to the fierce and intensive passions of *Manon Lescaut*. In spite of the opera’s negative reviews, the public eventually became enamored with it. But in Vienna, the powerful Mahler was hostile to Puccini and virtually banned *La Bohème* in favor of Leoncavallo’s treatment of the same subject. Leoncavallo had earlier achieved worldwide acclaim for his verismo opera, *I Pagliacci* (1892), and one year later was part of the legion of librettists who wrote the libretto for Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*.

With respect to *La Bohème*, many friends attempted to persuade both Puccini and Leoncavallo not to simultaneously write operas based on Murger’s story, a caution based primarily on the fact that certain elements of the plot, if adapted from the original play, were uncomfortably too close to that of Verdi’s renowned *La Traviata* (1853): both heroines die of tuberculosis, and in Murger, Mimi is persuaded to leave Rodolfo by his wealthy uncle, who employs some of the same arguments posed by Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*.

Nevertheless, both composers were intransigent and attacked the composition of the work. But in true operatic tradition, passions erupted, and what began as a friendly rivalry and spirited competition eventually transformed into bitter enmity between Puccini and Leoncavallo, particularly after Leoncavallo claimed that he had precedence in the subject. Earlier, Ricordi had been unsuccessful in securing exclusive rights for Puccini because Murger’s novel was in the public domain. Leoncavallo’s *La Bohème* premiered in 1897, one year after Puccini’s *La Bohème*. The critics and audiences lauded Leoncavallo’s opera. Although it is perhaps unjust, Leoncavallo’s opera is rarely performed in modern times, eclipsed by the more popular Puccini work.

After *La Bohème*, Puccini transformed Victorien Sardou’s play *La Tosca* into a sensational, powerful, and thrilling music-action drama. Although the play was extremely popular in its time, Puccini certainly provided immortality for its playwright through his opera’s success.

For his next opera, he adapted David Belasco’s one-act play *Madame Butterfly* (1904). At its premiere, the opera experienced what Puccini described as “a veritable lynching”; the audience’s hostility and denunciation of the composer and his work were apparently deliberately engineered by rivals who were jealous of Puccini’s success and favored status with Ricordi. Nevertheless, Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* quickly joined its two predecessors as cornerstones of the international operatic repertory.

Puccini followed with *La Fanciulla del West* (“The Girl of the Golden West”) (1910), *La Rondine* (1917), the three one-act operas of *Il Trittico*—*Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Il Tabarro* (“The Cloak”) (1918), and his final work, *Turandot*, completed posthumously in 1926 by Franco Alfano.

Il Trittico: an overview

Il Trittico ("The Triptych"), was originally intended to draw three episodes respectively from Dante's *The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatory* and *Paradise*. (Only *Gianni Schicchi* was taken directly from Dante.)

A brief story synopsis of the three *Il Trittico* operas is the following:

Il Tabarro is the story of a Parisian barge captain, Michele, who discovers that his wife Giorgetta is having an affair with a young stevedore, Luigi. He kills Luigi as he is about to meet Giorgetta for a clandestine rendezvous. Afterwards, he presents his adulterous wife with the corpse of her lover, wrapped in his cloak.

Suor Angelica takes place in a convent during the seventeenth century. Sister Angelica has entered the convent in punishment for having defamed her family name by bearing a child out of wedlock. Her aunt, the Princess, visits her to demand that she renounce her share of the family estate. When Angelica inquires about her child, the Princess coldly tells her that he is dead. Angelica takes poison. Just before she dies, she has a vision of the Virgin bringing her child to her.

Gianni Schicchi, adapted from Canto XXX of Dante's *Inferno*, takes place in Florence at the end of the thirteenth century. Greedy relatives gather at the deathbed of the deceased Buoso Donati. They become horrified to discover that Buoso has left his entire fortune to a monastery. They ask the wily Gianni Schicchi, whose daughter Lauretta is in love with Buoso's nephew Rinuccio, to help them make a new will that would bequeath all of Buoso's properties to the relatives. Schicchi gets into bed and impersonates Buoso. When the notary arrives, Schicchi dictates Buoso's will, bequeathing Buoso's house and his most valuable properties to his "good friend Gianni Schicchi."

From its conception, Puccini was doubtful about the aptness of the generic title *Il Trittico*; unlike the three panels of a triptych, his three operas form no narrative sequence, nor is there any obvious relationship or unity between their subjects. Yet, with some imagination, there is indeed some faint thematic coherence that does seem to exist among the three operas with respect a relationship to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*.

As such, *Il Tabarro*, a horrifying verismo story, can be related to Dante's *Inferno*; *Suor Angelica*, presenting mortal sin and salvation through divine grace, can be related to the *Purgatory*; and *Gianni Schicchi*, with its liberating and redeeming atmosphere, can be related to the *Paradise*. In this context, the cohesion of the three episodes of *Il Trittico* suggests the idea of a gradual rise from darkness to light.

Each individual opera has a powerful dramatic effect, the whole far surpassing its individual parts. In that sense, the true effect of *Il Trittico* is to experience all three operas in one evening.

Il Tabarro

(“The Cloak”)

Opera in Italian in one act

Music
by
Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by Giuseppe Adami, after *La Houppelande*,
a play by Didier Gold (1910)**

Premiere:
Metropolitan Opera, New York
December 1918

Principal Characters in Il Tabarro

Giorgetta, Michele's wife, (age 25)	Soprano
Michele, a barge owner (age 50)	Baritone
Luigi, a stevedore and Giorgetta's lover (age 20)	Tenor
Tinca, a stevedore	Tenor
Talpa, a stevedore	Bass
La Frugola, Talpa's wife	Mezzo-soprano

Time: Early 1900s.

Place: Paris. A barge moored along a wharf on the Seine River.

Brief Story Synopsis

It is an early evening in September. Michele, a barge owner, stares moodily into the sunset, his unlit pipe hanging from his mouth. Michele's unhappy and much younger wife Giorgetta is busy with laundry and other household tasks. The stevedores, Tinca, Talpa and Luigi, are unloading sacks of cement from the hold, groaning and complaining about their laborious work.

Giorgetta, sympathetic to the stevedore's drudgery, offers them wine. Michele goes below deck, irritated because Giorgetta seems to be rejecting him.

As an Organ-Grinder along the wharf plays a waltz, Tinca dances rather clumsily with Giorgetta, prompting Luigi to intervene; as they dance, they are oblivious to the presence of the others and unwittingly reveal an urgent attraction each other. When Michele reappears, they quickly separate and stop dancing. Giorgetta, hiding behind self-serving reasons, carefully questions Michele as to whether he plans to retain his present crew of stevedores; he assures her that Talpa, Tinca, and Luigi will remain.

La Frugola, a rummaging rag-picker arrives to collect her husband, Talpa. She gives Giorgetta a beautiful jewel-studded comb that she found that day. The stevedores complain about their oppressive life, prompting Luigi to explode into an impassioned outcry condemning their destiny. Giorgetta falls into a wistful reminiscence about her youth in the Paris suburb of Belleville, and Luigi, also born and bred there, joins her; as they dream of returning to the country, they seem to forget their troubles. Secretly, Giorgetta and Luigi are in love.

When Tinca, Talpa and Frugola leave, Luigi stays behind, ostensibly to discuss with Michele his future as a stevedore for the barge, but that is merely an excuse for him to be close to Giorgetta. After Michele goes off to set the evening lanterns, Luigi and Giorgetta reminisce about the ecstasy they shared the night before. They plan to meet again later that evening after Michele has gone to sleep. Giorgetta will give Luigi a signal when it is all-clear to come aboard: she will light a match.

Michele emerges from the cabin. He tries to rekindle the warmth of their past relationship, reminding Giorgetta of the happy times they shared with their small child, now dead, and how he used his cloak to shield her from the cold winds. But Giorgetta's mind and heart remain closed to her husband; she is preoccupied with her forthcoming rendezvous with Luigi. She pretends to be tired and goes below deck. Michele watches her, suspiciously noticing that she is not getting ready for bed, and that she seems to be agitated and anxious.

Michele's suspicions transform into a sudden eruption of jealousy and despair, causing him to rage about his fate with Giorgetta, a relationship in which the flames of intimacy and love have extinguished. He concludes that Giorgetta must have a lover, the reason she never sleeps at night, but he is unable to figure out who it might be.

Michele prepares to light his pipe. Luigi, hiding on the wharf, sees a match being struck and assumes it is Giorgetta's signal for him to come aboard. Luigi sneaks aboard the barge in the darkness, but does not see the hiding Michele, who emerges in a fury, seizes his prey by the neck, and forces him to confess that he loves Giorgetta. Michele strangles Luigi to death, and then covers his corpse with his cloak.

Giorgetta, uneasy and stirring below, comes on deck. She is seemingly remorseful and apologetic for her coldness to Michele, and expresses her desire to be sheltered by Michele's cloak. Michele pulls the cloak away to reveal Luigi's lifeless form. In triumph, he pushes her savagely onto the corpse of her lover.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

It is early evening. The theme of the Seine River symbolizes its eternal, sluggish flow, a metaphor for the weariness and soul-destroying monotony that oppresses the lives of the bargemen and stevedores whose livelihood depends on the river.

The Seine River:

Andante moderato calmo



Michele, the skipper of the barge, is seated close to the tiller, steadily gazing at the magnificent September sunset. His unlighted pipe hangs from his lips.

On the wharf, longshoremen are moving to and from the barge, their backs bent under the weight of heavy bags of cement. They complain about their burdens and the languorous toil they must endure to survive. Whistles of passing tugs are heard from the river, automobile horns in the distance.

Giorgetta emerges from the cabin. She removes her laundry from a line, and then draws a bucket of water from the river to water her flowers. She notices her husband Michele seated motionless by the tiller. She shades her eyes from the sun with her hand, and then calls out to him, inquiring if he is not tired from blankly gazing out into the bright sunset. He remains pensive and introspective, speaking few words.

Michele inquires if the stevedores have completed the unloading of the barge. Giorgetta assures him that the men have toiled hard all day, and surely the hold will be emptied soon; tomorrow they will be ready to take on new cargo. Giorgetta becomes compassionate to the stevedore's burdensome labor and inquires of Michele if she could offer them wine. Michele agrees, complimenting her that she has a heart of gold, but to himself, he laments that she has no compassion for him. Seeking her love, he gently places his arm about her waist, telling her that he has had no wine, that his pipe is extinguished, but that his desire for her is aflame; he kisses her, but she turns away from him. Disappointed, Michele leaves and disappears into the hold of the ship.

The stevedore Luigi complains about the incessant work. Giorgetta offers him wine, and as she walks toward the cabin, she exchanges covert, expressive glances with him. Tinca, emerges from the hold while conversing with his fellow stevedore, Talpa, urging him to hurry so they can have supper; Talpa, wiping perspiration from his brow, complains about the endless burden of unloading the barge. Giorgetta, carrying a pitcher of wine and glasses, urges the stevedores to be merry and let the wine fortify them. All surround Giorgetta, who, with genial hospitality, pours wine for all of them.

Organ-Grinder's Waltz:

Tempo di Valzer moderato



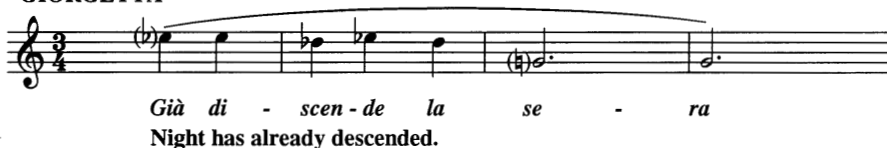
An Organ-Grinder passes by the wharf while playing an off-key waltz. Tinca raises his glass and praises the good wine that extinguishes melancholy thoughts. He begins to dance with Giorgetta, the others laughing because he cannot keep step with her. Luigi intervenes, taking Giorgetta in his arms and holding her tightly. Giorgetta abandons herself to Luigi, becoming languid as they dance. Michele emerges from the hold, and Talpa immediately cautions Giorgetta and Luigi to stop dancing. Luigi throws a few coins to the Organ-Grinder, and then proceeds toward the hold with the other men to resume unloading the barge.

Michele approaches Giorgetta, who immediately puts her dishevelled hair in order, and with forced composure, begins to converse with her husband. She asks him if they plan to sail next week. Michele responds vaguely. Their conversation is interrupted by the shrill whistle from a tug in the distance, and a song peddler, offering his newest song.

Giorgetta resumes her inquiries of Michele, who seems cold and evasive. She asks him if the three stevedores will continue working for them, but Michele is noncommittal. Trying to make conversation with her pensive husband, Giorgetta comments that night is descending, that the September sunset is a clear crimson, and that there is a chill in the air.

“Già discende la sera”

GIORGETTA



Giorgetta notices Frugola approaching, no doubt seeking her foolish husband, Talpa. Michele comments that Talpa drinks too much, but Giorgetta explains that it is because he is always jealous of Frugola. Michele is silent.

The song-peddler appears on the quay alongside the Seine, followed by a group of milliners who have rushed out of a nearby shop to listen to him. His song relates the story of Mimi: in Spring, youthful lovers will no longer see their dear ones.

Song Peddler: "Primavera"**Allegretto****SONG PEDDLER**

"Primavera, primave - ra, non cercare più i due a manti là fra l'ombre della sera."
"Spring, you can no longer find the young lovers in the shadows."

The song-peddler ends his song, the music quoting Puccini's *La Bohème*: "È la storia de Mimi!" ("It is the story of Mimi!") Giorgetta, watching Michele closely, inquires why he seems so strange this evening, so silent and pensive. Michele asks Giorgetta if he treats her well and gives her proper attention; Giorgetta confirms that she is not abused, but complains about his silence, preferring that he be more outgoing. Michele walks to the other end of the barge, Giorgetta following him and insisting that he tell her what seems to be wrong. Michele replies: "Ma nulla! Nulla!" ("Why nothing! Nothing!")

The song-peddler finishes his song: "Chi aspettando sa che muore." ("He who lives for love, dies for love.") As the peddler disappears in the distance, girls who have purchased the music read the words, rushing away as they repeat the verses.

Frugola appears on the wharf and ironically greets Michele and Giorgetta as "Eterni innamorati" ("Perennial lovers"). She mounts the gangplank and jumps on to the barge. She is a dirty, ragged woman who carries a knapsack on her shoulders that is filled with rubbish she has collected by rummaging through garbage. Michele greets Frugola, bids her a good night, and then enters the cabin.

Frugola, married to Talpa, asks Giorgetta if the stevedores have finished their work. She reveals that Talpa has been in pain from the excruciating labor, and that she has attentively soothed his aching pains with rubdowns and good rum.

Then Frugola throws her bag to the ground and greedily rummages through its contents.

"Se tu sapessi gli oggetti strani"**Allegro energico****FRUGOLA**

Se tu sa - pessi gli oggetti stra - ni che in questa sacca so - no racchiusi!
If you knew the strange objects that are gathered in this sack!

She takes out a jewel-studded comb and offers it to Giorgetta, who accepts it. Frugola proceeds to show Giorgetta all the quaint articles she has collected: laces, feathers, silk scarves, velvets, cream pots, ruffles, old silver bracelets. Even beef, which she has acquired for her Angora cat, her dear "Caporale" ("Corporal").

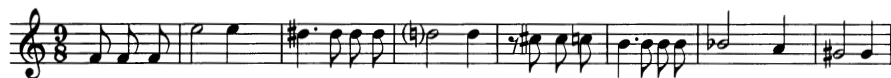
Talpa emerges from the hold and greets his wife. Michele also emerges from the cabin and approaches Luigi to inquire if he will help them tomorrow to unload the heavy steel bars that remain in the hold: Luigi agrees. Tinca emerges from the hold, followed by other stevedores. They all wish Michele a goodnight, and then scatter on the wharf. Talpa, wanting to join his fellow stevedores in drink, argues with Frugola as Michele descends into the cabin.

Tinca insists that he wants more wine to drown out his sorrows and repress his thoughts about revolting. Luigi responds to Tinca, addressing their cruel fate with bitter resentment at the toil that they are condemned to perform for the scantiest of wages.

“Hai be ragione”

Allegro moderato con moto

LUIGI



As they reminisce and dream, Luigi and Giorgetta remain transfigured, their hands entwined as if they have become one soul, both spellbound by the same thoughts. Then they realize that others are present and drop each other's hands.

Frugola observes them and cynically affirms that life is certainly different on board a ship. Talpa, disinterested in Giorgetta's dreams, asks Luigi to join them for supper. Luigi declines, stating that he is waiting to see Michele. Talpa and Frugola leave, and Giorgetta wishes them a goodnight.

In a low voice, but fervidly, Giorgetta begs Luigi to remain, reminding him of the ecstatic rapture they shared the night before. She becomes apprehensive when her thoughts turn to Michele; she admits that if he knew of their affair he would kill them both, but Luigi vows that death is better than living in constant separation.

“Lover’s Guilt” or “Stolen Love”

Andante moderato

GIORGETTA



O Luigi! Luigi!

Bada a te! Può salir fra un momento!

Luigi! Luigi! Take care! He'll return any moment!

Just as Luigi is about to embrace Giorgetta, Michele emerges from the hold. Surprised, he inquires why Luigi still remains. Luigi explains to the skipper that he wanted to thank him for providing work, and that perhaps he could drop him off at Rouen, where he could seek additional work. Michele assures him that there is no work there; Luigi agrees to stay.

Michele goes off to light the evening lanterns, and then enters the cabin. Luigi rushes to Giorgetta, both becoming impassioned with intense yearning and desire. They are both in conflict and tension between their ecstasy and fear, but they are obsessed to be together.

“È la gioia rapita fra spasimi e paure”

LUIGI



È la gio - ia ra - pì - ta fra spasimi e pa - u - re.

A seductive joy, amid ecstasy and fear.

They plan their intrigue to meet as they did the night before. Luigi promises to return in an hour. Giorgetta will leave the gangplank for him, and she will signal him that it is safe by lighting a match. Giorgetta encourages Luigi to leave the barge right away until their rendezvous that evening.

It is complete darkness.

Michele: Despair

Andante molto moderato



To a theme representing Michele's despair and longing for the lost love of his wife, Michele addresses Giorgetta. He urges Giorgetta to go to bed, but she claims that she is not quite tired yet. Giorgetta compliments Michele for keeping Luigi as a stevedore for him and suggests that he dismiss Tinca, a man who is always drunk; Michele confirms that his drunkenness is because his wife is faithless and he drinks to drown his sorrows.

Giorgetta is silent, seemingly troubled and nervous. Michele inquires why she is uneasy, but she is impassive. Then he approaches her with determination, inquiring why she does not love him any more.

"Perchè, perchè non m'ami più?"

MICHELE



Per - chè, per - chè non m'a - mi più? Per - chè?
Why? Why don't you love me any more? Why?

Michele reminds Giorgetta of the past; it was just a year ago that during those cool nights on the river they shared their intimacy in the dark cabin; the three of them (with their infant child), but Giorgetta responds painfully at the mention of the child, now dead, and begs that he be silent. Michele continues in nostalgia, reminding her how he would wrap her in his cloak if the breeze was too brisk; in the past, they were so warm and happy together, but the flames of that intimacy have extinguished.

Giorgetta admits that she indeed loves Michele because he is a kind and honest man, but she spurns his advances and excuses herself. She claims that she is tired and weary and wishes to go to sleep, even though it is stifling and suffocating on the barge. Michele again reminds her that she never sleeps, his suspicion that there are other reasons why Giorgetta does not sleep at night.

Michele tries to draw Giorgetta into his arms, urging her to come close to him. Giorgetta remains intransigent and cold, telling him that she no longer feels the same, that they are aging and that she no longer feels those intimate passions.

Abruptly, Giorgetta wishes him a good night. Michele tries to kiss her, but she escapes from him and runs off. He follows her savagely with his eyes and mutters with a vengeance that she is a vile slut.

Michele wonders about his rejection by Giorgetta: Is it because he has aged? Does Giorgetta have a lover? Does she not sleep so she can escape to a secret lover?

On the boulevard along the Seine, the shadows of two lovers, entwined, pass by as they exchange loving endearments to each other; from a nearby-by barracks taps is heard.

The river becomes a metaphor for Michele's unhappiness and the anguish that pervades his soul, endless sorrows that flow eternally. The mysterious silent waters flow on, passing over his broken heart. He expresses his longing for the river to wash away his tears and bitter sorrows, that he may die in peace in the silent waters.

In the darkness and silence, Michele take his big black cloak and throws it on his shoulders. Then he leans against the tiller of the barge, all the while steadily gazing at the still river.

Cloak theme: "Nulla! Silenzio!"

Andante grave
MICHELE



Nulla! Silenzio!
Nothing! All is quiet!

Then Michele, convinced that Giorgetta has a lover, wonders who that lover might be?

"Chi? Chi? Forse il mio sonno!"

Andante grave
MICHELE



Chi? chi? For - se il mio son - no!
Who? Who? Perhaps I am dreaming!

Michele takes his pipe from his pocket and lights it. As the match flares, Luigi cautiously mounts the gangplank and jumps on the barge. Michele sees the shadows, becomes startled, and then hides. Then he recognizes Luigi, throws himself upon him, and seizes him by the throat. Luigi struggles to free himself, but Michele cautions him not to scream. He asks why he has returned, suggesting that he is seeking his wife. Luigi denies his accusation, but Michele accuses him of lying and demands that he confess the truth. Luigi tries to draw his knife, but Michele overpowers his arms. He curses Luigi, warning him that he will kill him and throw him in the river unless he confesses that he loves his wife; if he does he will let him go.

Finally, Luigi admits that he loves Giorgetta; Michele makes him repeat it. Then Michele tightens his hold on Luigi's throat and strangles him to death.

From inside the cabin, Giorgetta is heard calling to Michele. Michele hears her voice and quickly sits down, throwing his cloak over the corpse of Luigi. Giorgetta appears and looks about in fright. She becomes calm when she notices Michele seated, and then draws near to him anxiously. Michele, very calmly, reminds her that he told her that she would not be able to sleep.

Meekly, Giorgetta apologizes for being so cold to him and coquettishly asks his forgiveness. She asks Michele if he wants her near to him. Michele tells her to go under his cloak. In a trembling voice, she reminds Michele that he used to tell her: “Tutti quanti portiamo un tabarro che asconde qualche volta una gioia, qualche volta un dolore.” (“Every man needs to carry some great cloak, where he sometimes hides some wondrous joy, and sometimes a profound sorrow.”)

Michele responds savagely; that sometimes the cloak hides a crime, or a murder. He invites Giorgetta to come beneath his cloak.

As Michele opens the cloak, Luigi’s dead body falls at Giorgetta’s feet. Horror stricken, she shrieks and tries to draw back. But Michele seizes her and throws her upon the corpse of her dead lover.

Commentary and Analysis

Giacomo Puccini always identified his musical and dramatic style with the “giovane scuola,” the “young school” of naturalistic composers who evolved in Italy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the verismo composers. (Verismo is synonymous with realism, or truth.) Of Puccini’s ten operas, only the stark realism of *Tosca* (1900) and *Il Tabarro* (1918) are considered true verismo operas, the underlying themes of his other operas containing only characteristics or allusions to the genre.

Verismo began as a literary movement, exemplified in Italy by the novels and plays of Giovanni Verga, that adapted the style of naturalism of the French writers, Émile Zola and Guy de Maupassant. The landmark Italian veristic opera, Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890) was based on a short story by Verga, and was followed by Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci* (1892).

Conceptually, these verismo operas advocated an accurate representation of natural or real life conflicts and tensions, all without the idealization and sentimentalism that was so prevalent in its predecessor, Romanticism. Verismo’s primary focus was to present reality, and therefore it rejected visionary subjects and themes. To achieve that realism, the verists often placed their characters in contemporary dress, and their plots generally portrayed humble people, rural and impoverished souls, rather than the aristocratic or privileged. But more importantly, verismo passions portrayed raw violence; in both its action and music, verismo portrayed a heightened emotionalism rather than subtlety. In verismo, the tendency was to wed the sordid with the sensational.

As the nineteenth century approached its close — the fin de siècle — the times became even more spiritually unsettled; man became self-questioning and acutely aware of a cultural decadence that was pervading society. Nietzsche, the quintessential cultural pessimist of the nineteenth century, said it was a time of “the transvaluation of values,” in effect, his recognition of spiritual deterioration and decadence.

Artistic genres expressed this end-of-century malaise through an acute sense of realism; it became a time to peer into humanity’s soul and seek truth. Romanticism had dominated most of the nineteenth century, but its artificial sentiment and idealism began to be viewed as a contradiction of universal truth. So art shifted its focus to a more realistic portrayal of common man and his everyday, personal life drama — and even his degeneracy.

That new truth was portrayed in opera by the Italians in their verismo genre: verismé by the French (Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875) was the first verismé opera.) The veristic genre championed the concept that in art and literature, ugly and vulgar aspects of humanity earned their right to representation based upon their inherent truthful values. Conceptually, during the last thousand years of western history, civilization had progressed from the god-centered Middle Ages, in which man lived on the precipice between hell and damnation, to Enlightenment reason, to Romanticism’s sense freedom and feeling, to realism; but in realism, the antithesis of reason, man was portrayed as merely a creature of instinct.

Realism began in literature as naturalism, a genre that probed deeply into every aspect of the human experience. In 1845, in France, Prosper Mérimée wrote his novella, *Carmen*, a short story immortalized in Bizet’s opera, that dealt with extreme passions involving sex, betrayal, rivalry, vengeance, and murder. Almost simultaneously, Émile Zola, recognized by many as the founder of literary naturalism, wrote novels that portrayed the underbelly of life, bringing human passions to the surface in his documentation of every social ill, every obscenity, and every criminality, no matter how politically sensitive: *The Dram Shop* (1877) about alcoholism; *Nana* (1880) about prostitution and the demimonde. Similarly, Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1857) portrayed the romantically motivated adulteries of a married woman whose

pathetically overblown love affairs end in her suicide. And in England, Charles Dickens presented the problems of the impoverished in his portrayal of moral degeneracy in the new industrial age slums.

Realism essentially had no philosophical foundation: its object was simply to portray the human condition without superficiality. As such, human passions became the subject of the action: no subject was too mundane; no subject too harsh, and no subject too ugly. As the antithesis of Romanticism, realism avoided artificiality and sentimentalism, and averted affectations with historical personalities, or romantic portrayals of chivalry and heroism.

Realism's objective was to search for the underlying truth in man's existence, and thus, reveal man's true nature. As such, it brought violent and savage passions to artistic expression, becoming obsessed with violence, passion, and death. Realism portrayed human nature in the raw, the barbarian side of man, yet man possessing uninhibited spontaneity, courage, energy and vitality: in effect, the latent animal within the human soul; the "noble savage." So realism ennobled primitive and unspoiled man because he was true to his natural inclinations, and not stifled by the hypocrisy of society's conventions and the presumptions of civilized values, behavior previously justified by reason and morality. Realism perceived that beneath that veneer and facade called civilization, lurk dark, irrational mysterious forces that become manifested in brutal and cruel human passions, acts of violence, and bestiality: those forces of unreason and violence are sinister and fatal powers that become equated with death; in Realism, death becomes the supreme consummation of desire.

In Italy, verismo was partly inspired by the public's weariness with Romanticism's sentiment and idealization. But realism also evolved from the volatile political and social perplexities of the times. During that last decade of the nineteenth century, Italy was experiencing political, social and economic crises, and art reflected the zeitgeist of the times.

The Risorgimento (1860-61) had ostensibly fulfilled Italy's dream of liberation from the foreign rule of Austria and France, initially unifying the country under a democratic political system. But by the end of the century, none of those lofty dreams of democracy and political stability had been achieved: chaos and anarchy loomed on the horizon. Italy lacked the resources for rapid social and economic development, and the dream of a "second Rome" did not emerge. The veneer of political union could not disguise the reality of a divided country: in the south, from Naples through Sicily, the social and economic structure was virtually medieval, an illiterate peasantry living in grinding poverty under primitive feudal institutions that lacked the infrastructure to execute law and order; the only effective escape from squalor was emigration. But in contrast, the north thrived, developing industrially and progressing economically.

During the first generation after unification, moderate liberals of the north led the government, but those leaders were upper and middle class representatives who distrusted democracy. In the 1870s and 1880s more liberal factions of the upper middle-class oligarchy emerged, maintaining political stability by developing personal cliques and petty interest groups that they held together with pork-barrel deals; in the end, every opposing faction in Italy was compromised in one way or another through political favors.

The slow expansion of the nation's economy caused continuing internal discontent; in the 1890s there were peasant revolts, and disorders were provoked by anarchists and disenfranchised factions. The political climate was sensitive, insecure, and vacillating; it was heroic — if not fatal — to express outrage and criticism of the country's chaotic condition. These were volatile times, an era in which regicide and nihilism were virtually everyday topics, and there was much political agitation and social unrest: the Socialist Party that had been agitating for change but progress was outlawed, causing rioting to erupt in the larger cities. And in 1900, King Umberto was assassinated by anarchists.

A host of political ideologies and movements emerged, each with its own agenda to establish order: some advocated a sinister new form of supernationalism that demanded more aggressive action; and ultimately, political and social unrest was repressed by energetic government police action. But the political chaos set the stage for emerging authoritarianism and fascism, a complete control of intellectual and political thought that advocated militarism, irrationalism, scorn for the rule of law and ethics, discipline and total devotion to duty, and the supreme and absolute sovereignty of the state. The Italian slogan “to believe, to obey, to combat” became emerging fascism’s antithesis to the French Revolution’s “liberty, equality, fraternity.”

Thus, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, Italy’s political and social climate was chaotic, and the country seemed to be evolving toward the same despotism and tyranny of Robespierre’s Reign of Terror. Those fears inspired the renowned poet Luigi Illica to write the libretto for Umberto Giordano’s verismo opera, *Andrea Chénier* (1896), that was intended as a warning to his Italian compatriots; beware of the ominous clouds that were gathering on their political horizon, because the dark history of the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror could very well repeat itself in Italy.

Prosper Mérimée, the literary creator of *Carmen*, perfectly captured the essence of naturalism (realism) when he commented: “I am one of those who has a strong liking for bandits, not that I have any desire to meet them on my travels, but the energy of these men, at war with the whole society, wrings from me an admiration of which I am ashamed.”

Mérimée, like so many of his French contemporary naturalist writers, turned to exotic locales for artistic inspiration. Spain, a close neighbor just to the southwest, bore a special fascination, particularly the character of its arcane gypsy culture. Those gypsies, considered sorcerers, witches, and occultists, were the traditional enemy of the church and were almost always stereotyped as an ethnic group of bandits and social outcasts dominated by loose morality. From the comfort of distance, Mérimée told fascinating picaresque tales about gypsy ethos and culture, in a moralistic sense, using their presumed evils, loose morals, and bizarre idiosyncrasies, to imply to the reader their spiritual decadence that was to serve as a moralistic guide for renewal and redemption.

Mérimée’s particular verismé was his obsession with man’s propensity for extreme and violent passions that are irreconcilable and ultimately became fatal. In his tragedy of *Carmen*, he presents those forces of violence, cruelty, immorality, irrationality, and erotic love, as sinister fatal powers: in Mérimée’s verismé, man is a crazed brute, and certainly, good does not necessarily triumph over evil.

Bizet himself found his muse and inspiration for *Carmen* in realism’s truthful representation of humanity. He commented: “As a musician, I tell you that if you were to suppress hatred, adultery, fanaticism, or evil, it would no longer be possible to write a single note of music.” In 1875, Bizet’s *Carmen* heralded the arrival of realism to the opera stage: verismé. In Italy, its counterpart — verismo — formally arrived to the opera stage with Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), followed by Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci* (1892).

Verismo flourished at a time when Italian opera was perceived to be in decline and degeneration: its portrayal of real, earthy people who expressed vigorous passions was intended to rejuvenate the opera art form. The archetypes of Italian verismo have become those two Siamese twins of opera, affectionately known as “Cav” and “Pag”: it is said that “Cav” is the “flesh and bones” of verismo; “Pag” is its “soul.” Together, they are the fountainheads of the short-lived verismo genre of Italian opera. But there were other operas in this new avant-garde school: Umberto Giordano’s *Andrea Chénier* (1896) and *Fedora* (1897), Francesco Cilèa’s *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902), and eventually, Puccini’s *Tosca* (1900) and *Il Tabarro* (1918).

The underlying essence of these verismo operas highlights how quickly love can be transformed into violent hatred. Most of these opera stories involve a love triangle, in which one side of the triangle is betrayed, leading to murder. In *Cav* the triangle involves two women, the spurned Santuzza and the coquettish Lola, both in love with the young dandy, Turiddu; the fourth character is Alfio, Lola's cuckolded husband, whose betrayal and loss of honor drives him to murderous revenge. In *Pag* the triangle involves Nedda, her lover Silvio, and her cuckolded husband Canio; the fourth character is Tonio, spurned by Nedda. In each opera, the spurned lover (Santuzza in *Cav* or Tonio in *Pag*), becomes the informer or instigator of the ultimate tragedy, the character who incites the betrayed lover to avenge the crime of betrayal: in *Cav*, Santuzza, spurned by Turiddu, incites Alfio to become her instrument of revenge; in *Pag*, it is the hunchbacked clown, Tonio, rejected by Nedda, who instigates Canio to murderous revenge.

Puccini's masterpiece verismo opera, *Il Tabarro*, a late, and perhaps the last of the verismo genre, portrays the violent passions of revenge that are aroused by jealousy, betrayal and adultery: Michele's brutal murder of his wife Giorgetta's lover Luigi. The essence of these verismo operas is the portrayal of exploding human passions spawned by adultery. As such, these operas portray the underlying essence of verismo: raw human nature and primitive instincts that erupt into brutal, violent and savage actions.

In verismo, death is the consummation of desire.

Puccini's *Il Tabarro* was adapted from Didier Gold's one-act play, *La Houppelande* ("The Cloak"), (1910). In France, Gold's work was known as *pièce noire*, a grimly realistic theatrical play that was saturated with unrelenting gloom and set amidst the wretched social conditions of the Parisian lower classes. Gold's play strongly echoed the naturalism of Zola, because it dealt by implication with the larger themes of adultery, violence and crime. In verismo — and the Grand Guignol" ("Large Puppet Theater") — these themes are presented in terms of melodrama, the authors merely describing horrible conditions, but avoiding any lengthy narratives by the characters that would provide a commentary of their sordid lifestyle. Gold's play ran for several years in Paris; it fascinated Puccini from the moment he saw it.

The Grand Guignol Theater began in Paris in 1897 and developed verismo to the extreme. (It was closed in 1962.) Originally, the plays were to be presented as a puppet-show intended for adults rather than children, but eventually the characters became live performers. It presented one-act plays that titillated — and terrified — Parisian audiences: relentless portrayals involving the blood and gore involved in murder, mayhem and revenge, and which included stabbings, mutilations, beheadings, gougings, tortures and dismemberments, all presented in such graphic detail that they horrified the audiences, who would often laugh, cry and faint; the actors would calculate their success according to the evening's faintings. During one play that ended with a realistic blood transfusion, fifteen playgoers had lost consciousness. At times, the cobble-stoned alley outside the theater was frequented by hyperventilating couples and vomiting individuals: it was said that a doctor was always in attendance at performances.

Originally, the Grand Guignol adapted the works of famous playwrights and authors: Dickens, Kipling, Poe, Stevenson and Mark Twain. But within a short time, new owners brought a different genre to the theater, progressing from morality plays to a more gruesome fare: terror, blood, sex and sordidness. Thus, although the theater's concept was based on naturalism, The Grand Guignol proceeded to turn everyday banal subjects into horror plays by featuring themes such as infanticide, insanity, vengeance, mysterious death and the suffering of innocents.

Émile Zola's artistic philosophy was that art's only true subject was the gloom of "real life." In effect, the Grand Guignol's presented "slice of life" dramatizations that were in every sense "slice of death" situations, realistic representations of unimaginable horrors:

murder, rape, mutilation and torture. The idea was to evoke an Aristotelian catharsis, successfully purging the audience with pity and fear, although more often than not the result was physical as well as emotional. Gold's *La Houppelande* was vintage Grand Guignol, and a perfect melodrama for Puccini to transform into a verismo opera.

Gold's play, *La Houppelande*, culminated in two simultaneous crimes of passion: like the skipper Michel, the stevedore Goujon has an unfaithful wife, the latter a prostitute. At the conclusion of the play — without cloak but with dagger — Goujon stabs his wife to death in a quayside tavern, emerging while brandishing a bloodstained knife at the exact moment that Michel is thrusting his wife's face against that of her strangled lover. Puccini, a composer whose muse was more often than not inspired by his profound macabre and Neronic instincts, strangely suppressed the subplot, content to present his music drama with Michel's single murder of his wife's lover.

To provide an authentic atmosphere of the lower social and economic classes, Gold gave three of his characters nicknames that might be common among Parisian bargemen and beggars. Thus, the first stevedore is called Goujon (a "fool" — Puccini's Tinca); the second stevedore is La Taupe (the "mole" — Talpa in the opera); and Taupe's wife, who is La Furette, the "rag-picker" (Puccini's La Frugola.) La Furette is a weird representative of the Parisian "Lumpenproletariat," that group of dispossessed and uprooted individuals estranged from economic and social classes.

And for further realism, Gold's characters speak Parisian slang and use vulgar language. He even provided the characters' respective ages — which Puccini retained — to emphasize that disparity of age between Georgette and Michel in order to suggest her motivation for an adulterous affair: Louis (age 20): Georgette (age 25), and Michel (age 50). Moreover, the secret lovers were born and bred in the same Parisian suburb of Belleville, so both, unlike the skipper Michel, pulse with the excitement and fascination of the big city, the antithesis of the unsettling nomadic life on a river barge that has contributed to Georgette's unhappiness and rebellion.

Puccini's characters bear essentially the same characteristics and personalities as those of the play, but perhaps they are more romantic and emotionally richer, a decided benefit offered by the operatic medium's ability to intensify passions. In Gold's play, the frustrated Georgette seduces the young stevedore Louis, who afterwards confesses that he is haunted by profound feelings of moral guilt because of their secret love affair. But Puccini's Luigi is presented as a more ardent lover than the rather rational Louis of Gold's play: Louis' motivations to transplant himself in Rouen and abandon his lover is because of moral scruples; Puccini, on the other hand, perhaps prompted by his urge to place guilt on his heroines, addresses Luigi's motivations as his inability to share Georgette with her husband.

Gold compressed his drama into two hours: from sunset to complete darkness. His play — like the opera — opens with the subtle detail of Michel seen with a pipe hanging from one corner of his mouth: the pipe that will be lit at the end of the drama and become the young stevedore's deathtrap. The love triangle is gradually exposed through a succession of appropriate plot details; the lover Louis arrives at the exact moment when Michele tries to kiss his wife, but as she spurns him, she stares fixedly and intensely at the young stevedore. During a long duologue with Georgette — the Michele/Giorgetta duet that occurs toward the end of the opera — "Perchè, perchè non m'ami più?" ("Why don't you love me anymore?"), Michel refers to Goujon's (Talpa) wife as a whore whom her husband, so the skipper argues, would have killed long ago, had he not found consolation for his sorrows in drink. At this point in the play, Goujon's wife is seen passing with two men on her way to the quayside tavern, at the sight of which Georgette becomes deeply agitated. Lastly, the cloak of the title, the archetypal

symbol of male protection for the female, is used as a means to the grimly ironic conclusion of the drama in which Michel murders Louis. All this gradual buildup of tension and suspense by the insertion of seemingly incidental and accidental details is an integral part of the machinery of French melodrama, certainly obvious in Sardou's *La Tosca*. Needless to say, Puccini, a meticulous and astute dramatist, retained almost all of Gold's plot details.

Nevertheless, Puccini instigated excisions and changes from the Gold original that became inherently necessary when a spoken drama is adapted for operatic purposes. But the excision of the subplot involving Goujon and his wife was a radical alteration; Puccini was unable to envision the simultaneous murders and therefore found the inclusion of Goujon's knifing of his strumpet wife irrelevant to the main thrust of the dramatic action.

In *Il Tabarro*, perhaps for the first time in his career, Puccini seems to reveal a social conscience. (In *Tosca*, his publisher Ricordi severely admonished his pet composer for failing to conclude the opera with an expression of more profound democratic ideals.) Gold's young stevedore, Louis, meekly accepts his destiny as an indigent laborer, but Puccini and his librettist puts words into Luigi's mouth at the moment when he deplores his fate: they read like those of a fanatical Marxist: "Hai ben ragione" ("You're right; it's better not to think, just bow your head and bend your back.")

Puccini added some new text to accommodate lyrical expansion: Frugola's air about her beloved cat Corporal, that leads into her longing for a little country cottage where she and her husband — and her cat Corporal — will peacefully await death. But her yearning for pastoral peace serves to provoke the lover's nostalgia: their duet beginning with Giorgetta's "È be altro il mio sogno!" ("My dream is different!"), the longing for country becoming the panacea for all ills. Consciously or subconsciously, the composer from Torre del Lago was expressing pastoral ideas that he would later incorporate into the sentimental and nostalgic Act II, Scene 1 trio for Turandot's Ministers.

Nevertheless, Puccini added small diversions and vignettes to provide contrast and variety, detours urgently needed to relieve the original play's almost unrelenting mood of oppressive gloom. As such, Puccini enlarged the scene of the Street-Vendor, a truly Parisian touch, as well as the brief episode of the pair of young lovers passing by on the quay, that immediately precedes Michele's somber monologue.

The most prominent musical themes in *Il Tabarro* are the "River" and "Stolen Love." In general, the opera's harmonies are simple, and the writing remains in diatonic mode without adventure into any whole-tone scale, although some caustic harmonies and discords were most probably influenced by Stravinsky, reflecting Puccini's desire to keep abreast of contemporary harmonic developments: the "Cloak" theme.

The orchestral scoring is simple, yet sharp and direct, its harmonic colors somber to reflect the music drama's inherent darkness. And, Puccini again exhibited his penchant for musical realism, those impressionistic urges to portray "piccole cose" ("little things"), that are demonstrated in the musical effects for the fog horn, auto horn, and taps heard from the barracks.

But the primary musical subject of *Il Tabarro* is the river, a gloomy theme that dominates the entire opera. The river haunts the drama, an evil and ominous cloud hovering over each of the characters that reflects the bargemen's weariness, and the oppressive, soul-destroying life that the river has subjected them to; the river represents an emotional inferno that overpowers human destiny. The "River" theme is tonally ambiguous, rising and falling within a two octave range in order to suggest its infinite depth, but the atmosphere of the theme is always melancholy.

The characters in *Il Tabarro* are weary, pathetic creatures, each smoldering with murderous passions: particularly the suspicious Michele and the possessive Luigi.

During the first half of the opera, the skipper Michele is continually pensive, but he explodes with impassioned fury in the second half, his suspicions of his wife's adultery tormenting his soul. In his first conversation with Giorgetta — ironically to the background of the Song-Peddler's song of love — he is pensive, moody, and deeply engrossed in his inner anguish, a man consumed by his inner unhappiness.

Later, he confronts Giorgetta: "Perchè, perchè non m'ami più?" ("Why don't you love me anymore?"), an expression of his longing and despair for the lost love of his wife that he reveals with unrelenting energy and power. There is a striking resemblance between Michele's powerful explosion of "Resta vicina a me!" ("Stay close to me!"), and Scarpia's "Ha più forte sapore" ("A willing surrender is sweeter than a violent conquest.") of *Tosca*, Act II, in which he concludes with a similar outburst of "Bramo" ("I yearn for you."). Both characters are addressing their impassioned yearning for love: Scarpia dreams of his future conquest; Michele of restoring his past love.

Michele's monologue, beginning with "Nulla! Silenzio!" is powerful and sinister, evoking a terrifying portrait of the man, a beast of prey lying in ambush for his victim on a dark night, and at the same time brooding about his wife's infidelity, his jealousy gradually mounting to murderous passion. (In Gold's play, this is the point when Goujon passes by on his way to the Belle Musette where he will kill his wife.) The monologue is underscored with the "Cloak" theme, first heard in the preceding duet with Giorgetta, a musical portrait of the somber, sinister and morose Michele.

Michele's poignant meditation on life and death, a desire to be punished by the brutal river, "Scorri, fiume eterno!" ("Flow, eternal river!"), culminates in his final, futile outcry of despair, "La pace allor dammi la morte!" ("Let me die with you!"), his desire for peace through death that is rendered with intolerable pain by Puccini's orchestra. The skipper wishes to end his agony by ending his life in the Seine's waters, like so many others he fished out in the past. So at that moment Michele does not necessarily consider taking revenge on his wife's lover, but blames his unhappiness on the river, the peaceful grave that will liberate him from his miseries.

But soon thereafter, the "Death" theme that underscores Michele's "Chi? chi? Forse il mio sono!" ("Who? Who? Perhaps I'm asleep!"), captures his obsessive rage and desire to know his wife's lover. In this emotional monologue, Michele speculates as to which of his three stevedores might be his wife's lover: Talpa? Too old; Tinca? No, he drinks. But just before he is about to utter Luigi's name, Puccini inserts a brief pause, thus indicating Michele's momentary hesitation about the young stevedore. He is unsure. After all, Luigi had just expressed his wish to disembark at Rouen. At that moment, Puccini's orchestra quotes the "Lover's Guilt" theme, a revelation of the drama's truth revealed to the audience like a Greek chorus.

For Puccini, Michele was a tragic man, tortured by his wife's infidelity, and obsessed to find the means to catch and punish her lover, a true verismo character who Puccini made even more powerful and frightening through his music.

Puccini provided Luigi, rather than his heroine, Giorgetta, with the most expressive music. Luigi is first introduced during the superficialities of a drinking-song: "Eccola la passata!" ("Here's your next round!") But Puccini envisioned Luigi as a profoundly despairing character, a man suffering from the oppression of his miserable life: the arioso "Hai ben ragione!" ("You're right"), is a forceful, virile, and political and social exposition of the stevedore's plight.

The heroine Giorgetta has no solo aria, but is delineated in her duets with Luigi and Michele. In her first duet with Luigi, "È ben altro il mio sogno!" ("My dream is different!"),

the star-crossed lovers are portrayed as impassioned youth, yearning for love and the peace of their former country lives. In the lover's second duet, "O Luigi!", underscored by the "Lover's Guilt" theme, they project their inspirations simultaneously, together with ambivalent feelings of guilt and a longing for a brief moment of happiness together. Giorgetta describes how her hand always trembles before she lights the match to give Luigi the signal for their clandestine meetings, followed by an impassioned climax, the "Stolen Love" theme exploding from the full orchestra with ferocity.

La Frugola, a secondary character, receives special musical attention from Puccini, who seemed to be fascinated by her grotesqueness; she seems to have earned more generous music than his heroine Giorgetta. Puccini granted the rag-picker her own leitmotif, capturing her entrance as she hobbles along with a sack full of rubbish on her shoulder. But he also gave her two songs: "Se tu sapessi gli oggetti strani che in questa sacca" ("If only you knew what strange things are collected in this sack!"), and "Ho sognato una casetta" ("I dream about a little house.") La Frugola is a fantastic character, and her songs are full of mechanical patter: the meowing of her cat, Corporal, "ron, ron" ("Purr, purr").

I *Tabarro* is structured in virtually two equal halves, the first serving to establish the atmosphere of the vagrant barge life: it is remarkably varied in mood but always possess a strong undercurrent of somberness as the characters and their relationship to the essential action is introduced. In the second half of the opera, all the secondary characters exit and do not appear again.

Thus, the curtain rises immediately to establish the scenic ambience. Giorgetta is busy with trivialities of home, such as laundry and watering plants; the stevedores are unloading the barge; and Michele stands immobile by the helm, watching the sunset. The "River" theme dominates the scene.

With the basic atmosphere established, Puccini introduces various diversions, vivid vignettes that will make the gloom of the second half of the opera even more profound: Luigi's drinking along with the other stevedores, the amusing out-of-tune Organ-Grinder's waltz, and the Song-Peddler, whose wistful song, "Primavera" contains the line "Chi ha vissuto per amore, per amore si morì" ("He who lives for love, dies for love"), fundamentally, the underlying theme of all of Puccini's operas. In the refrain of the three verses is "È la storia di Mimi": Puccini, like Mozart in *Don Giovanni* (recalling music from *The Marriage of Figaro*) and Wagner in *Die Meistersinger* (recalling music from *Tristan and Isolde*) quotes his own music from his earlier *La Bohème*.

But the Organ-Grinder's waltz is more than diversionary because it serves to expose the actual essence of the drama: the secret love affair between Luigi and Giorgetta. It is followed by a brief dialogue between Michele and Giorgetta that establishes his pensiveness and the tension of his relationship, particularly his suspicion — and irritation — as Giorgetta expresses compassion for the needy Luigi.

The arrival of La Frugola adds an almost grotesque element to the contrasting atmosphere, but the rag-picker's song, "Ho sognato una casetta," sets off the lovers' ecstatic duet in praise of Paris, the first revelation of their amorous relationship. Having lit his bright lights, Puccini now extinguishes them with dramatic suddenness in the subsequent scene: La Frugola and her old Talpa shuffle off into the dark night softly murmuring a fantastic, ghostlike version of the previous "Ho sognato." Afterwards, a soprano sings about the "River" from offstage, answered by a distant tenor, and then the music dies away into a prolonged siren-sound emitted by a distant tug. Thus the first half of the opera beautifully establishes the conflicts of the drama against a backdrop of impressionist and realistic elements.

The second half of *Il Tabarro* is a profound contrast to the first half; it features only the three principal characters, and the music develops a somberness, the scenes unfolding at a much slower pace.

In the duet between Michele and Giorgetta, Puccini introduces Michele's "Despair" theme and the "Cloak" theme. The central mood is of sad reminiscences, Michele recalling his former happiness with Giorgetta and pleading for the lost love of his wife, who, guilt-stricken, replies evasively to his pleas. After Giorgetta has descended to her cabin, the scene concludes with ominous tensions: Michele cursing Giorgetta, "Sgualdrina" ("Slut"), virtually muttered between his clenched teeth.

Between the Michele/Giorgetta duet and Michele's monologue, Puccini injects a brief vignette as two lovers are seen passing by, singing a gay little love song, "Bocca di rosa fresca," an echo that provides a glimpse of light and a relief of tension before the full horror of the drama engulfs its characters. Puccini, a master at painting those impressionist details of atmosphere, injects the sound of a bugle sounding taps from distant barracks just before the final scene.

Michele dominates the final moments of the opera: his monologue, "Nulla, silenzio," that is underscored by the "Cloak" theme, and what has been called the "Death" chorale, his pondering who might be his wife's lover: "Chi? Chi? Forse il mio sonno!" ("Who? Perhaps I'm asleep!") Then Luigi sneaks aboard, and Michele seizes and strangles him to death, the "Cloak" theme thundering in the orchestra. In the following scene, Giorgetta emerges from the cabin accompanied by the "Death" chorale from Michele's monologue. She pretends to be remorseful, but the anguished fear in her heart for the fate of Luigi is betrayed by the orchestra: a recall of their "Lover's Guilt" music. In the final coup de theatre, Puccini's orchestra repeats the "Cloak" theme, fortissimo and savagely.

Puccini was at the height of his musical dramatic powers at the time of *Il Trittico*, totally capable of providing the completeness of a full-length opera in a one-act structure. *Il Tabarro* possesses perfectly balanced characterization, action and ambience: Giorgetta is both shrew and lover; Luigi is a brusque, volatile character, his explosive fury in deploring the horrible conditions of the underclasses equal to his passion for Giorgetta; and Michele is a true verismo personality, easily transformed from jealous husband to murderer.

Il Tabarro represents vintage Puccini, a powerful music drama featuring the agony and torment of impassioned characters, a late flowering of the verismo genre, but a towering representation of the genre's inner soul.

Libretto

Il Tabarro

A wharf on the Seine River, where a barge is moored. Michele, the skipper, is seated close to the tiller, steadily gazing at the spectacular sunset. His unlighted pipe hangs from his lips.

*Longshoremen come and go from the barge to the wharf,
their backs bent under the weight of the heavy loads.*

Andante moderato calmo



Gli Scaricatori:

Oh! Issa! oh!
Un giro ancor!
Se lavoriam senza ardore,
si resterà ad ormeggiare,
e Margot con altri ne andrà.

The Longshoremen:

Hoist! Hoist!
Another trip to go!
If we work without enthusiasm,
we'll remain at anchor forever,
and Margot will go with others.

Now and then a whistle from a passing tug is heard, as well as horns from automobiles.

Oh! Issa! oh!
Un giro ancor!
Non ti stancar, battelliere,
dopo potrai riposare,
e Margot felice sarà!
Oh! Issa! oh!
Un giro ancor!
Ora la stiva è vuotata,
chiusa è la lunga giornata,
e Margot l'amor ti darà!

Hoist! Hoist!
Another trip to go!
Don't get tired, sailor boy,
you'll be able to rest later,
and Margot will be happy!
Hoist!
Another trip to go!
The hold is now empty and clean,
fold your weary arms,
and Margo will give you love!

Giorgetta emerges from the cabin, not noticing Michele. She removes wash from the line, and then draws a bucket of water from the river to water her flowers. Then, she cleans the bird cage. When she notices Michele seated motionless by the tiller, she shades her eyes with her hand to protect them from the glare of the sun, and then calls out to him.

Giorgetta:

O Michele? Michele?
Non sei stanco d'abbacinarti al sole che tramonta?
Ti sembra un gran spettacolo?

Giorgetta:

Michele? Michele?
Aren't you tired of blankly gazing at the sunset?
Is it truly so spectacular?

Michele:

Sicuro!

Michele:

Certainly!

Giorgetta:

Lo vedo bene: dalla tua pipa il fumo bianco non
sbuffa più!

Giorgetta:

Indeed it must be, because smoke no longer comes
from your pipe!

Michele:

Han finito laggiù?

Michele: *(pointing to the hold)*

Have they finished down there?

Giorgetta:
Vuoi che discenda?

Michele:
No. Resta. Andrò io stesso.

Giorgetta:
Han lavorato tanto!
Come avevan promesso,
La stiva sarà sgombra, e per domani
si potrà caricare.
Bisognerebbe, ora, compensare
questa loro fatica; un buon bicchiere.

Michele:
Ma certo. Pensi a tutto, cuore d'oro!
Puoi portare da bere.

Giorgetta:
Sono alla fine: prenderanno forza.

Michele:
Il mio vinello smorza la sete, e li ristora.
E a me, non hai pensato?

Giorgetta:
A te? Che cosa?

Michele:
Al vino ho rinunciato ma, se la pipa è spenta,
non è spento il mio ardore.
Un tuo bacio, o mio amore.

Giorgetta:
Do you want me to go down and see?

Michele:
No. Stay. I'll go myself.

Giorgetta:
They've worked so hard!
Just like they promised,
they've cleared the hold so it can be loaded again
tomorrow.
We should reward them for their work with a good
drink.

Michele:
Of course! You think of everyone; you have a
heart of gold! Bring them something to drink.

Giorgetta:
They're almost finished. This will give them strength.

Michele:
My wine will satisfy their thirst and restore them.
And what about me?

Giorgetta:
You? What do you mean?

Michele: (*gently putting his arm about her*)
I've given up wine, but just because my pipe is
finished it doesn't mean my passion is finished.
Give me a kiss, my love.

*Michele kisses Giorgetta, who then turns her face away from him.
Disappointed, he walks off and descends into the cabin.*

Luigi:
Si soffoca, padrona!

Giorgetta:
Lo pensavo, ma ho io quel che ci vuole.
Sentirete che vino!

Luigi: (*emerging from the hold*)
It's stifling here!

Giorgetta:
I thought so. I've got what you want.
Try this wine!

Giorgetta walks toward the cabin after both exchange expressive glances.

Il Tinca:
Sacchi dannati!
Mondo birbone!
Spicciati, Talpa!
Si va a mangiare!

Il Talpa:
Non aver fretta! Non mi seccare!
Ah! Questo sacco spacca il groppone!

Dio! Che caldo!
O Luigi, ancora una passata.

Tinca: (*emerging from the hold*)
Damned sacks!
A burdensome life!
Hurry up, Talpa!
It's time to eat!

Talpa:
Don't hurry me! Stop shouting!
This sack is breaking my back!

God! What heat!
Oh, Luigi, we have another round to make.

Luigi:

Eccola la passata!
Ragazzi, si beve!
Qui, tutti insieme, lesti!

Luigi: (*pointing to Giorgetta who reappears carrying a pitcher of wine and glasses*)

Boys, here's your next round!
Come here and have a drink!
Here, all together, quickly!

All gather around Giorgetta, who distributes glasses and pours them wine.

Ecco! Pronti!
Nel vino troverem l'energia per finir!

Here! Ready!
Wine will give you the energy to finish.

Giorgetta:

Come parla difficile!
Ma certo: vino alla compagnia!
Qua, Talpa!
Al Tinca! A voi! Prendete!

Giorgetta: (*laughing*)

Your words are indeed difficult!
But anyway, wine for everyone!
Here, Talpa!
For you, Tinca! For you! Take some!

Il Talpa:

Alla salute vostra il vino si beva!
S'alzi il bicchiere lieti!
Tanta felicità per la gioia che dà!

Talpa:

We drink to wish you good health!
Raise your glasses! Cheers!
May you have as much happiness as the wine gives us pleasure!

Giorgetta:

Se ne volete ancora!

Giorgetta:

Have another one!

Il Talpa:

Non si rifiuta mai!

Talpa:

I never refuse!

Giorgetta:

Avanti coi bicchieri!

Giorgetta: (*to the others*)

Bring over your glasses!

Luigi:

Guarda là l'organetto!
È arrivato in buon punto.

Luigi: (*pointing to an Organ-Grinder passing along the wharf.*)

Look at the Organ-Grinder!
He's come just in time.

Il Tinca:

In questo vino affogo i tristi pensieri.
Bevo al padrone!
Viva!

Tinca: (*raising his glass*)

I drown all my sorrows in this wine.
I drink to our skipper!
Good health!

(Tinca drinks. Giorgetta pours out more wine.)

Grazie! Grazie!
L'unico mio piacer sta qui in fondo al bicchier!

Thanks! Thanks!
My only pleasure is here, at the bottom of the glass!

Luigi:

Ei, là! Professore! Attacca!

Luigi: (*to the Organ-Grinder*)

Here, Professor! Some music!
(to the other men)

Sentirete che artista!

Now you'll hear a real artist!

Tempo di Valzer moderato

Giorgetta:
Io capisco una musica sola: quella che fa ballare.

Il Tinca:
Ma sicuro!
Ai suoi ordini sempre, e gamba buona!

Giorgetta:
To'! Vi prendo in parola.

Il Tinca:
Ballo con la padrona!

Giorgetta:
The only music I understand is music for dancing.

Tinca: (*approaching Giorgetta*)
Of course!
I'm at your service, and a good dancer!

Giorgetta: (*laughing*)
I'll keep you to your word.

Tinca: (*flattered*)
I'll dance with our mistress!

Tinca cannot keep in step with Giorgetta, and all laugh at him.

Luigi:
La musica e la danza van d'accordo.

Sembra che tu pulisca il pavimento!

Giorgetta:
Ahi! Mi hai pestato un piede!

Luigi:

Va! Lascia! Son qua io!

Luigi:
The music and the dance are in harmony.
(*to Tinca*)
You look as though you're cleaning the floor!

Giorgetta:
Ouch! You stepped on my foot!

Luigi: (*pushing Tinca aside and taking his place.*)
Get out of the way! I'm here!

Luigi takes Giorgetta in his arms and holds her firmly. She abandons herself to him languidly. They are dancing as Michele emerges from the cabin.

Il Talpa:
Ragazzi, c'è il padrone!

Talpa: (*quickly*)
Boys, there's the skipper!

Luigi and Giorgetta stop dancing. Luigi throws a few coins to the Organ-Grinder, and then joins the other men and descends into the hold. Michele approaches Giorgetta.

Giorgetta:

Dunque, che cosa credi?
Partiremo la settimana prossima?

Michele:
Vedremo.

Giorgetta:
Il Talpa e il Tinca restano?

Michele:
Resterà anche Luigi.

Giorgetta:
Ieri non lo pensavi.

Michele:
Ed oggi, penso.

Giorgetta: (*arranging her hair and addressing Michele with forced colmness*)
What are you thinking?
Are we leaving here next week?

Michele: (*vaguely*)
We'll see.

Giorgetta:
Will Talpa and Tinca stay with us?

Michele:
Luigi will stay too.

Giorgetta:
You didn't think so yesterday.

Michele:
But today, I think so.

Il Venditore di Canzonette:

Chi la vuole l'ultima canzonetta?
Chi la vuole?

Giorgetta:

Perchè?

Michele:

Perchè non voglio ch'egli crepi di fame.

Giorgetta:

Quello s'arrangia sempre.

Michele:

Lo so: s'arrangia, è vero. Ed è per questo
che non conclude nulla.

Giorgetta:

Con te non si sa mai chi fa male o fa bene!

Michele:

Chi lavora si tiene.

Song Peddler: (*in the distance*)

Who wants to buy the latest song?
Who will buy?

Giorgetta: (*nearing Michele*)

Why?

Michele:

Because I don't want him to starve to death.

Giorgetta:

He always manages.

Michele:

I know; he manages. That's why he never finishes
anything.

Giorgetta: (*annoyed*)

With you, nobody can ever tell whether he's done
well or badly!

Michele: (*simply*)

Those who work survive.

GIORGETTA**Giorgetta:**

Già scende la sera..
Oh che rosso tramonto di settembre!
Che brivido d'autunno!

Il Venditore di Canzonette:

Con musica e parole, chi la vuole?

Giorgetta:

Non sembra un grosso arancio questo sole
che muore nella Senna?

Guarda laggiù la Frugola! La vedi?
Cerca di suo marito. Non lo lascia!

Michele:

È giusto. Beve troppo!

Giorgetta:

Non lo sai ch'è gelosa?

Giorgetta:

It's evening already.
What a red September sunset!
The autumn air is so chilly!

Song Peddler: (*coming nearer*)

Who wants my ballad, with music and words?

Giorgetta:

Doesn't the sun look like a large orange as it sinks
into the Seine?

(*Giorgetta points to the wharf*)

Look, there's Frugola. You see her?
She looking for her husband. She never let's go of
him!

Michele:

She's right. He drinks too much!

Giorgetta:

Don't you know that she's jealous?

Giorgetta:
O mio uomo, non sei di buon umore!
Perchè? Che hai? Che guardi?
E perchè taci?

Giorgetta: (*continuously watching Michele*)
My husband, you seem in a bad mood!
What's wrong? Why do you stare at me?
Why are you so quiet?

Michele does not respond. Meanwhile, the song peddler has appeared on the wharf near the barge, followed by a group of milliners, who have rushed from a nearby shop to listen to him.

Il Venditore di Canzonette:
Chi vuole la canzone?

Song Peddler:
Who wants to hear my latest song?

Le Midinettes:
Bene! Bene! Si! Si!

The Milliners:
Yes! Yes! Go on! Go on!

Michele:
T'ho mai fatto scenate?

Michele:
Have I treated you well?

Giorgetta:
Lo so bene: tu non mi batti!

Giorgetta:
I know it well. You don't beat me!

Allegretto
SONG PEDDLER



"Primavera, primave - ra, non cercare più i due a manti là fra l'ombre della sera."
"Spring, spring, the young lovers are no longer among the evening shadows."

Il Venditore di Canzonette:
"Primavera, primavera, non cercare più i due amanti là fra l'ombre della sera.
Chi há vissuto per amore per amore si morì.
È la storia di Mimi."

Song Peddler:
"Spring, spring, the young lovers are no longer among the evening shadows.
He who has lived for love, will die for love.
That's the story of Mimi."

Michele:
Forse lo vorresti?

Michele:
Perhaps you want me to?

Giorgetta:
Ai silenzi talvolta, sì, preferirei lividi di percosse!

Giorgetta:
I'd prefer it to your silences! I'd rather be bruised all over!

Michele does not reply to Giorgetta, but walks to the other end of the barge. Giorgetta follows him.

Giorgetta:
Dimmi almeno che hai!

Giorgetta: (*insisting*)
At least tell me what's the matter!

Michele:
Ma nulla! Nulla!

Michele:
Why nothing! Nothing!

Il Venditore di Canzonette:
"Chi aspettando sa che muore conta ad ore le giornate con i battiti del cuore.
Ma l'amante non tornò, e i suoi battiti finì anche il cuore di Mimi!"

Song Peddler:
"He who knows he will soon die counts the hours of the days with a beating heart.
But her lover does not return, and the hours of the day stop beating, and so does Mimi's heart."

The song peddler disappears. The girls read the words on the music sheets they purchased, and then rush away, their voices fading as they repeat the verses.

Giorgetta:
Quando siamo a Parigi io mi sento felice!

Giorgetta:
I feel so happy when we're in Paris.

Michele:
Sì capisce.

Michele:
Yes, I know.

Giorgetta:
Perché?

Giorgetta:
Why?

Frugola appears on the wharf. She mounts the gangplank and jumps onto the barge. She is a dirty, ragged woman, carrying a large knapsack on her shoulders, that is filled with the rubbish she has picked up.

La Frugola:
Eterni innamorati, buona sera.

Frugola:
Good evening, young lovers!

Giorgetta:
O buona sera, Frugola!

Giorgetta:
Good evening, Frugola!

Michele gestures a greeting to Frugola, and then descends into the cabin.

La Frugola:
Il mio uomo ha finito il lavoro?
Stamattina non ne poteva più dal mal di reni.
Faceva proprio pena.
Ma l'ho curato io: una buona frizione
e il mio rum l'ha bevuto la sua schiena!

Frugola:
Has my husband finished work?
This morning he was in such pain that he could
hardly move.
He makes his own punishment. But I've cured
him. I rubbed his back with rum!

Frugola laughs boisterously. She throws her sack on the ground and greedily rummages through it, taking out several objects.

Giorgetta, guarda: pettine fiammante!
Se lo vuoi, te lo dono.
È quanto di più buono ho raccolto in giornata.

Giorgetta, look at this jewelled comb!
If you want it, I'll give it to you.
It's the best thing I've found today.

Giorgetta:
Hanno ragione di chiamarti Frugola:
tu rovasti ogni angolo ed hai la sacca piena.

Giorgetta: *(taking the comb)*
That's why they call you 'Frugal':
you rummage everywhere to fill your sack.

La Frugola:
Qui dentro è un po' di tutto!

Frugola:
Inside there's much more!

Frugola shows Giorgetta various articles.

Allegro energico
FRUGOLA



Se tu sa - pessi gli oggetti stra - ni che in questa sacca so - no racchiusi!
If only you knew what strange things are collected in this sack!

Se tu sapessi — gli oggetti strani
che in questa sacca — sono ricchiusi!
Ciuffo di piume — velluti e trine,
stracci, barrattoli — vecchie scarpine.
Vi son confusi — strane reliquie,
i documenti — di mille amori.
Gioie e tormenti — quivi raccolgo
senza distinguere — fra i ricchi e il volgo!

Giorgetta:
E in quel cartoccio?

La Frugola:
Qui c'è una cena!
Cuore di manzo per *Caporale*,
il mio soriano dal pelo fulvo, da l'occhio strano,
che non há uguale!

Giorgetta:
Gode di privilegi il tuo soriano!

La Frugola:
Li merita! Vedessi!
È il più bel gatto e il mio più bel romanzo.
Quando il mio Talpa è fuori,
il soriano mi tiene compagnia.
Insieme noi filiamo i nostri amori
senza puntigli e senza gelosia.
Vuoi saperla la sua filosofia?
Ron ron: meglio padrone in una catapecchia
che servo in un palazzo.
Ron ron: meglio cibarsi con due fette di cuore che
logorare il proprio nell'amore!

Talpa emerges from the hold, followed by Luigi.

Il Talpa:
To'! guarda la mia vecchia!
Che narravi?

La Frugola:
Parlavo con Giorgetta del soriano.

Michele:

O Luigi, domani si carica del ferro.
Vieni a darci una mano?

Luigi:
Verrò, padrone.

Il Tinca:

Buona notte a tutti!

If only you knew what strange things are collected
in this sack!
Here's feathers, laces, velvets, rags, silk scarves,
cream pots, ruffles, and old silver bracelets.
They confuse you — strange relics,
evidence of a thousand loves and torments.
I collect them from
both the rich and poor,

Giorgetta:
And what's in that bag?

Frugola: (*laughing*)
That's supper!
A heart of beef for my fine Angora, Corporal,
my cat who has snow-white fur and deep blue
eyes! He is so rare!

Giorgetta: (*laughing*)
What a privileged fellow!

Frugola:
He deserves to be! Look!
He's the most beautiful cat, and my best romance.
When Talpa is out,
the cat keeps me company.
We have a love affair without spite, without
jealousy.
Shall I tell you his philosophy?
Purr purr: it's better to be master of a hovel than a
servant in a palace.
Purr purr: it's better to live on two slices of heart
than destroy one's own self with love!

Talpa:
Well! Here's my old lady!
What were you talking about?

Frugola:
I was telling Giorgetta about our Angora.

Michele:
(*steps from the cabin and approaches Luigi*)
Luigi, tomorrow we're loading iron.
Can you give us a hand?

Luigi:
I'll come, skipper.

Tinca: (*coming from the hold, followed by other
stevedores, who scatter to the wharf after
saluting Michele.*)

Goodnight everyone!

Il Talpa:

Hai tanta fretta?

Talpa:

Why such a hurry?

La Frugola:

Corri già a ubbriacarti?
Ah! se fossi tua moglie...

Frugola:

Hurrying to get drunk?
If your wife...

Il Tinca:

Che fareste?

Tinca:

What would you do?

La Frugola:

Ti pesterei finchè non la smettesti di passare le
notti all'osteria.
Non ti vergogni?

Frugola:

I'd beat you till you stopped spending all night in
the tavern.
Don't you have any shame?

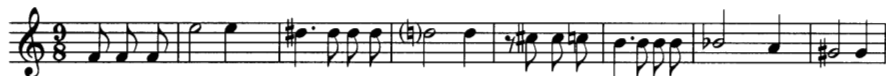
Il Tinca:

No. Fa bene il vino!
S'affogano i pensieri di rivolta:
chè se bevo non penso,
e se penso non rido!

Tinca:

No. Wine is good for me!
I drown rebellious thoughts in it:
if I drink, I don't think,
because if I think, I don't laugh!

Michele departs and descends into the cabin.

Allegro moderato con moto**LUIGI**

Hai ben ragione; meglio non pensare, piegare il capo ed incurvar la schiena.
You're right. It's better not to think, just bow your head and bend your back.

Luigi:

Hai ben ragione; meglio non pensare,
piegare il capo ed incurvar la schiena.
Per noi la vita non ha più valore
ed ogni gioia si converte in pena.

Luigi:

You're right. It's better not to think,
just bow your head and bend your back.
Life has no other value for us,
and every joy transforms into pain.

I sacchi in groppa e giù la testa a terra.
Se guardi in alto, bada alla frustata.
Il pane lo guadagni col sudore,
e l'ora dell'amore va rubata.
Va rubata fra spasimi e paure
che offuscano l'ebbrezza più divina.
Tutto è conteso, tutto ci è rapito.
la giornata è già buia alla mattina.
Hai ben ragione: meglio non pensare.
piegare il capo ed incurvar la schiena.

Put the sack on your back, your head to the ground.
If you look up, beware of the whip.
Bread is earned with sweat,
and time for love must be stolen.
Stolen with anguish and fear
that obscures the most divine joy.
Everything is fought for, stolen,
The day is already dark in the morning.
You're right. It's better not to think.
Just bow your head and bend your back.

Il Tinca:

Segui il mio esempio: bevi.

Tinca:

Follow my example and drink.

Giorgetta:

Basta!

Giorgetta:

Enough!

Il Tinca:

Non parlo più!
A domani, ragazzi, e state bene!

Tinca:

I'll say no more!
Till tomorrow, boys, and be well!

Tinca walks away, disappearing on the wharf.

Il Talpa:

Ce ne andiamo anche noi? Son stanco morto.

Talpa: (to Frugola)

Should we leave now? I'm dead tired.

La Frugola:

Ah! quando mai potremo comprarci una bicocca?
Là ci riposeremo!

Frugola: (lethargically)

When will the day come when we can buy a little cottage? A place where we can rest!

Giorgetta:

È la tua fissazione la campagna!

Giorgetta:

You're obsessed with the country!

Allegretto mosso
FRUGOLA



Ho sognato una ca - set -ta, con un piccolo orticello.
I dream about a little house with a garden beside it.

La Frugola:

Ho sognato una casetta
con un piccolo orticello.
Quattro muri, stretta stretta,
e due pini per ombrello.
Il mio vecchio steso al sole,
ai miei piedi *Caporale*,
e aspettar così la morte
ch'è il rimedio d'ogni male!

Frugola:

I dream about a little house
with a small garden beside it.
Four walls around it,
and two pine trees for shade.
My old man stretches out in the sun,
and Corporal is at my feet.
Waiting like that for death
is the remedy for all misfortunes!

Andante moderato
GIORGETTA



È ben altro il mio sogno! Son na - ta nel sob - borgo, e solo l'aria di Parigi,
My dream is different! I was born in the suburbs, and the air of Paris excites me,

Giorgetta:

È ben altro il mio sogno!
Son nata nel sobborgo e solo l'aria
di Parigi m'esalta e mi nutrisce!
Oh! Se Michele, un giorno, abbandonasse
questa logora vita vagabonda!
Non si vive là dentro,
fra il letto ed il fornello!
Tu avessi visto la mia stanza, un tempo!

Giorgetta: (with excitement)

My dream is different!
I was born in the suburbs,
and the air of Paris excites me!
If only one day Michele would abandon this
exhausting vagabond life!
I wouldn't have to live down there,
between the bed and the stove!
You should see how I used to live!

La Frugola:

Dove abitavi?

Giorgetta:

Non lo sai?

Luigi:

Belleville!

Giorgetta:

Luigi lo conosce!

Luigi:

Anch'io ci son nato!

Giorgetta:

Come me, l'ha nel sangue!

Luigi:

Non ci si può staccare!

Giorgetta:

Bisogna aver provato!

Belleville è il nostro suolo e il nostro mondo!

Noi non possiamo vivere sull'acqua!

Bisogna calpestare il marcia piedi!

Là c'è una casa, là ci sono amici,
festosi incontri, pieni confidenze.

Luigi:

Ci si conosce tutti!

S'è tutti una famiglia!

Giorgetta:

Al mattino, il lavoro che ci aspetta.

Alla sera i ritorni in comitiva.

Botteghe che s'accendono

di luci e di lusinghe

vetture che s'incrociano,

domeniche chiasose,

piccole gite in due

al Bosco di Boulogne!

Balli all'aperto

e intimità amorose!?

È difficile dire cosa sia

quest'ansia, questa strana nostalgia.

Luigi e Giorgetta:

Ma chi lascia il sobborgo vuol tornare,

e chi ritorna non si può staccare.

C'è là in fondo Parigi che ci grida

con mille voci il fascino immortale!

Frugola:

Where did you live?

Giorgetta:

Don't you know?

Luigi: *(suddenly interrupting them)*

Belleville!

Giorgetta:

Luigi knows the village!

Luigi:

I was also born there too!

Giorgetta:

Like me, he has Belleville in his blood!

Luigi:

One can never be free of the place!

Giorgetta: *(her enthusiasm increasing)*

It's all your experiences!

Belleville is our home soil and our world!

We can't live on water!

We need to tread on the pavements!

A house, friends, meetings, gossip, everyone
knows everyone else, and everyone is family.

Luigi:

We know each other there!

We're all one family there!

Giorgetta:

In the morning, you go to work.

In the evening, you return with company.

Shops ablaze with light,

carriages passing each other

cars crossing,

and merriment on Sundays,

excursions in pairs

as you walk together to the Bois de Boulogne!

Dancing out of doors,

and intimate amours!?

It's hard to understand this anxiety,

this strange homesickness.

Luigi and Giorgetta: *(with excitement)*

But those who leave it, crave to return,

and when he returns, he cannot leave again.

There, in the heart of Paris, it calls with a

thousand happy voices!

The lovers remain together almost spellbound, like one soul possessed by the same thoughts.

Then they realize that others are present, and they drop their hands.

La Frugola:

Adesso ti capisco: qui la vita è diversa...

Frugola: *(after a brief pause)*

Now I understand. Life is different here...

Il Talpa:

Se s'andasse a mangiare?
Che ne dici?

Talpa: *(disinterested, to Luigi)*

What about supper?
Want to eat with us?

Luigi:

Io resto: ho da parlare col padrone.

Luigi:

I have to stay and talk to the skipper.

Il Talpa:

Quand'è così, a domani.

Talpa:

In that case, until tomorrow.

Giorgetta:

Miei vecchi, buona notte!

Giorgetta:

My old friends, goodnight!

Talpa and Frugola depart, all the while singing about their dream of a house in the country.

Ho sognato una casetta
con un piccolo orticello.
Quattro muri, stretta stretta,
e due pini per ombrello.
Il mio vecchio steso al sole,
ai miei piedi *Caporale*,
e aspettar così la morte
ch'è il rimedio d'ogni male!

I dream about a little house
with a small garden beside it.
Four walls around it,
and two pine trees for shade.
My old man stretches out in the sun,
and Corporal is at my feet.
Waiting like that for death
is the remedy for all misfortunes!

Giorgetta:

O Luigi! Luigi!

Giorgetta: *(softly but fervidly)*

Luigi! Luigi!

As Luigi rushes toward her, she cautions him with a gesture.

Andante moderato

GIORGETTA



O Luigi! Luigi!

Bada a te! Può salir fra un momento!

Luigi! Luigi! Be careful! He might return here at any moment!

Bada a te! Può salir fra un momento!
Resta pur là, lontano!

Be careful! He might return here at any moment!
Stay where you are, away from me!

Luigi:

Perchè dunque inasprisci il tormento?
Perchè mi chiami invano?

Luigi:

Then why do you increase my torment?
What's the point of calling me here?

Giorgetta:

Vibro tutta se penso a iersera,
all'ardor dei tuoi baci!

Luigi:

In quei baci tu sai cosa c'era...

Giorgetta:

Sì, mio amore. Ma taci!

Luigi:

Quale folle paura ti prende?

Giorgetta:

Se ci scopre, è la morte!

Luigi:

Preferisco morire, alla sorte, che ti tiene legata!

Giorgetta:

Ah! se fossimo soli, lontani.

Luigi:

E sempre uniti!

Giorgetta:

E sempre innamorati!
Dimmi che non mi manchi!

Luigi:

Mai!

Giorgetta:

Stai attento!

Giorgetta:

I tremble remembering last night,
and your passionate kisses!

Luigi:

You know what was in those kisses...

Giorgetta:

Yes my love, but be quiet!

Luigi:

What foolish fear has seized you?

Giorgetta:

If he discovers us, it's death!

Luigi:

I'd rather die than see you tied to this fate!

Giorgetta:

If only we could be alone, far away.

Luigi:

Together forever!

Giorgetta:

And in love forever!
Say you'll never leave me!

Luigi: (*rushing towards her*)

Never!

Giorgetta: (*fearfully*)

Be careful!

Michele suddenly emerges from the cabin.

Michele:

Come? Non sei andato?

Luigi:

Padrone, v'ho aspettato, perchè volevo dirvi
quattro parole sole: intanto ringraziarvi d'avermi
tenuto. Poi volevo pregarvi, se lo potete fare,
di portarmi a Rouen e là farmi sbarcare.

Michele:

A Rouen? Ma sei matto?
Là non c'è che miseria: ti troveresti peggio.

Luigi:

Stai bene. Allora resto.

Michele: (*to Luigi*)

You still here? Haven't you gone yet?

Luigi:

Skipper, I was waiting to talk to you and thank
you for having kept me, but I must ask you, if you
can, to take me to Rouen and leave me ashore.

Michele:

To Rouen? Are you mad?
There's only misery there, you'd be worse off.

Luigi:

Very well. Then I'll stay with you.

Michele advances toward the cabin.

Giorgetta:

E adesso dove vai?

Giorgetta:

Where are you going?

Michele:
A preparare i lumi.

Michele:
To prepare the lanterns.

Luigi:
Buona notte, padrone.

Luigi:
Goodnight, skipper.

Michele:
Buona notte.

Michele:
Goodnight.

*Michele enters the cabin. Luigi is almost on the gangplank when Giorgetta rushes to him.
Their dialogue is quick and breathless.*

Giorgetta:
Dimmi: perchè gli hai chiesto di sbarcarti a Rouen?

Giorgetta:
Tell me: why did you ask him to be left in Rouen?

Luigi:
Perchè non posso dividerti con lui!

Luigi:
Because I can't share you with him!

Giorgetta:
Hai ragione: è un tormento.
Anch'io ne son presa, anch'io la sento
ben più forte di te questa catena!
Hai ragione: è un tormento,
è un'angoscia, una pena,
ma quando tu mi prendi, è più grande il compenso!

Giorgetta:
You're right: it's torture.
I'm a captive, and I feel these chains more
strongly than you!
You're right: it's torture,
anguish and punishment,
but when you hold me, the reward is even greater!

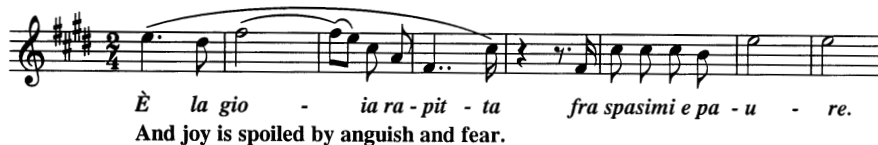
Luigi:
Par di rubare insieme qualche cosa alla vita!

Luigi:
Together we seem to steal what we can from life!

Giorgetta:
La voluttà è più intensa!

Giorgetta:
The desire is more intense!

LUIGI



Luigi:
E la gioia rapita fra spasimi e paure.

Luigi:
And joy is spoiled by anguish and fear.

Giorgetta:
In una stretta ansiosa.

Giorgetta:
In an anxious embrace.

Luigi:
Fra grida soffocate.

Luigi:
Suffocating cries, unfinished kisses.

Giorgetta:
E parole sommesse.

Giorgetta:
And submissive words.

Luigi:
E baci senza fine!

Luigi:
And endless kisses!

Giorgetta:
Giuramenti e promesse.

Luigi:
D'essere soli noi.

Giorgetta:
Noi, soli, via, via, lontani!

Luigi:
Noi tutti soli, lontani dal mondo!

È lui?

Giorgetta:
No, non ancora.
Dimmi che tornerai più tardi.

Luigi:
Sì, fra un'ora.

Giorgetta:
Ascolta: come ieri lascerò la passerella.
Sono io che la tolgo.
Hai le scarpe di corda?

Luigi:
Sì. Fai lo stesso segnale?

Giorgetta:
Sì, il fiammifero acceso!
Come tremava sul braccio mio teso la piccola
fiammella!
Mi pareva d'accendere una stella, fiamma del
nostro amore, stella senza tramonto!

Luigi:
Io voglio la tua bocca, voglio le tue carezze!

Giorgetta:
Dunque anche tu lo senti folle il desiderio!

Luigi:
Folle di gelosia!
Vorrei tenerti stretta come una cosa mia!
Vorrei non più soffrire, che un altro ti toccasse,
e per sottrarre a tutti il corpo tuo divino,
io te lo giuro, non tremo
a vibrare il coltello,
e con gocce di sangue fabbricarti un gioiello!

Giorgetta:
Vows and promises.

Luigi:
For us to be alone together.

Giorgetta:
Alone, and far away!

Luigi:
All alone, and far away from the world!
(Luigi thinks he hears footsteps)
Is that him?

Giorgetta:
No, not yet.
Promise me you'll come back later.

Luigi:
Yes, in an hour from now.

Giorgetta:
Listen: like last night I'll leave the gangplank down.
I'm the one who always takes it up.
Are you wearing corded shoes?

Luigi: (showing his feet)
Yes. Will you give the same signal?

Giorgetta:
Yes. The lighted match!
How that tiny flame flickered in my hand!

It was as though the flame of our love would set
fire to a star!!

Luigi:
I crave your mouth and your caresses!

Giorgetta:
Then you also feel that foolish desire!

Luigi:
Foolish jealousy!
I want to hold you close to me as though you are
mine! I don't want to suffer any longer because
someone else touches you. I want to keep
everyone away from your divine body.
I swear to you I would not fear to draw my knife,
and make a ring for you with drops of blood!

*Giorgetta pushes Luigi away from her, and he leaves quickly.
Alone, she passes her hand over her forehead and sighs in anguish.*

Giorgetta:
Come è difficile esser felici!

Giorgetta:
How difficult it is to be happy!

It is complete darkness. Michele emerges from the cabin carrying the lanterns.

Andante molto moderato



Michele:

Perchè non vai a letto?

Michele:

Why aren't you in bed?

Giorgetta:

E tu?

Giorgetta:

And you?

Michele:

No, non ancora.

Michele:

No, not just yet.

Giorgetta:

Penso che hai fatto bene a trattenerlo.

Giorgetta:

I think you were right to keep him.

Michele:

Chi mai?

Michele:

Who?

Giorgetta:

Luigi.

Giorgetta: (*casually*)

Luigi.

Michele:

Forse ho fatto male.

Basteranno due uomini: non c'è molto lavoro.

Michele:

Perhaps I've made a mistake.

There's only enough work for two men.

Giorgetta:

Tinca lo potresti licenziare, beve sempre.

Giorgetta:

Get rid of Tinca. He drinks too much.

Michele:

S'ubriacaper calmare i suoi dolori.

Ha per moglie una bagascia!

Beve per non ucciderla.

Che hai?

Michele:

He drinks to drown his sorrows,

because his wife is a tramp!

He drinks so he doesn't kill her.

What do you think?

Giorgetta does not answer, but seems troubled and nervous.

Giorgetta:

Son tutte questa storie che a me non interessano.

Giorgetta:

These stories don't interest me.

MICHELE



Per - chè,

per - chè non m'a - mi

più?

Per - chè?

Why? Why don't you love me any more? Why?

Michele:

Perchè, perchè non m'ami più?

Perchè?

Michele: (*nears her impetuously*)

Why don't you love me any more?

Why?

Giorgetta:

Ti sbagli; t'amo. Tu sei buono e onesto.

Ora andiamo a dormire.

Michele:

Tu non dormi!

Giorgetta:

Lo sai perchè non dormo.

E poi, là dentro soffoco. Non posso!

Michele:

Ora le notti sono tanto fresche.

E l'anno scorso là in quel nero guscio eravamo pur tre, c'era il lettuccio del nostro bimbo.

Giorgetta:

Il nostro bimbo! Taci, taci!

Michele:

Tu sporgevi la mano, e lo cullavi dolcemente, lentamente, e poi sul braccio mio t'addormentavi.

Giorgetta:

Ti supplico, Michele: non dir niente.

Michele:

Erano sere come queste.

Se spirava la brezza, vi raccoglievo insieme nel tabarro, come in una carezza.

Sento sulle mie spalle le vostre teste bionde.

Sento le vostre bocche vicino alla mia bocca.

Ero tanto felice, ero tanto felice.

Ora che non c'è più, i miei capelli grigi mi sembrano un insulto alla tua gioventù!

Giorgetta:

Ah! Ti supplico, Michele, non dir niente! Ah! No!

No. Calmati, Michele. Sono stanca.

Non reggo. Vieni.

Michele:

Ma non puoi dormire!

Sai bene che non devi addormentarti!

Giorgetta:

Perchè mi dici questo?

Michele:

Non so bene.

Ma so che è molto tempo che non dormi!

Giorgetta: *(coldly)*

You're wrong. I love you.

You're kind and honest.

(she tries to end the conversation)

Let's go to sleep.

Michele: *(staring at her intently)*

You never sleep!

Giorgetta:

You know why I don't sleep.

I can't breathe in there!

Michele:

The nights are cooler now.

Last year, there were three of us in there, with our baby in the cradle.

Giorgetta: *(painfully)*

Our little baby! Be quiet!

Michele: *(insisting, and deeply moved)*

You reached out and rocked him, gently, slowly.

Then you fell asleep on my arm.

Giorgetta:

I beg you, Michele, stop talking about it.

Michele:

On evenings like this, when the breeze stirred, I wrapped you in my cloak as though in an embrace.

I felt your dark head on my shoulders. I felt your mouth close to mine.

I was so happy.

It's not like that now. My age seems to be an insult to your youth!

Giorgetta:

I beg you, Michele, no more!

No! Say no more!

No, keep quiet, Michele.

I'm tired. Let's go.

Michele: *(harshly)*

But you can't sleep!

You know it well!

Giorgetta: *(frightened)*

Why do you say that?

Michele:

I don't know.

But I do know you haven't slept for a long time!

Michele tries to draw Giorgetta into his arms.

Resta vicino a me!
Non ti ricordi altre notti, altri cieli ed altre lune?
Perchè chiudi il tuo cuore?
Ti rammenti le ore che volavano via su questa
barca trascinate dall'onda?

Giorgetta:
Non ricordare.
Oggi è malinconia.

Michele:
Ah! Ritorna, ritorna come allora,
ritorna ancora mia!
Quando tu m'amavi e ardentemente
mi cercavi e mi baciavi quando tu m'amavi!
Resta vicino a me! La notte è bella!

Giorgetta:
Che vuoi! S' invecchia!
Non son più la stessa.
Tu pure sei cambiato. Diffidi.
Ma che credi?

Michele:
Non lo so nemmeno io!

Giorgetta:
Buona notte, Michele. Casco dal sonno.

Michele:
E allora va pure; ti raggiungo.

Come close to me!
Don't you remember other nights, other skies, and
other moonlights? Why have you closed your heart?
Do you remember the hours when this boat
carried us across the water?

Giorgetta:
I don't remember.
Now everything is melancholy.

Michele:
Return to me,
be mine again!
You loved me, and kissed me passionately.
Stay close to me!
It's a beautiful night!

Giorgetta:
What do you want! We're older!
I'm not the same.
You've also changed. You're suspicious.
What are you thinking about?

Michele:
I don't even know myself!

Giorgetta:
Goodnight, Michele. I'm exhausted.

Michele:
Then go. I'll join you soon.

As Giorgetta enters the cabin, Michele follows her with his eyes, and then mutters savagely.

Sgualdrina!

Slut!

On the boulevard, the shadows of two lovers are seen passing by. They are singing.

Amanti:
Bocca di rosa fresca.
E baci di rugiada
O labbra profumate.
O profumata sera.
C'è la luna,
la luna che ci spia.
A domani, mio amore.
Domani, amante mia!
A domani, mio amore.
Domani, amante mia!

Lovers:
Mouth like a fresh rose.
And kisses fresh as dew.
Oh pungent lips.
Oh starlit night.
There is the moon,
the moon that spies on us.
Till tomorrow, my love.
Tomorrow, my sweetheart!
Till tomorrow, my love.
Tomorrow, my sweetheart!

Taps are sounded from a nearby barracks. Michele takes his big black cloak and throws it on his shoulders. He leans against the tiller of the barge, steadily gazing upon the still river.

Michele:

Scorri, fiume eterno! Scorri!
Come il tuo mistero è fondo!
Ah! L'ansia che mi strugge non ha fine!
Passa, fiume eterno passa!
E me pure travolgi!

Quante son le rovine che calmò la tua onda!
Tu della miseria hai segnata la fine!
E sempre calmo passi, e non ti ferma dolore nè
paura nè tormento nè volgere di anni!

Continui la tua corsa, continui il tuo lamento!
Sono i lamenti, forse, dei tuoi morti?
Di migliaia di morti che portasti l'un duopo
l'altro verso il gran destino sulle tue braccia
lugubri ma forti!

Sono i dolori che tu soffocasti chiudendo l'urlo
estremo in un gorgoglio?
Acqua misteriosa e cupa, passa sul mio triste
cuore!
Lava via la pena e il mio dolore, fa pur tua la mia
sorte!
E se non puoi la pace allor dammi la morte!

Michele:

Flow, eternal river, flow!
Like your deep and mysterious waters!
Anguish pervades my soul endlessly!
Pass on, eternal river, pass on!
And drag me in and engulf me!

Your waves soothe so many sorrows!
You have marked the end of so much misery!
Forever calm, you flow, never halted by pain, fear
or anguish!

Forever flow on, forever continue your lament!
Are those the moans of icy corpses?
You carried thousands of dead in quick succession
toward their end, on your slimy arms!

Are those the sorrows you quelled by choking
their last breath in your whirlpools?
Mysterious and dark waters, flow on and pass
over my broken heart!
Wash away my sorrow and my bitter pain!
Make my destiny yours, and if you cannot give
me peace, then let me die in your waters!

Andante grave
MICHELE



Nulla! Silenzio!
Nothing! All is quiet!

Nulla! Silenzio!
È là! Non s'è spogliata.
Non dorme. Aspetta.
Chi? Che cosa aspetta?

Nothing! Just silence!
There she is. Still dressed.
Not asleep. She's waiting.
What's she waiting for? Who?

Andante grave
MICHELE



Chi? chi? For - se il mio son - no!
Who? Who? Perhaps I'm asleep!

Chi? Chi? Forse il mio sonno!
Chi l'ha trasformata?
Qual ombra maledetta è discesa fra noi?
Chi l'ha insidiata?

Il Talpa? Troppo vecchio!
Il Tinca forse? No, no, non pensa beve.
E dunque chi? Luigi?
No, se proprio questa sera voleva abbandonarmi e
m'ha fatto preghiera di sbarcarlo a Rouen!

Ma chi dunque? Chi dunque?
Chi sarà?
Squarciare le tenebre!
Vendere! E serrarlo così, fra le mie mani!
E gridargli: "Sei tu! Sei tu!"
Il tuo volto livido, sorrideva alla mia pena!
Sei tu! Sei tu! Su! Su! Su!
Dividi con me questa catena!
Accomuna la tua con la mia sorte
giù insiem nel gorgo più profondo!
La pace è nella morte!

Who? Perhaps I'm asleep!
Who has changed her?
What evil shadow has come between us?
Who has led her astray?

Talpa? He's too old!
Perhaps Tinca? No, no, he drinks too much.
But then who? Luigi?
No, just this evening he asked me to leave him at
Rouen!

But then who is it? Who then?
Who will it be?
If I could see in the dark and catch him with my
hands!
I'd shout to him: "It's you! It's you!"
Your lurid face smiles at my pain!
It is you! You!
Share these chains with me!
Join your fate with mine,
together in the deep!
There is peace in death!

*Mechanically, Michele takes his pipe from his pocket and lights it. At the flaring of the match,
Luigi cautiously moves towards the gangplank, and then jumps onto the barge.
Michele, seeing the shadow, becomes startled. He hides, and then recognizes Luigi.
He lunges at him, and seizes him by the throat.*

Michele:
T'ho colto!

Luigi:
Sangue di Dio! Son preso!

Michele:
Non gridare!
Che venivi a cercare?
Volevi la tua amante?

Luigi:
Non è vero!

Michele:
Mentisci!
Confessa, confessa!

Luigi:
Ah! perdio!

Michele:
Giù il coltello!
Non mi sfuggi, canaglia!
Anima di forzato! Verme!
Volevi andare giù, a Rouen, non è vero?
Morto ci andrai, nel fiume!

Michele:
I've got you!

Luigi: (*struggling to free himself*)
By the Saints! I'm caught!

Michele:
Don't scream!
Who are you looking for?
Were you looking for your lover?

Luigi:
It's not true!

Michele:
You're lying!
Admit it! Admit it!

Luigi: (*pulling out his knife*)
By all angels!

Michele: (*pinioning his arms*)
Drop your knife!
You won't escape, you scoundrel!
You won't escape, vile beast. Monster!
You wanted me to go to Rouen. is that true?
You'll go there dead, in the river!

Luigi:
Assassino! Assassino!

Luigi:
Assassin!

Michele:
Confessami che l'ami! confessa! confessa!

Michele:
Admit that you love her! Admit it!

Luigi:
Lasciami, lasciami, lasciami!

Luigi:
Let me go!

Michele:
No! Infame! Infame!
Se confessi, ti lascio!

Michele:
No! Scoundrel!
If you confess that you love her, I'll let you go!

Luigi:
Sì.

Luigi:
Yes.

Michele:
Ripeti! Ripeti!

Michele:
Repeat it!

Luigi:
Sì. L'amo!

Luigi: (*in a feeble voice*)
Yes, I love her!

Michele:
Ripeti! Ripeti!

Michele:
Repeat it!

Luigi:
L'amo!

Luigi: (*moaning weakly*)
I love her!

Michele:
Ripeti!

Michele:
Repeat it!

Luigi:
L'amo!

Luigi: (*more weakened*)
I love her!

Michele:
Ancora!

Michele: (*tightening his hold*)
Again!

Luigi:
L'amo. Ah!

Luigi:
I love her. Ah!

*Michele holds his grip on Luigi's neck. Luigi dies.
From inside the cabin, Giorgetta is heard calling Michele.
Giorgetta appears, looks about, and seems frightened.*

Giorgetta:
Michele! Michele!
Ho paura, Michele.

Giorgetta: (*as she emerges from the cabin*)
Michele! Michele!
I'm frightened, Michele.

*Michele, hearing Giorgetta's voice, rapidly wraps his cloak about the corpse of Luigi,
and keeps it close to him. He sits down.
Giorgetta approaches Michele slowly, looking around anxiously.
She sees Michele seated and calms down.*

Michele:

Avevo ben ragione: non dovevi dormire?

Giorgetta:

Son presa dal rimorso d'averti dato pena.

Michele:

Non è nulla. I tuoi nervi.

Giorgetta:

Ecco è questo, hai ragione.

Dimmi che mi perdoni.

Non mi vuoi più vicina?

Michele:

Dove? Nel mio tabarro?

Giorgetta:

Sì, vicina, vicina. Sì.

Mi dicevi un tempo:

“Tutti quanti portiamoun tabarro che asconde
qualche volta una gioia, qualche volta un dolore.”

Michele:

Qualche volta un delitto!

vieni nel mio tabarro!

Vieni! Vieni!

Michele: *(very calmly)*

Didn't I tell you that you wouldn't be able to sleep?

Giorgetta: *(meekly)*

I'm full of remorse for making you suffer.

Michele:

It's nothing. Just your nerves.

Giorgetta:

That's it. You're right.

Tell me you forgive me.

(coquettishly) Don't you want me closer?

Michele: *(menacingly)*

Where? Inside my cloak?

Giorgetta:

Yes, close to you.

You used to tell me:

“Everyone should wear a cloak that sometimes
hides happiness, and sometimes sadness.”

Michele:

And sometimes a crime!

Come inside my cloak!

Come! Come!

Michele rises, and throws open the cloak. Luigi's dead body falls at Giorgetta's feet.

With a great cry she falls back, horror stricken.

But Michele grabs her violently and throws her upon the corpse of her dead lover.

Giorgetta:

Ah!

Giorgetta: *(terrified and screaming desperately)*

Ah!

End of Il Tabarro

Suor Angelica

(“Sister Angelica”)

Opera in Italian in one act

Music
by
Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Premiere:
Metropolitan Opera, New York
December 1918

Principal Characters in Suor Angelica

Sister Angelica	Soprano
The Princess (Angelica's Aunt)	Contralto
The Abbess	Mezzo soprano
The Monitor	Mezzo soprano
Sister Genevieve	Soprano
Sister Osmina	Soprano
Sister Dolcina	Soprano
Mistress of the Novices	Mezzo soprano
Nursing Sister	Mezzo soprano
The Mendicants	Sopranos
The Novices	Sopranos
The Lay-Sisters	Sopranos

A Convent in Italy at the end of the seventeenth century.

Brief Story Synopsis

Sister Angelica, the daughter of a noble family, has brought shame and disgrace on her family by an illicit passion; she bore a child out of wedlock. In expiation for her sin, she has taken the veil and forfeited her share of her inheritance, but during her seven years at the convent, she cannot extinguish her thoughts about her son.

Angelica's Aunt arrives at the convent to demand her formal assignment of any claims to her inheritance. During their encounter, the Aunt informs Sister Angelica that her son died two years ago. Angelica turns to despair and decides to end her life by poison. In her final agony, she is overcome by a tormenting sense of cardinal sin she has committed by her act of suicide.

She prays to the Virgin Mary for salvation from damnation. Her prayer is answered by a Miracle: a celestial choir of angels intones a solemn hymn, the adjoining chapel becomes suffused with radiant light, the gates of the chapel open and on the threshold stands the Virgin, gently motioning a young child toward the dying Sister Angelica.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

A convent in Italy during the latter part of the seventeenth century. It is a clear spring sunset. There is a small church, a shrine, a cloister, a cemetery, and a garden with grass and flowers, and cypress trees. There is a fountain sprouting into an earthen pile. The sisters are praying inside the church, a hymn celebrating the Virgin Mary, and blessing Jesus, the fruit of Her womb.

The Prayer: “Ave Maria”

Andante moderato



Two sisters appear. They are late for chapel prayers, but before entering, they pause to listen to the birds singing in the cypress trees.

Sister Angelica, also late, opens the chapel door, but first gestures a sign of penance for latecomers; she kneels, kisses the threshold, and then enters the chapel.

After their prayers, the sisters emerge from the Chapel. The Abbess stops in front of the shrine, and the sisters bow to her reverently as they pass. The Abbess blesses the sisters, and then departs.

The Monitor reproaches the sisters who were late for prayers, punishing their foolish sins by preventing them from participating in one day of their celebration. The Mistress of the Novices further punishes the Lay-Sisters, ordering them to say a prayer twenty times for the oppressed, afflicted, and those living in mortal sin.

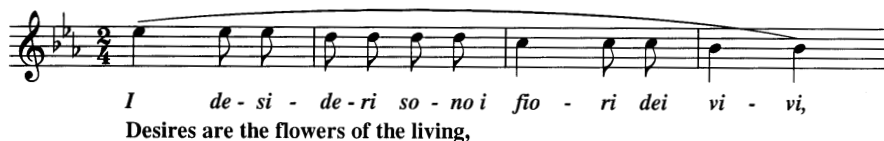
The Monitor commands Sister Lucilla to do her spinning, to work fervently and in silence. The Monitor also punishes Sister Osmina because she concealed two scarlet roses in her sleeve during chapel prayers. Afterwards the Monitor permits the sisters some recreation before they return to their work.

While Sister Angelica waters flowers in the garden, Sister Genevieve notes that because the sun has now entered the cloisters, the three evenings of their golden fountain celebration is beginning, the time when the fountain's waters turn to gold.

The sisters become engaged in thoughts about Sister Bianca Rosa, who died recently, commenting that it would have been her desire to have the golden water sprinkled on her grave.

“I desideri sono i fiori dei vivi”

Moderato e sostenuto SUOR ANGELICA



Sister Angelica morbidly comments about desires, a gift to the living from the Virgin. The Monitor cautions them that one must never have desires that are vain and worldly, prompting the others to think about their own desires. Sister Genevieve, a former shepherdess, yearns to see a little lamb and pet it, but quickly cautions herself by invoking Jesus, the true Lamb of God. The sisters reproach Sister Dolcina, one whose desires are gluttonous for food.

Sister Angelica is asked if she has any desires; she replies no, but the sisters refute her, commenting that she has been in the convent for seven years and yearns to hear news of her family. They believe that she was a noble who was forced to take the veil in punishment, but they are unaware of the reason.

The Nursing Sister arrives to announce that Sister Clara was bitten by a wasp and is in excruciating pain. Sister Angelica offers her some herbs and flowers to make a potion that will reduce the inflammation.

Two Mendicants arrive with provisions, which they deliver to the housekeeper. The Mendicants announce that a splendid carriage has stopped outside the convent. Sister Angelica becomes anxious, inquiring about its coat-of-arms. The sisters offer their prayers for Sister Angelica; that the carriage may have brought her long-sought visitor.

The Abbess enters; all are expectant, particularly Sister Angelica who remains motionless and in suspense. The Abbess dismisses the other sisters, who run to the fountain to fill their cups with the golden water. Then she advises Angelica that her Aunt, the Princess, has come to visit her. After the Abbess departs, Sister Angelica stares at the door anxiously.

There is the noise of keys in the door lock. The Abbess reappears, together with the Sister Portress; each stands bending reverentially on each side of the door. A dark figure appears, her deportment that of aristocratic dignity. She enters slowly with the aid of an ebony cane. It is the Princess, Sister Angelica's Aunt, who stops, and then throws an unemotional, cold glance at her niece. At the sight of her Aunt, Sister Angelica is moved, but she controls her emotions because of the presence of the Abbess and Sister Portress. Both sisters leave, and the door is closed.

Sister Angelica, full of emotion, moves toward her Aunt, but the old lady merely stretches out her left hand as if to indicate that she will only consent to her niece kissing it. Sister Angelica seizes the Aunt's outstretched hand, and raises it to her lips. While the Aunt sits down, Sister Angelica falls to her knees, unable to utter a word. Tears begin to stream down her cheeks as she imploringly stares at her Aunt's face, but the old lady stares rigidly ahead.

The Aunt announces that after Angelica's parents died twenty years ago, she became the guardian of the children and the entire estate, dividing it as she saw fit, and with full justice. She hands Angelica the document to examine, read, and sign.

The Aunt announces the reason Angelica must sign the document; Angelica's sister, Anna Viola, is to be married, a love that overcame the disgrace that Angelica brought to the family name. Angelica explodes in anguish at her Aunt, condemning her relentless demands. The Aunt equally becomes agitated, telling Angelica that she often prays at their family chapel and hears her dead mother's voice calling for Angelica's atonement.

"Nell silenzio"

Andante molto sostenuto
THE PRINCESS (Aunt)



Nell si - lenzio di quei raccogli-men - ti, il mio spirito par che s'allon - ta-ni.
In the silence of my prayers, my spirit seems to leave me.

Angelica reveals that she has paid dearly for her transgression; she has offered her life to the Blessed Virgin, but she also cannot forget her son, the baby that was torn from her. She inquires about him: his hair, his eyes.

The Aunt is silent, causing Angelica to curse and damn her. Distraught, the Aunt reveals that Angelica's son died two years ago, the victim of a fatal illness.

Angelica falls to the ground, heartbroken. Angelica remains kneeling, both hands covering her face. The Sister Portress enters. The Aunt whispers something to her. The Portress leaves, but immediately returns with the Abbess, who carries a writing tablet, inkwell and a quill.

Angelica intuitively understands her duty. Silently, she moves to the table, and with trembling hand affixes her signature to the parchment. Then she moves away, again covering her face with both hands.

After the two sisters leave, The Aunt takes the parchment. She begins to move toward her niece, but Angelica shrinks away from her. The Aunt proceeds toward the door and strikes it with her cane. The Portress opens the door and leads the Aunt out, but she hesitates on the threshold, glances back at her niece, and then departs.

Night has fallen. In the cemetery, the sisters are lighting lanterns on the tombstones. Sister Angelica remains sobbing in desperation.

"Sensa mamma"

Andante desolato molto sostenuto

SUOR ANGELICA



*Senza mamma, o bimbo, tu sei mor - to! Le tue labbra, senza i baci miei,
Without your mother, my child, you died! Without my kisses, your lips grew pale and cold!*

Angelica grieves in sorrow over her son's death, her child who died without knowing his mother's unbounded love for him. She expresses her yearning to see him again, perhaps only in Heaven; she yearns for death, the moment she will see her son again.

Angelica becomes transformed into a state of ecstasy, as if a Divine voice has spoken to her, a voice commanding her spiritual course.

"La grazia è discesa dal cielo"

SUOR ANGELICA



*La gra - zia è disce - sa dal cie - lo, già tutta, già tutta m'accende!
Her grace has descended from Heaven and shines all around me!*

It is now quite dark, but the cupola of the church is aglow, illuminated by the stars and the moon. Angelica appears with an earthenware jar, which she places down at the foot of the cypress tree; she takes a bundle of twigs and branches, heaps up a few stones and places the twigs and branches upon them. She goes to the fountain and fills the jar with water. Then she lights the fire with a piece of flint and places the jar on the fire.

The flowers that Angelica cared for so much contain poison, a reward for Angelica that will become the vehicle for her death. Angelica bids farewell to her sisters, announcing that her son has called her to Paradise, the fulfillment of her longing to see him again.

In a state of rapture and exaltation, Angelica moves to the shrine and kisses the cross. Quickly, she picks up the jar, fixes her eyes to the heavens, and drinks the poison. She leans on the cypress tree, presses her chest with her left hand, and slowly drops her right hand, letting the jar fall to the ground.

But the reality of her suicide seems to overcome her exaltation. Her face, so serene and smiling before, transforms into intense anguish and fear, as if overcome by a revelation. Suddenly, she explodes in torment; she will be damned for committing the mortal sin of suicide. She prays to the Virgin to save her soul and offer Her grace, explaining that her act of suicide was a mother's sacrifice for the love of her son.

Angelica hears the voice of Angels. Suddenly the chapel becomes resplendent in mystic, radiant light. The Blessed Virgin appears, and in front of her, a fair child, dressed in white. The Virgin gestures the child toward his dying mother. Sister Angelica becomes engrossed in the magnetic spell of the vision and raises her arms toward the child.

As the child steps toward Angelica, she falls to the ground and dies.

Commentary and Analysis

Suor Angelica, the tragic story about the suicide of a nun, was apparently the invention of the Puccini's librettist, Giovacchino Forzano, the product of a sketch he had made for a play of the same name, but never produced. Nevertheless, the subject appealed strongly to Puccini and kindled his tragic muse, its heroine's fate possessing a pathos that the composer had been unable to inspire since *Madama Butterfly*, fourteen years earlier.

Perhaps the infamous "affaire Doria" scandal also inspired Puccini to the pathetic heroine of *Suor Angelica*. In 1908, Puccini's obsessively jealous wife, Elvira, accused Doria Manfredi, a servant, of having an amorous liaison with her husband. A scandal and subsequent legal entanglement ensued, ultimately resulting in Doria's imprisonment, after which she attempted suicide and died. The public scandal and Doria's suffering severely depressed Puccini for many years, and there is no doubt that her sorrowful fate was at the back of the composer's mind when he portrayed the suicide of Sister Angelica, as was the slave girl Liù in his later *Turandot*.

There are indeed parallels in *Suor Angelica* and the earlier *Madama Butterfly*: the soul of both operas involves the suffering and excruciating agonies that befall a mother's loss of her son, leading them to their suicide. And both heroines are subjected to severe mental torture: Sharpless visits Butterfly to inform her of Pinkerton's desertion; Angelica's Aunt informs her niece of the death of her young son. And Puccini would rise to musical dramatic heights in his portrayal of their suicides: Butterfly's impassioned farewell to her child; Angelica's torment that leads to her suicide, damnation, and the "Miracle" of spiritual reunion.

Certain features of the *Suor Angelica* story bear an uncanny parallel to an earlier Massenet opera: *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* ("The Juggler of Notre Dame") (1902). Both operas take place in a monastery: Massenet's story in a French monastery during the fourteenth century, in which all the characters are men, and Puccini's story, taking place in an Italian convent at the end of the seventeenth century, in which all the characters are women. Both operas conclude when the sinner is granted Divine forgiveness.

Puccini, who began his musical career as a church organist in his native Lucca, certainly had an affinity for a subject containing religious ambience, a welcome opportunity to exercise his old skills in writing liturgical music. But he also had an intimate understanding of convent life; his sister, Iginia, had risen to become Mother Superior at the Convent of Vicopelao, where he had visited often. But Puccini was a quintessential music dramatist and a man of the theater, who despite his own remiss religious beliefs, never failed to be fascinated by the ritual and spectacle of the Roman Catholic Church, an allure that inspired that potent blend of religion and eroticism he portrayed in the finale of the first act of *Tosca*: the "Te Deum." In *Suor Angelica*, the composer likewise achieved a brilliant religious ambience in the sister's opening "Prayer," but the final hymn of the angels in the "Miracle" scene is a Puccinian coup de théâtre.

Puccini was a craftsman who was obsessed with the most finite dramatic details of his operas. For *Tosca*, he climbed to the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome to hear the morning bells of St. Peter's, their pitch faithfully reproduced during the opening of its third act. Likewise, he strove for perfection of details in *Suor Angelica*, finding an authentic Latin prayer, what he later described as "Marcia Reale della Madonna" ("Royal March of the Madonna"), the hymn sung by the chorus of angels during the "Miracle" scene, that was provided to him by his friend, Father Pietro Panichelli.

But although the tragic plight of *Suor Angelica* tragedy fascinated Puccini, it also severely challenged his dramatic powers; the opera is not the typical Puccini opera that is kindled by erotic love. Nevertheless, the heroine's torment and suffering served to kindle his tragic imagination.

The atmosphere of the convent and the sister's dedication to the Virgin Mary pervades the entire drama and envelops its characters, the music's religious coloring the score's most conspicuous feature. *Suor Angelica* begins in an atmosphere of tranquility, its sense of piety expressed by a chorus of sisters singing a hymn glorifying the Virgin Mary: "Ave Maria."

But the sisters live a cloistered life that is structured and commands absolute obedience to discipline. Yet the sisters are humble and devoted creatures, frail but human. Some of the sisters seem to be rebellious, unable to cope with the monotony of their life and its strict rules: the Lay-Sisters — and Sister Angelica — are late for chapel prayers, Sister Lucilla is ordered to work at her spinning because she laughed and made others laugh during prayers, and Sister Osmina is accused of concealing scarlet roses in her sleeves during the chapel prayer.

The Abbess, the Monitor, and the Mistress of the Novices, are the authoritarian disciplinarians, ruling the sister's cloistered lives by invoking their faith; each of the sisters is severely punished accordingly. Puccini, a master of detail, provides thumbnail sketches of the individual sisters: the childish chatter of the Novices, the obstinate Sister Osmina, as well as the sternly reproving Monitor.

But from this seemingly homogeneous group, the gentle yet lively Sister Genevieve emerges, invoking the celebration that occurs for three days each spring, when the sun envelops their fountain and seemingly turns its water into the purest gold: a grace from the Virgin, that inspires the sisters to bless the grave of their recently departed sister Bianca Rosa with its golden water.

At this moment, Sister Angelica begins to emerge from the obscurity of the group of nuns, rising slowly to become the central character in the drama. She reveals herself for the first time in her brief aria, "I desiderì," her thoughts about the nature of desire that invokes flowers as a metaphor for desire, a blessing from the Holy Virgin that is only for the living: it is an expression of self-denial, in which an impassioned musical climax reveals a longing for death.

But desire is forbidden, incompatible with their devotion and commitment to God, a stricture clearly cautioned by the austere Monitor: "Noi non possiamo nemmeno da vive avere desiderì." ("We must never have desires that are vain and worldly.") Sister Genevieve emerges again in her wistful aria, "Soave Signor Mio!" ("My gentle Lord"), an expression of her desires, a longing of this former shepherdess to again embrace her beloved lambs. But she quickly cautions her uncontrollable — and sinful — thoughts, invoking the Lord as the true "Lamb of God."

The talk about desires prompt the sisters to gossip about Sister Angelica, a woman they recognize as suffering from inner agony and turmoil; she has not heard news from her family in the seven years she has been at the convent. And they reveal that Angelica was a noble, forced to take the veil in punishment for a severe transgression. Angelica's essential conflict has not yet been revealed, a woman in pain and anguish because she is unable to see her son, who was taken from her after his birth.

The next episode involving the Nursing Sister provides a key element of the drama; it introduces Angelica's expertise with flowers and herbs after the Nursing Sister announces that a wasp had bitten Sister Clara, suffering from excruciating pain. And Puccini provides additional color by injecting his obsession for "cose piccole" ("little things"): the Mendicants arriving bearing provisions for the sisters.

The dramatic highlight of the opera begins with the announcement that a luxurious coach waits outside the convent, causing Angelica to speculate that it is a visitor from her family. And indeed, the Abbess enters to announce that Angelica has a visitor: her Aunt, the Princess. Until the Aunt's arrival, the general ambience and dramatic characterization in the opera fluctuated between liturgical intensity and simple conversation, small playful and sprightly phrases conveying the personalities of the sisters that are occasionally tinged with

gentle sadness. But the great confrontation scene between Angelica and her Aunt contains the most dramatic passages in the opera, inspiring Puccini to one of his finest musical-dramatic scenes. It is the turning point of the opera, the moment Sister Angelica transforms into the tragic heroine.

Just like *Tosca*'s Scarpia, the villain of Angelica — the Aunt Princess — is a brilliant psychological portrait in music; she becomes the most captivating character in the opera, and the only significant role in the composer's gallery of female characters that he ever wrote for a low female voice. (Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* is excluded.)

Puccini's music characterizes the Aunt as a cold, cruel and sinister bigot, the music conveying reptilian images. The Aunt's words represent her instruments of torture, her mental cruelty merely lacking Scarpia's eventual explosion of physical lust. Yet much of the Aunt's music is reminiscent of *Tosca*'s "Torture" scene, an example of Puccini at his quintessential musical dramatic effectiveness.

The Aunt's entrance immediately conveys impending disaster and leads to a potent emotional exchange. She is clad in black, appearing as a severe and autocratic figure, but completely self-controlled and deporting herself with aristocratic dignity. Much of her harsh personality is conveyed through gestures: she walks with measured steps and supports herself on an ebony cane. When an emotional Sister Angelica moves toward her Aunt, the latter merely stretches out her left hand as if to indicate that she will only tolerate a submissive hand-kiss, as she stares fixedly ahead while her niece kneels before her.

The Aunt begins and ends this crucial scene in a dull, expressionless monotone. But her inflections are devastating. She announces that she is the total guardian of the family estate, and she has come to force Angelica to cede any claim to her inheritance or worldly goods to her sister, who is about to be married. In her aria, "Nell silenzio" ("In the silence of my prayers"), the Aunt relates her mystic communion with the spirit of Angelica's dead mother, who, the Aunt reveals, is in her relentless anger; her mother demands justice through complete atonement from Angelica, an unforgiven and infinite punishment for disgracing the family name by bearing a child out of wedlock.

The Aunt shatters Angelica with the news of the death of her young son, a heartrending moment of the drama. The scene is not unlike *Madama Butterfly*'s second act scene with Sharpless, in which the heroine grows from a meek, submissive girl to a woman of almost tragic stature; it is at this moment that Angelica reaches her dramatic apex, "È morto?" ("Is he dead?"), a moment of pathetic grief and utter emotional devastation.

This entire scene affirms Puccini's musical dramatic skill, his music highlighting the emotional contrast between the two women.

Angelica's aria, "Senza mamma," presents a despairing and piteous portrait of Angelica, a mother in mortal grief; it is an aria that conveys pure poignancy, a nobility of expression, yet emotional restraint, its ending on a pianissimo A rarely observed by singers.

Sister Angelica prays, and the sisters tell Angelica that the Virgin has heard her prayers. Angelica sees her course clearly and decisively, a sense of destiny commanded by the Virgin Herself: "La grazia è descesa dal cielo" ("Her grace has descended from Heaven.")

Angelica proceeds to prepare for her suicide, making her poison from the flowers she had always tenderly cared for, the flowers that will repay her with her own death. In exaltation, she bids farewell to the sisters; tenderly and with subtle poignancy she tells them that she had a vision of her smiling son, urging her to join him in Heaven: "Mamma, vieni in paradiso!" ("Mother, come to Paradise!"), an expansive hymn-like melody that seems to rise to Heaven with Angelica's ecstasy.

The closing “Miracle” scene is stirring and theatrically effective. Angelica, on the threshold of death and already spiritually transformed, merges her voice with those of the angels. Angelica then expresses her joyous ecstasy — a downward portamento — at the moment at which the Virgin motions the child to advance to his mother. A chorus of invisible angels and the “celestial” orchestra offstage announce the Hymn to the Mother of Mothers, or “Marcia Reale,” an expression of poignant religiosity. It is a moment with cathartic power and mystic ecstasy.

Suor Angelica is a tragic story whose engine is driven by motherly love: the collision between Angelica’s motherly love for her son, and the spiritual motherly love of the Virgin Mary. Angelica was a suffering woman, a sinner condemned to her destiny. Puccini builds the opera’s characterizations from simple portraits of the tranquility and devotional obedience of convent life, to an emotional confrontation between Angelica and her Aunt, to the final “Miracle,” the transformation and redemption of Angelica through divine absolution: it is a story that penetrates the soul of a mother, the spiritual Mother, and that of Sister Angelica. *Suor Angelica* is a compelling story of the sacred in conflict with the profane, ingeniously conveyed in the magic of Puccini’s signature musical inventions.

Libretto

Suor Angelica

*A convent in Italy during the latter part of the seventeenth century.
There is a small church, a cloister, a shrine, a cemetery,
a garden with grass and flowers, and cypress trees.
There is a fountain that sprouts into an earthen pile.*

As the curtain rises, it is a clear spring sunset. The sisters are heard praying inside the church.

Andante moderato



Coro di Suore:

Ave Maria, piena di grazia, il Signore è teco,
Tu sei benedetta fra le donne,
benedetto il frutto del ventre tuo, Gesù.

Chorus of Sisters:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee,
Blessed art thou among women and blessed is
the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

*Two sisters appear, late for chapel prayers. Before entering the chapel, they pause an instant
to listen to the birds singing in the cypress trees.*

*Sister Angelica, also late, opens the chapel door; but first gestures a sign of penance for late
comers; she kneels, kisses the threshold and then enters the chapel.*

Coro di Suore:

Santa Maria, prega per noi peccatori, ora e
nell'ora della nostra morte. E così sia.

Chorus of Sisters:

Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, pray for us.
And therefore may it be.

Suor Angelica:

Prega per noi peccatori, ora e nell'ora della
nostra morte. E così sia.

Sister Angelica: (from inside the Chapel)

Pray for those of us who are sinners, in the hour
of our death.

*The sisters emerge from the chapel in pairs. The Abbess stops in front of the shrine, and the sisters
bow to her reverently as they pass. The Abbess blesses them, and then withdraws.
The sisters form small groups. The Monitor enters.*

La Suora Zelatrice:

Sorelle in umiltà,
mancaste alla quindèna,
ed anche Suor Angelica,
che però fece contrizione piena.
Invece voi, sorelle,
peccaste in distrazione
e avete perso un giorno di quindèna!

The Monitor: (to two Lay-Sisters)

Sisters in humility,
you are both late for chapel service,
and so was Sister Angelica,
but she has done penance.
But you, sisters,
have sinned foolishly
and lost a day of the celebration!

Una Conversa:

M'accuso della colpa e invoco una gran pena,
e più grave sarà, più grazie vi dirò,
sorella in umiltà.

A Lay-Sister:

I have sinned and ask for severe punishment.
The more severe the punishment, the more I shall
give thanks.

La Maestra Delle Novizie:

Chi arriva tardi in coro, si prostri e baci terra.

La Suora Zelatrice:

Farete venti volte la preghiera mentale per gli afflitti, gli schiavi e per quelli che stanno in peccato mortale.

Una Conversa:

Con gioia e con fervore!

Le Due Converse:

Christo Signore, Sposo d' Amore,
io voglio sol piacerti, Sposo d' Amor,
ora e nell' ora della mia morte! Amen!

Mistress of the Novices:

Those coming late for chapel prayers, must kneel and kiss the ground.

The Monitor: (to the Lay-Sisters)

You shall say a prayer twenty times for the oppressed and afflicted, and for those who live in mortal sin.

A Lay-Sister:

I obey you with fervent joy!

The Two Lay-Sister: (with enthusiasm)

Blessed Christ, Beloved Bridegroom, I wish only to please Thee, now and in the hour of my dying! Amen!

The Lay-Sisters retire in contrition. The Monitor reprimands Sister Lucilla, who takes down a spinning wheel from under the arch, and prepares to spin.

La Suora Zelatrice:

Suor Lucilla, il lavoro. Ritiratevi e osservate il silenzio.

La Maestra Delle Novizie:

Perché stasera in coro ha riso e fatto ridere.

La Suora Zelatrice:

Voi, Suor Osmina, in chiesa
tenavate nascoste nelle maniche
due rose scarlattine.

Suor Osmina:

Non è vero!

La Suora Zelatrice:

Sorella, entrate in cella.
Non tardate! La Vergine vi guarda!

The Monitor:

And now Sister Lucilla, get to work. Retire and observe silence.

Mistress of the Novices: (to the two novices)

It's because this evening she laughed, and made others in the choir laugh.

The Monitor: (to Sister Osmina)

You, Sister Osmina, please tell me why I caught you in chapel concealing two scarlet roses in your sleeves.

Sister Osmina: (restive)

It is not true!

Sister Zelatrice: (severely)

Sister, go into your cell.
Hurry up! The Blessed Virgin is watching!

Sister Osmina shrugs her shoulders, enters her cell and slams the door.

Sei Suore:

Regina Virginum, ora pro ea.

La Suora Zelatrice:

Ed or, sorelle in gioia, poichè piace al Signore e per tornare più allegramente a faticare per amor Suo, ricreatevi!

Le suore:

Amen!

Six Sisters:

Sovereign Lady pray for her.

The Monitor:

And now, sisters in joy, please the Lord, and because of your love of Him, before returning happily to work, you may have some recreation!

The Sisters:

Amen!

As sisters scatter through the cloister. Sister Angelica is busy watering flowers.

Suor Genovieffa:

Oh, sorelle, sorelle, io voglio rivelarvi che una
spera di sole è entrata in clausura!
Guardate dove batte, là, là fra la verzura!
Il sole è sull'acoro! Comincian le tre sere della
fontana d'oro!

Alcune Suore:

È vero, fra un istante vedrem l'acqua dorata!

Una Suora:

E per due sere ancora!

Alcune Suore:

È maggio! È il bel sorriso di Nostra Signora che
viene con quel raggio.
Regina di Clemenza, grazie!

Una Novizia:

Maestra, vi domando licenza di parlare?

La Maestra Delle Novizie:

Sempre per laudare le cose sante e belle.

La Novizia:

Qual grazia della Vergina rallegra le sorelle?

La Maestra Delle Novizie:

Un segno risplendente della bontà di Dio!
Per tre sere dell'anno solamente, all'uscire dal
coro, Dio ci concede di vedere
il sole che batte sulla fonte e la fa d'oro.

La Novizia:

E le altre sere?

La Maestra Delle Novizie:

O usciamo troppo presto e il sole è alto, o
troppo tardi e il sole è tramontato.

Alcune suore:

Un altr'anno è passato!
È passato un altr'anno! E una sorella manca.

Sister Genevieve: (gaily)

Sisters, I want to show you that a sunbeam has
entered the cloister!
Look on the grass where it falls.
The three-evening celebration of the golden
fountain is beginning!

Some Sisters:

It is true, soon we'll see the golden water!

One Sister:

And it will appear for two more evenings!

Some Sisters:

It is May, and the lovely smile of Our Lady
comes with that ray.
Queen of Mercy, we thank Thee!

One Novice: (timidly)

Sister, may I have permission to speak?

The Mistress of the Novices:

Speak if it is about matters holy and beautiful.

The Novice:

What act of Our Lady's grace makes the sister's
happy?

The Mistress of the Novices:

A shining sign of God's goodness!
On three evenings a year when we come out of
chapel, God allows us to see the sun falling on
the fountain that He turns to gold.

The Novice:

And the other evenings?

The Mistress of the Novices:

We come out either too early when the sun is
high, or perhaps too late when the sun has set.

Some Sisters: (sadly)

Another year has passed!
And we've lost a sister!

*The sisters become absorbed in thought,
seemingly making an effort to bring back the image of their dead sister.*

Suor Genovieffa:

O sorella in pio lavoro, quando il getto s'è
infiiorato, quando il getto s'è indorato, non
sarebbe ben portato un secchiello d'acqua d'oro
sulla tomba a Bianca Rosa?

Le suore:

Sì, la suora che riposa lo desidera di certo.

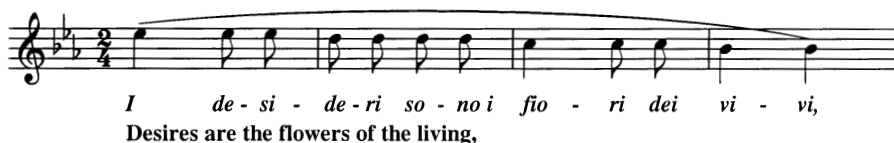
Sister Genevieve:

Sisters, when the fountain begins to glow and
turn golden, shall we take a pail of golden water
to the grave of Sister Bianca Rosa?

The Sisters:

Yes, our sister resting there would like that.

Moderato e sostenuto
SUOR ANGELICA

**Suor Angelica:**

I desideri sono i fiori dei vivi, non fioriscon nel regno delle morte, perché la madre Vergine soccorre, e in Sua benignità liberamente al desiar precorre. Prima che un desiderio sia fiorito la Madre delle Madri l'ha esaudito. O sorella, la morte è vita bella!

La Suora Zelatrice:

Noi non possiamo nemmen da vive avere desiderî.

Suor Genovieffa:

Se son leggeri e candidi, perché? Voi non avete un desiderio?

La Sorella Zelatrice:

Io no!

Un'altra:

Ed io nemmeno!

Un'altra:

Io no!

Una novizia:

Io no!

Suor Genovieffa:

Io sì, lo confesso.
 Soave signor mio, tu sai che prima d'ora nel mondo ero pastora.
 Da cinqu'anno non vedo un agnellino.
 Signore, ti rincresco se dico che desidero vederne uno piccino, poterlo carezzare, toccargli il muso fresco e sentirlo belare?
 Se è colpa, t'offerisco il Miserere mei.
 Perdonami, Signore, Tu che sei l'Agnus Dei.

Suor Dolcina:

Ho un desiderio anch'io!

Le suore:

Sorella, li sappiamo i vostri desiderî. Qualche boccone buono! Della frutta gustosa!
 La gola è colpa grave!
 È golosa!

Sister Angelica:

Desires are the flowers of the living that do not flower in the land of the dead, because the Blessed Virgin helps us, and controls our desire.
 Before a desire can flower the Mother of mothers has granted it.
 Sisters, death is a beautiful life!

The Monitor:

We must never have desires that are vain and worldly.

Sister Genevieve:

But if they are pure, why not?
 Have you ever had a desire?

The Monitor:

I have not!

An other:

And not even I!

An other:

Not I!

A Novice:

Not I!

Sister Genevieve:

I have, and I confess it.
 My gentle Lord, You know that I was a shepherdess.
 I have not seen a lamb in five years.
 Lord, does it anger You if I say that I desire to see a little one, and nurse it, touch its cold nose, and hear it bleat?
 If it is a sin I shall offer the Miserere.
 Forgive me, Lord, Thou art the Lamb of God.

Sister Dolcina:

I have a desire also!

The Sisters:

Sister, we already know your desires. A tasty mouthful of juicy fruit!
 Gluttony is a deadly sin.
 She's so jealous!

Sister Genevieve and other sisters approach Sister Angelica.

Suor Geneveva:

Suor Angelica, e voi avete desideri?

Sister Genevieve:

Sister Angelica, do you have any desires?

Suor Angelica:

Io? No, sorella mia.

Sister Angelica:

I? No, my sister.

Sister Angelica turns toward the flowers. The sisters whisper about her.

Le suore:

Che Gesù la perdoni, ha detto una bugia!

The Sisters:

May Jesus forgive her, she's told a lie!

Una novizia:

Perché?

One Novice:

But why?

Alcune suore:

Noi lo sappiamo, ha un grande desiderio!
Vorrebbe aver notizie della famiglia sua!
Sono più di sett'anni, da quando è in monasterio,
non ha avuto più nuove.
E sembra rassegnata, ma è tanto tormentata!
Nel mondo era ricchissima, lo disse la Badessa.
Era nobile! Nobile? Principessa! La vollero far
monaca, sembra per punizione! Perché? Chi sa!
Mah!?

Some Sisters:

We know she has a great desire!
She wants to hear news of her family!
She's been in the convent for at least seven years
but has heard nothing.
She seems resigned, but she's tormented!
Our Mother Abbess said she comes from a
wealthy family! She was a noble! Noble? Yes, a
Princess who was made to take the veil as
punishment! But why? Who knows!

La sorella infermiera:

Suor Angelica, sentite!

Nursing Sister: *(arriving anxiously)*

Sister Angelica, help me!

Suor Angelica:

O sorella infermiera, che cosa accadde, dite!

Sister Angelica:

Sister nurse, tell me, what is the matter?

La sorella infermiera:

Suora Chiara, là nell'orto, assettava la spalliera
delle rose.
All'improvviso tante vespe sono uscite, l'han
pinzata qui nel viso.
Ora è in cella e si lamenta. Ah, calmatele,
sorella, il dolor che la tormenta.

The Sister Nurse:

Sister Clara was out there in the garden trimming
the rose tree,
and she happened on a wasp's nest and they've
stung her in the face.
Now she's lying in her cell in pain and anguish.
What pain she is having.

Alcune suore:

Poveretta!

Some Sisters:

Poor girl!

Suor Angelica:

Aspettate, ho un'erba e un fiore.

Sister Angelica:

Wait, I have herbs and flowers.

La sorella infermiera:

Suor Angelica ha sempre una ricetta buona, fatta
col fiori, sa trovar sempre un'erba benedetta per
calmare i dolori.

The Sister Nurse:

Sister Angelica has a wondrous potion made
from herbs and flowers. She knows how to mix
them and they seem to cure every ailment.

Suor Angelica:

Ecco, questa è calenzola: col latticcio che ne cola
le bagnate l'enfiagione.

Sister Angelica: *(handing her herbs and flowers)*

Here, this will surely help her. You must dip the
herbs in milk and it will reduce the inflammation.

E con questa una pozione. Dite a sorella Chiara che sarà molto amara ma che la farà bene. E le direte ancora che punture di vespe sono piccole pene, e che non si lamenti, ch  a lamentarsi crescono i tormenti.

La sorella infermiera:

Le sapr  riferire. Grazie, sorella, grazie.

Suor Angelica:

Sono qui per servire.

And with these you make a potion. Better tell Sister Clara that it's nasty and bitter, but it will ease the pain. And you must tell your patient that a wasp's sting is not very serious. She really must remember that fretting and crying only makes things more difficult.

The Sister Nurse:

I will do as you tell me! Thank you sister.

Sister Angelica:

I am here to help you.

Two Mendicants arrive, leading a well-loaded donkey.

Le cercatrici:

Laudata Maria!

The Mendicants:

Praise Mary!

Tutte:

E sempre sia!

All:

For evermore!

The sisters crowd around the donkey.

They unload their gifts and hand them to the housekeeper, Sister Procurator, and the sisters.

Le cercatrici:

Buona cerca stasera, sorella dispensiera!

The Mendicants:

A good collection this evening, sister housekeeper!

Una cercatrice:

Un otre d'olio.

One Mendicant:

A skin of oil.

Suor Dolcina:

Uh, buono!

Sister Dolcina:

Oh, splendid!

L'altra cercatrice:

Nocci le, sei collane.

The other Mendicant:

Some hazelnuts.

Una cercatrice:

Un panierin di noci.

One Mendicant:

A basket of walnuts.

Suor Dolcina:

Buone con sale e pane!

Sister Dolcina:

So good with salt and bread!

La Suora Zelatrice:

Sorella!

The Monitor:

Sister!

Una Cercatrice:

Qui farina, e qui una caciottella che suda ancora latte, buona come una pasta, e un sacchetto di lenti, dell'uova, burro e basta.

One Mendicant:

Flour, and a cheese that still drips milk — as delicious as a pasta, a bag of lentils, some eggs, butter, and that's all.

Alcune suore:

Buona cerca stasera, sorella dispensiera!

Some Sisters:

A good collection this evening, sister housekeeper!

L'altra cercatrice:

Per voi, sorella ghiotta.

The other Mendicant:

For you, greedy sister.

Suor Dolcina:

Un tralcetto di ribes! Degnatene, sorelle!

Alcune suore:

Grazie! Grazie!

Una suora:

Uh, se ne prendo un chicco la martorio!

Suor Dolcina:

No, prendete!

Alcune suore:

Grazie!

La cercatrice:

Chi è venuto stasera in parlatorio?

Alcune suore:

Nessuno. Perché?

La cercatrice:

Fuor del portone c'è fermata una ricca berlina.

Suor Angelica:

Come, sorella? Come avete detto? Una berlina è fuori? Ricca?

La cercatrice:

Da gran signori. Certo aspetta qualcuno che è entrato nel convento e forse fra un momento suonerà la campana a parlatorio.

Suor Angelica:

Ah, ditemi, sorella, com'era la berlina?
Non aveva uno stemma? Uno stemma d'avorio?
E dentro tappezzata d'una seta turchina ricamata in argento?

La cercatrice:

Io non lo so, sorella. Ho veduto soltanto una berlina bella.

Le suore:

È diventata bianca. Ora è tutta vermiglia!
Poverina! È commossa!
Spera che sien persone di famiglia!
Vien gente in parlatorio! Una visita viene!
Per chi? Per chi sarà? Fosse per me! Per me!
Fosse mia madre che ci porta le tortorine bianche!
Fosse la mia cugina di campagna che porta il seme di lavanda buono!

Sister Dolcina:

A stem of raspberries. Help yourselves, sisters!

Some Sisters:

Thank you! Thank you!

One Sister:

Oh, I'm afraid to take one.

Sister Dolcina:

No, do take one!

Some Sisters:

Thank you!

The Mendicant:

Who has come to visit us this evening?

Some Sisters:

No one. Why?

The Mendicant:

A splendid carriage has stopped outside.

Sister Angelica: (turning to sudden fear)

What, sister? What did you say? Is there really a luxurious carriage outside?

The Mendicant:

It belongs to the nobility and must be waiting for someone who is visiting the convent.
Perhaps the parlor bell will ring soon.

Sister Angelica: (with growing anxiety)

Tell me about the carriage. Did it have a coat-of-arms in ivory?
Was it upholstered inside, with blue silk and silver embroidery?

The Mendicant:

I don't know. All I saw was a splendid coach.

The Sisters: (watching Angelica curiously)

How pale she's become.
She's upset.
She hopes it's someone from her family!
There's a visitor in the parlor!
Who is it for? If only it was for me!
Perhaps my mother is bringing white doves!
Perhaps my cousin from the country brings me some lavender seeds!

A bell sounds. Some of the sisters rush away.

Suor Angelica:

(O Madre eletta, leggi mi nel cuore, volgi per me un sorriso al Salvatore.)

Suor Genovieffa:

O sorella in amore, noi preghiam la Stella delle Stelle, che la visita, adesso, sia per voi.

Suor Angelica:

Buona sorella, grazie!

Sister Angelica:

(Blessed Mother, read my heart and smile at the Savior for me.)

Sister Genevieve:

Beloved sister, we pray to the Star in Heaven that the visitor is for you.

Sister Angelica:

Good sister, thank you!

The Abbess enters to make an announcement. Everyone is expectant. But their attitudes give the impression that they would like to sacrifice themselves for their afflicted sister. Sister Angelica, with eyes uplifted, remains motionless and in suspense.

La Badessa:

Suor Angelica!

The Abbess:

Sister Angelica!

Le Suore:

Ah!

The Sisters:

Ah!

The Abbess makes a gesture, ordering the other sisters to withdraw. The spout of the fountain is now the color of the purest gold. The sisters fill their watering cans with the golden water and disappear in the direction of the cemetery.

Suor Angelica:

Madre, Madre, parlate! Chi è?
Son sett'anni che aspetto una parola, una nuova, uno scritto.
Tutto ho offerto alla Vergine in piena espiazione.

Sister Angelica:

Mother, Mother, tell me! Who is it?
I've waited seven years for a word, for news, for a letter.
I've offered all in atonement to our Lady.

La badessa:

Offrittele anche l'ansia che adesso vi scompone!

The Abbess:

Then also offer Her the anxiety that now disturbs you!

Voci delle suore:

Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat ei Requiescat in pace. Amen!

Voices of the Sisters:

Lord, give her eternal rest, may eternal light shine upon Her and may She rest in peace. Amen!

Suor Angelica:

Madre, sono serena e sottomessa.

Sister Angelica:

Mother, I am calm and obedient.

La Badessa:

È venuta a trovarvi vostra zia Principessa.

The Abbess:

Your Aunt, the Princess, has come to see you.

Suor Angelica:

Ah!

Sister Angelica: (sighing)

Ah!

La Badessa:

In parlatorio si dica quanto vuole ubbidienza, necessità.
Ogni parola è udita dalla Vergine Pia.

The Abbess:

In the parlor. Say what obedience and necessity require.
Every word is heard by the Virgin.

Suor Angelica:

La Vergine m'ascolti e così sia.

Sister Angelica:

The Virgin shall hear me.

*The Abbess leaves. Sister Angelica looks anxiously toward the door.
 There is the noise of keys in the lock. The door is opened by Sister Portress.
 The Abbess appears, the sisters standing on each side of the door, bending deferentially.
 A dark figure appears, with a deportment of aristocratic dignity.
 She walks slowly with the aid of an ebony cane.
 It is the Princess, Sister Angelica's Aunt. She stops and throws a glance at her niece, coldly, and
 without a trace of emotion. At the sight of her Aunt, Sister Angelica is moved,
 but controls herself because of the presence of the Abbess and Sister Portress.
 The door is closed. Sister Angelica, full of emotion, moves toward her Aunt, but the old lady merely
 stretches out her left hand as if to indicate that she will only consent to Sister Angelica kissing it.
 Sister Angelica seizes the Aunt's outstretched hand, raising it to her lips.
 While the Aunt sits down, Sister Angelica falls to her knees, unable to utter a word. Tears stream
 down Angelica's cheeks. Imploringly, she stares at her Aunt's face,
 but the old lady remains, staring fixedly straight ahead.*

La zia Principessa:

Il Principe Gualtiero vostro padre, la Principessa Clara vostra madre, quando venti anni or sono vennero a morte mi affidarono i figli e tutto il patrimonio di famiglia.

Io dovevo dividerlo quando ciò ritenessi conveniente, e con giustizia piena.
 È quanto ho fatto. Ecco la pergamena. Voi potete osservarla, discuterla, firmarla.

Suor Angelica:

Dopo sett'anni son davanti a voi.
 Ispiratevi a questo luogo santo.
 È luogo di clemenza. È luogo di pietà!

La zia Principessa:

Di penitenza. Io debbo rivelarvi la ragione perché addivenni a questa divisione:
 Vostra sorella Anna Viola andrà sposa.

Suor Angelica:

Sposa?! Sposa la piccola Anna Viola, la sorellina, la piccina?
 Ah! Son sett'anni! Son passati sett'anni!
 O sorellina bionda che vai sposa, o sorellina mia, tu sia felice!
 E chi la ingemma?

La zia Principessa:

Chi per amore condonò la colpa di cui macchiaste il nostro bianca stemma.

Suor Angelica:

Sorella di mia madre, voi siete inesorabile!

La zia Principessa:

Che dite? E che pensate? Inesorabile?
 Vostra madre invocate quasi contro di me?
 Di frequente, la sera, là, nel nostro oratorio, io mi raccolgo.

The Aunt Princess:

Prince Gualtiero, your father, and Princess Clara, your mother, when they died twenty years ago, God rest their souls, made me the guardian of their children and the entire family estate.

I had to divide it as I thought fit, and with full justice.

I have done this. Here is the document. Read it, examine it, and sign it.

Sister Angelica:

I stand before you after seven years.
 Let this holy place inspire you.
 It is a place of forgiveness, of compassion!

The Aunt Princess:

And repentance. I must tell you the reason why I arrived at this division.
 Your sister, Anna Viola, is to be married.

Sister Angelica: (painfully)

Married?! My little Anna Viola, my little sister, the dear little one?
 Seven years have passed.
 My little blond sister is to be married. Little sister may you be happy!
 Who is she marrying?

The Aunt Princess:

One whose love overcame the disgrace that you brought to our good name.

Sister Angelica:

Sister of my mother, you are inexorable!

The Aunt Princess:

How dare you? What do you mean inexorable?
 Dare you invoke your mother's name against me?
 Often, in the evening, I go to our chapel, kneeling in prayer.

Andante molto sostenuto
THE PRINCESS (Aunt)



Nell si - lenzio di quei raccogli-men - ti, il mio spirito par che s'allon - ta-ni.
In the silence of my prayers, my spirit seems to leave me.

Nel silenzio di quei raccoglimenti, il mio spirito
 par che s'allontani
 e s'incontri con quel di vostra madre in colloqui
 eterei, arcani!
 Come è penoso udire i morti dolorare e
 piangere!
 Quando l'estasi mistica scompare per voi serbata
 ho una parola sola:
 Espiare! Offritela alla Vergine la mia giustizia!

Suor Angelica:

Tutto ho offerto alla Vergine, sì, tutto!
 Ma v'è un'offerta che non posso fare!
 Alla Madre soave delle Madri non posso offrire
 di scordar mio figlio!
 Il mio figlio!
 La creatura che mi fu strappata! Figlio mio che
 ho veduto e baciato una sol volta!
 Creatura mia! Creatura mia lontana!
 È questa la parola che imploro da sett'anni!
 Parlatemi di lui!
 Com'è, com'è mio figlio?
 Com'è dolce il suo volto?
 Come sono i suoi occhi?
 Parlatemi di lui, di mio figlio!

Perché pacete?
 Un altro istante di questo silenzio e vi dannate
 per l'eternità!
 La Vergine vi ascolta e Lei vi giudica.

La zia Principessa:

Or son due anni venne colpito da fiero morbo.
 Tutto fu fatto per salvarlo.

Suor Angelica:

È morto?
 Ah!

In the silence of my prayers, my spirit seems to
 leave me.
 and join your mother's spirit, in mysterious
 communication!
 How painful it is to hear the dead mourn and
 weep!
 When the mystical ecstasy passes I have but only
 one word for you:
 Atone! Offer my justice to the Virgin!

Sister Angelica:

I have offered everything to the Virgin!
 But there is something I cannot offer to the gentle
 Mother of all mothers; I cannot promise to
 forget my son!
 My beloved son!
 The baby was torn away from me! My son who I
 saw and kissed only once!
 My darling baby! My baby so far away!
 This is the word for which I prayed for seven years!
 Tell me about him!
 How is my son?
 What does he look like?
 What color are his eyes?
 Tell me about him, about my son!

Why are you silent?
 Another moment of this silence and you'll be
 damned for eternity!
 The Virgin hears us and will judge you.

The Aunt Princess:

Two years ago he became fatally ill.
 Everything was done to save him.

Sister Angelica:

He's dead?
 Ah!

The Aunt silently bends her head. Sister Angelica, with a heartbreaking cry, falls to the ground. Her Aunt rises to aid her, thinking she has fainted. But she hears Angelica's sobs and controls her movement of pity. The Princess rises and turns toward a sacred image on the wall. She leans with both hands on her ebony cane, and with bent head, prays in silence.
Angelica's sobs continue, stifled and heartrending.

Darkness begins to fall. Sister Angelica remains kneeling, both hands covering her face. The Portress enters. The Princess whispers something to her. The Portress leaves, but immediately returns with the Abbess, who carries a tablet, inkwell and a quill. Sister Angelica hears the sisters approaching and intuitively understands. Silently, she moves to the table, and with trembling hand affixes her signature to the parchment. Then she moves away and covers her face with both hands.

After the two sisters leave, the Princess takes the parchment, and then moves toward her niece. But as she draws nearer to her, Sister Angelica shrinks away. The Princess proceeds toward the door, striking it with her cane. The Portress opens the door and shows the Princess the way out. But she hesitates a moment at the threshold, glances back at her niece, and then departs.

Night has fallen. In the cemetery, the sisters are lighting lanterns on the tombstones. Sister Angelica remains sobbing in deperation.

Andante desolato molto sostenuto
SUOR ANGELICA



Senza mamma, o bimbo, tu sei mor - to! Le tue labbra, senza i baci miei,
Without your mother, my child you died! Without my kisses, your lips grew pale and cold!

Suor Angelica:

Senza mamma, o bimbo, tu sei morto!
Le tue labbra, senza i baci miei, scoloriron
fredde, fredde!
E chiudesti, o bimbo, gli occhi belli!

Non potendo carezzarmi, le manine componesti
in croce!
E tu sei morto senza sapere quanto t'amava
questa tua mamma!
Ora che sei un angelo del cielo, ora tu puoi
vederla la tua mamma.
Tu puoi scendere giù pel firmamento
ed aleggiare intorno a me,
ti sento, sei qui, mi baci, m'accarezzi.

Ah, dimmi quando in cielo potrò vederti?
Quando potrò baciarti!
Oh, dolce fine di ogni mio dolore.
Quando in cielo con te potrò salire?
Quando potrò morire?
Dillo alla mamma, creatura bella, con un leggero
scintillar di stella.
Parlami, amore!

Sister Angelica:

Without your mother, my child, you died!
Without my kisses, your lips grew pale and cold!
And you closed your beautiful eyes, unable to
touch me!

You could not caress me, your hands folded in a
cross!
And you died without knowing how much your
mother loved you!
Now that you are an angel in Heaven, you can
save your mother.
You can come down from the sky and flutter
around me,
I feel you here, kissing me, caressing me.

Tell me when I shall be able to see you?
When I shall be able to kiss you!
Sweet end to all my sorrows,
when shall I meet you in Heaven?
When can I die?
Pretty child, speak to your mother like a
twinkling star.
Speak to me, my loved one!

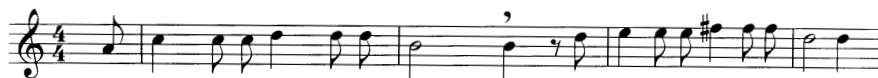
The lanterns are now lit in the cemetery.; the cloister is almost in complete darkness. The sisters emerge from the cemetery in pairs, nearing Sister Angelica, who is absorbed in ecstasy. In the semi-darkness, it seems as if the white-clad figures of the sisters barely touch the ground as they walk along.

Le suore:

Sorella, o buona sorella, la Vergine ha accolto la prece.
Sarete contenta, sorella, la Vergine ha fatto la grazia.

The Sisters:

Sister, good sister, the Virgin has heard your prayer.,
You will be content, sister, for the Virgin has given you Her grace.

SUOR ANGELICA

La gra - zia è disce - sa dal cie - lo, già tutta, già tutta m'accende!

Her grace has descended from Heaven and shines all around me!

Suor Angelica:

La grazia è discesa dal cielo, già tutta m'accende, risplende!
Già vedo, sorella, la meta!
Sorelle, son lieta!
Cantiamo! Già in cielo si canta!
Lodiamo la Vergine Santa!

Sister Angelica: (with mystical exaltation)

Her grace has descended from Heaven and shines all around me!
I see my course clearly before me!
Sisters, I am happy!
They are singing in Heaven already!
Let us praise the Holy Virgin!

Bells are heard. The other sisters disappear.

Tutte:

Lodiamo la Vergine santa!

All:

Let us praise the Holy Virgin!

Suor Angelica:

La grazia è discesa dal cielo!

Sister Angelica:

Her grace descends from Heaven!

*It is now quite dark. Upon the chapel, the cupola is illuminated by shining stars;
the moon rises above the cypress trees.*

Sister Angelica appears, carrying an earthenware jar, which she puts down at the foot of the cypress tree; she takes a bundle of twigs and branches, heaps up a few stones and places the twigs and branches upon them. She goes to the fountain and fills the jar with water.

Then she lights the fire with a piece of flint and puts the jar on the fire.

Suor Angelica ha sempre una ricetta buona fatta coi fiori.
Amici fiori che nel piccol seno racchiudete le stille del veleno.
Ah, quanto cure v'ho prodigate.
Ora mi compensate.
Per voi, miei fior, io morirò!

Sister Angelica was always good at making things from flowers.
These friendly flowers hide drops of poison in their hearts.
I took so much care with them, and now they will repay me.
Through you, flowers, I shall die!

Addio, buone sorelle, addio!
Io vi lascio per sempre.
M'ha chiamata mio figlio!
Dentro un raggio di stelle m'è apparso il suo sorriso, m'ha detto:
"Mamma, vieni in paradiso!"
Addio! Addio! Addio, chiesetta!
In te quanto ho pregato!
Buona accogliervi preghieri e pianti.
È discesa la grazia benedetta!
Muio per lui e in ciel lo rivedrò!

Farewell, dear sisters, farewell!
I leave you for ever.
My son has called me!
In a ray of starlight, I saw his smile, and he said to me:
"Mother, come to Paradise!"
Farewell, little chapel, where I have prayed so often!
You received kindly my prayers and my tears.
The grace of our Blessed Lady has descended!
I die for him and I'll see him again in Heaven!

In an impulse of exaltation, Sister Angelica kisses the cross at the shrine. Quickly, she picks up the jar, turns towards the chapel with her eyes fixed on the heavens, and drinks the poison.

She leans against the cypress tree, pressing her chest with her left hand, and slowly drops her right arm, letting the jar fall to the ground.

Her act of suicide seems to free her from her exaltation, bringing her back to reality. Her face, so serene and smiling before, transforms into intense anguish, as if a terrible revelation has overcome her.

Ah! Son dannata!

Mi son data la morte!

Io muoio in peccato mortale!

Madonna, salvami! Per amor di mio figlio ho smarrita la ragione!

Non mi fare morire in dannazione!

Dammi un segno di grazia, Madonna!

Madonna! Salvami! Salvami!

Ah! I am damned!

I have taken my own life!

I die in mortal sin!

Madonna, save my soul! It was for the love of my son that I lost my reason!

Don't let me die in damnation!

Give me a sign of Your grace, Madonna!

Madonna! Save me! Save me!

O Madonna, salvami! Una madre ti prega, una madre t'implora! O Madonna, salvami!

Oh Madonna, save me! A mother implores you, Madonna! Madonna, save me!

Sister Angelica seems to hear the voices of angels interceding for her to the Blessed Virgin.

Gli angeli:

O gloriosa virginum, sublimis inter sidera, qui te creavit, parvulum lactente nutris ubere.

Quod Heva tristis abstulit tu reddis almo

germine:

Intrent ut astra flebiles, coeli recludis cardines.

Angels:

O gloriosa virginum, sublimis inter sidera, qui te creavit, parvulum lactente nutris ubere.

Quod Heva tristis abstulit tu reddis almo

germine:

Intrent ut astra flebiles, coeli recludis cardines.

Suor Angelica:

Ah!

Sister Angelica:

Ah!

The chapel becomes resplendent with mystic light. The gates of the church open. At the door, the Blessed Virgin appears, and in front of her, a fair child, all in white.

The Virgin makes a gesture and pushes the child towards the dying mother.

Engrossed in the magnetic spell of the vision, Sister Angelica raises her arms towards the child.

As the child makes steps towards her, Angelica falls to the ground and dies.

End of Suor Angelica

Gianni Schicchi

Opera in Italian in one act

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Premiere:

Metropolitan Opera, New York

December 1918

Principal Characters in Gianni Schicchi

Gianni Schicchi	Baritone
Lauretta, his daughter	Soprano
The relatives of Buoso Donati:	
Zita, the “Old Woman,” a cousin	Mezzo-soprano
Rinuccio, Zita’s nephew, in love with Lauretta	Tenor
Gherardo, a nephew	Tenor
Nella, Gherardo’s wife	Soprano
Gherardino, their son	Mezzo-soprano
Betto (of Signa), an impoverished brother-in-law	Baritone
Simone, a cousin	Bass
Marco, his son	Baritone
La Ciesca, Marco’s wife	Soprano
Master Spinellocchio, a physician	Bass
Amantio di Nicolao, a notary	Bass
Pinellino, a shoemaker	Bass
Guccio, a dyer	Bass

TIME: the year 1299

PLACE: Florence, Italy

Brief Story Synopsis

The wealthy Buoso Donati has just died; his body lies in bed, covered with drapery. His relations have gathered to mourn his demise, but their greedy minds are troubled by the rumor that Buoso has left his entire fortune to the monks of Signa, in expiation for the malpractices by which he acquired his wealth.

The relatives ransack every nook and cranny in the house in search of the will, which is finally found by Rinuccio, who, before handing it to his aunt Zita, makes her promise that she will consent to his marrying Lauretta, the daughter of the upstart Gianni Schicchi; she tells him that if all receive their inheritance, he can marry whomever he wants.

They read the will and become mortified when they discover that Buoso has left everything to a monastery. Rinuccio suggest that they seek the help of the shrewd Gianni Schicchi to resolve their predicament, but the relatives refuse to have anything to do with that upstart and rogue. Nevertheless, Rinuccio convinces them that they are unreasonable and prejudiced; secretly, he sends Gherardino off to bring Gianni Schicchi.

Schicchi arrives with his daughter, Lauretta. Zita and Schicchi quarrel, the aunt vowing that she will not let her nephew marry a girl who does not have a dowry. Schicchi becomes enraged, but he is prevented from departing by Lauretta, who threatens to throw herself in the River Arno unless she is allowed to marry Rinuccio. Her pleading sways Schicchi and he relents.

After the relatives inform him that the will has not yet been made public, Schicchi invents a ruse; he will impersonate Buoso in his deathbed and dictate a new will to the Notary that bequeaths the entire estate to the relatives. The relatives become overjoyed at Schicchi's cleverness, and each surreptitiously approaches Schicchi with offers to bribe him to bequeath the most valuable properties to them. Blandly, Schicchi consents to each of them.

Buoso's body is removed, and Schicchi dons the dead man's clothes and climbs into the bed. After the Notary arrives, Buoso/Schicchi dictates his will, bequeathing some of the properties to the individual relatives, but the most valuable — the house in Florence and the properties at Signa — to his dear friend, Gianni Schicchi. The mortified relatives must remain silent, fearing that they are implicated in a fraud for which the punishment, according to ancient Florentine law, is severance of a hand and exile from Florence. After the Notary leaves, the relatives attack Schicchi with curses and abuse. As the new owner of the house, he chases them out.

After Schicchi looks admiringly at Lauretta and Rinuccio, who stand on the terrace in a rapturous embrace, he inquires what better use could have been made of Buoso's fortune than helping the young lovers. But for this little trick of his, the great Dante condemned him to the Inferno. Nevertheless, he invites the public to forgive him, because after all, it was done to secure a dowry for his daughter, the result of "extenuating circumstances."

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

The bedroom of Buoso Donati's house in Florence. It is nine o'clock in the morning, the light in the room divided between sunlight and candlelight. A large window provides a view of the tower of Arnolfo, another leads to a terrace. There are staircases right and left. A table contains various silver objects.

Half-curtains hide a bed on which the recently deceased body of Buoso Donati lies. Beside the bed are four candelabras, its candles lighted; in front of the bed there is a three-branched candelabra, its candles extinguished.

At first there is a phrase marked "tumultuoso," suggesting the frantic haste with which the expectant relatives rushed to old Buoso's house when they heard that Buoso had died: it is followed by the whining "Mourning" or "Death" motive.

"Mourning" or "Death" motive:

Largo



A collection of the dead Buoso's relatives kneel before Buoso's bed, hopeful, fearful and anxious. The relatives include: Gherardo, a nephew of Buoso, his wife Nella, and their little son Gherardino; old Simone, Buoso's nephew; Simone's son Marco and his wife La Ciesca; Buoso's old cousin Zita, who is accompanied by her young nephew, Rinuccio; and Betto di Signa, Buoso's impoverished brother-in-law.

All the relatives are mourning, moaning and mumbling, except little Gherardino, who is obviously bored, and amuses himself by playing with marbles. When he overturns a chair, the mourners interrupt their lamentations and rebuke him to be quiet. A while later, he tugs at his father's sleeve and whispers something to him, causing the exasperated Gherardo to remove his son from the room.

It is evident that the relatives' mind are not so much concerned about the loss of Buoso, but how he bequeathed his fortune. They stop wailing and whisper to each other, revealing the gossip is that Buoso willed his property in Signa to the monks in expiation for his unethical acquisition of the property. They express their exasperation at the possibility, underscored by a new musical theme that suggests Gianni Schicchi, a shadow already playing impishly with their hopes and fears.

Gianni Schicchi theme:



Worried and in panic, the mourners seek advice from Simone, the oldest and wisest among them, at one time the mayor of Fucecchio. Simone deliberates with an air of gravity and then delivers his verdict: if the Notary already has the will, it will be good for the monks but bad for them. But he suggests that if the will is still in the room, it may turn out bad for the monks but promising for them.

All express new hope, especially young Rinuccio, who prays that his uncle Buoso bequeathed him enough so that he can marry Lauretta, Gianni Schicchi's daughter. The relatives begin a frantic search for Buoso's will, overturning everything; they open drawers, lockers, look under the bed, and in the process, litter the room. All except Betto, who covertly approaches the table and tries to place some of the valuable silver articles under his coat.

One false alarm announcing success follows another. Finally, Rinuccio, who is mounted on a chest of drawers on top of a ladder, finds a parchment which he thinks may be Buoso's will. He holds it away from the zealous relatives, and asks his aunt Zita to promise that if Buoso left him any part of his money and he became immensely wealthy, she will consent that he can marry Lauretta, Gianni Schicchi's daughter. If Buoso has bequeathed his wealth to her, Zita announces that she does not care whom he marries.

Rinuccio and Lauretta's love:

Allegro, un poco sostenuto



Rinuccio gives the document to old Zita. Zita is about to cut the ribbon on the parchment. She looks for the scissors that just moments ago was on the table, but she cannot find them: they are in Betto's pocket. Instead of cutting the ribbon, she tears it off the document; at last, the relatives have found Buoso's will. All gather around her, attempting to read its contents. Meanwhile, Rinuccio takes Gherardino aside, gives him some coins, and tells him to rush to Gianni Schicchi and tell him and Lauretta to come at once.

Zita reads the inscription on the document: "To my dear cousins Zita and Simone." Hope rises in both of them; Simone, in gratitude and excited anticipation, lights the three candles that had extinguished. The others begin to speculate what Buoso may have left each of them: perhaps the house, the mills and the mule at Signa, or who knows?

Zita stands at the center of the excited group, all eyes centered eagerly on the fateful document.

"Will" motive:

Andante moderato



Their lips move as they are absorbed in reading the will. Suddenly their faces transform to a tragic look. They become incredulous, and then finally turn to rage. In despair, each falls into the nearest seat and remains like a graven image, their eyes wide open and staring straight ahead. All except Simone, who proceeds to extinguish the candles he lit just a few minutes ago.

The relatives have become petrified by the bequests in Buoso's will. With suppressed rage, Simone announces that the rumor was indeed true: the monks are going to get rich and fat at their expense, lavishing themselves and feasting on Buoso Donati's riches while the Donati relatives starve. Rinuccio laments that he must surrender his happiness to satisfy the greed of the friars. Little by little the relatives' frenzy increases; they each rise and frantically move about the room, hysterically cursing and swearing at the monks, and calling them every opprobrious name they can imagine, at the same time breaking into sardonic bursts of laughter, like the cries of the damned.

Their fury and outrage once more turns to despair. Some begin to shed tears in earnest, unable to believe that Buoso disinherited them. But even worse, Buoso's will is a fait accompli and nothing can be done now to change it. Once more, they appeal to the omniscient Simone, urging him to think of something to resolve their predicament, but the old man merely shakes his head sadly, his acknowledgment that their situation is hopeless.

Rinuccio comes forward with the proposal that only one man can help and advise them: Gianni Schicchi. The relatives become disappointed. Zita announces emphatically that their respectable Florentine family will have nothing to do with that rascal and upstart — or his daughter. Suddenly, Gherardino rushes in to announce, "Here he comes!" The relatives grumble, threatening to bar Schicchi from the house; Gherardino gets a spanking for taking orders from someone other than his father.

The relatives continue to cast abuses against Gianni Schicchi, particularly the idea that Rinuccio, a Donati, should even think of marrying the daughter of that scoundrel, a vulgar and revolting peasant. But Rinuccio admonishes them that they are mistaken, explaining that Gianni is cunning and clever, nobody's fool, sharp as a needle, and should anyone ever have a special problem, he will find the answer. He continues: that Schicchi is a first-class jester; that all they must do is look at his shrewd eyes, or his great nose that is like an old ruined tower, to be

convinced that he is capable of carrying any trick through to its end. And, Rinuccio admonishes them, only the cleverest trick will serve them now.

“Firenze è come un albero fiorito”

Andante mosso
RINUCCIO



Rinuccio praises Gianni Schicchi, a metaphor for Florence itself, the city of great arts, sciences, and great men. Rinuccio concludes by urging his relatives to forget their animosities and recriminations, and toast to the good health of the new breed of Florentines, the successor to Giotto and the Medici's: Gianni Schicchi.

There is a knock on the door; it is Gianni Schicchi. He enters, followed by his daughter Lauretta. The arch-rogue pauses at the threshold and looks around at the faces of the relatives, commenting on their apparent sorrow and desolation, which his intuitive insight tells him could only mean that Buoso had the bad taste to recover. Meanwhile Rinuccio and Lauretta greet each other affectionately, Rinuccio telling her about the unfortunate circumstances that have suddenly overcome them.

Gianni Schicchi observes the lighted candles around the bed and guesses that Buoso Donati died. To himself, he cynically wonders whether the relatives are truly grieving or acting. But aloud, he assures them that their grief must be unbearable, and that he is moved by their sorrow. Yet, he admonishes them, death is certainly an everyday matter. And then there is Buoso's estate; they may have lost Buoso, but they surely have gained money in the bank.

Zita impetuously advises Schicchi that Buoso bequeathed his money to the monks, leaving them penniless. However, she tells Schicchi that their predicament is not his concern and that he should leave immediately, further announcing that she will never consent to her nephew marrying Lauretta, a girl without a dowry. Rinuccio pleads with Zita, and likewise Lauretta pleads with her father; their love is more important than money. But the lovers become disappointed, their hopes shattered by their intransigence.

Gianni Schicchi and Zita argue viciously. Schicchi condemns Zita, calling her, among other things, a sordid, miserly old curmudgeon, Zita returning Gianni's insults in kind. The others try to interrupt their dispute, suggesting that their only concern should be to think about Buoso's will.

When Schicchi threatens to leave, Rinuccio holds him back, pleading with his relatives to show him Buoso's will. He tells Schicchi that no one else can help them; he is a genius at resolving any problem, finding a remedy, or an error or a loophole. But Schicchi has been insulted and becomes indignant, refusing to help the relatives. Lauretta appeals to her father to change his mind, threatening him that if she cannot marry Rinuccio she will throw herself in the Arno.

“Oh! mio babbino caro”

Andante ingenuo
LAURETTA



Lauretta's sentimental — and threatening — appeal forces Schicchi to concede; he angrily shouts to them, "Give me the will."

Gianni paces back and forth while he is absorbed in reading the will, the relatives following him with their eyes, and then following his footsteps. All except Simone, who remains seated, shaking his head doubtfully. The lovers, Rinuccio and Lauretta, indifferent to the rest, rue their shattered love and their hopes to be married.

Schicchi reads the will more closely, pacing and then stopping, and then pacing again. He looks anxiously at the relatives, signalling them to be quiet while he thinks. As he gazes straight ahead, he lights up as if struck by an idea, his face slowly becoming severe, as if overcome with a sense of triumph. Before he addresses the relatives, he commands Lauretta to leave the room, telling her to go out on the terrace and feed the little bird: alone, and without Rinuccio.

As soon as Lauretta has disappeared, he turns to the relatives, inquiring if anyone except themselves knows that Buoso is dead. They reply: "No." He advises them that no one must hear about it just yet. Then he becomes seized by doubt and asks about the servants, prompting Zita to advise him that no one except the relatives has entered the room since Buoso died. Schicchi orders Marco and Gherardo to remove the body and the candelabra to an adjacent room, and orders the women to remake Buoso's bed.

Suddenly there is a knock on the door, and everyone becomes startled. In a scared whisper, Zita announces that it is Maestro Spinelloccio, the doctor. Schicchi cautions them not to let him in; that they should tell him that Buoso is feeling better and is resting. But from outside, the doctor becomes insistent. Schicchi hides himself behind some curtains, and Betto draws the shutters to keep out the light. The other relatives crowd around the barely open door and engage the doctor in conversation, assuring him that his patient is doing well and feels much better.

Spinelloccio forces his way in. He addresses them in a nasal tone and with a Bolognese accent, priding himself on the wonders of science that he has just learned, has restored Buoso's health. When he tries to approach the bed to see his patient, the relatives block his way, claiming that Buoso is sleeping. But from behind the curtains, a thin, weak and tremulous voice begs the physician to call again in the evening, because he now feels drowsy and needs rest.

For a moment the sound of Buoso's voice is so convincing that it startles and frightens the relatives, but they soon realize that it was the voice of Gianni Schicchi impersonating Buoso. They manage to steady themselves, except old Betto, who, in his fright, lets fall a silver tray that he had been hiding in his sleeve; Zita retrieves it and replaces it on the table, saying nothing but reproaching Betto with a menacing look, and threatening him with her finger.

Spinelloccio agrees to return in the evening, but not before he congratulates his astute medical expertise; his patients show defiance and never die, demonstrating the miracles of science and particularly the well-known skill of the Bolognese school of medicine. (In the old *Commedia dell'arte* the Doctor was generally a Bolognese.) With the doctor gone, Betto reopens the shutters, letting in the full light of day.

Gianni Schicchi emerges from his hiding place and proudly asks the relatives: "Did I sound like Donati?" They assure him that he was perfect, causing Schicchi to respond with delight: "Victory! Victory!" But the relatives do not seem to grasp the full import of his plan, and he revels in calling them idiots. Almost breathless, Schicchi orders them to send for the Notary and have him come immediately and without delay; they must advise him that old Buoso has gotten much worse and wants to make his will.

Schicchi reveals the details of his plan to the relatives; when the Notary arrives, the room will be dimly lit, and Buoso Donati will be lying in his bed, his head covered by a nightcap, his face hidden by blankets, and a nose that appears exactly like Buoso's. But instead of old Buoso

in the bed, it will be Gianni Schicchi, imitating Buoso's voice, pretending to be Buoso, and dictating another testament that will suit the relatives. Schicchi prides himself on inventing the most ingenious, greatest trick in the world, causing the relatives to become choked with emotion; they celebrate their victory, and particularly their revenge against the monks. The relatives crowd around Schicchi and praise him, kissing his hands and garments. In their frenzied euphoria, they embrace each other and even sing praises of love among themselves.

Rinuccio quickly exits to collect the Notary.

Simone urges them to decide how they will divide Buoso's money: all reply in equal portions. Then they begin to argue, each staking a claim to specific properties: the house at Fucecchio (Simone), the house in Figline (Zita), the meadows in Prato (Betto), the land at Empoli (Gherardo), the house at Quintole (Marco), and of course the most valuable property which everyone wants, the mansion, mule and sawmills at Signa. Cynically, Schicchi comments to himself how enduring their family love has become.

All stop shouting when they are interrupted by the mournful sound of a funeral bell, all suddenly fearing that it signals that the town now knows of Buoso's death, and that their scheme is finished. Gherardo rushes out of the room to investigate. Lauretta peeps in from the terrace and advises her father that the little bird does not want to eat; Schicchi wants her preoccupied and out of the way while he perpetrates his fraud, so he tells her to offer the bird water.

Gherardo returns from scouting. Gasping for breath, he announces that the funeral bell was a false alarm for them, an announcement of the death of the moor, the captain's servant. The relatives are relieved and become cheerful, their thoughts immediately returning to the happy prospect of the disposition of Buoso's properties.

Simone, with an air of authority, decides that the decision for the disposition of Buoso's property should be left to the fair-minded Gianni Schicchi. Schicchi accepts their appointment and prepares for his scenario, calling for Buoso's nightcap, nightgown and lace handkerchief. Each relative in turn approaches Schicchi and addresses him in a whisper, each offering him a substantial bribe if he leaves them the mansion, mule and sawmills at Signa; Gianni assures each that they need not worry.

All seem satisfied after their secret conference with Schicchi, each rubbing his hands gleefully, and confident that he has succeeded in convincing Schicchi. Meanwhile, Gianni dresses in Buoso's nightcap and nightshirt, and receives compliments from the three women. Simone remains at the window watching for the Notary's arrival; Gherardo removes everything from the table where the Notary will sit; and Marco and Betto draw the curtains to darken the room. All are excited, assuring themselves that they shall prevail because Gianni Schicchi is their savior. Zita, Nedda and Ciesca coax Schicchi into Buoso's bed with a lullaby, which concludes: "O Gianni Schicchi, nostro salvatore!" (Oh, Gianni Schicchi, our savior!)

The relatives are all eager for the scenario to unfold. But as they push Schicchi toward Buoso's bed, he cautions them solemnly, reminding them not to forget the illegality of their actions: "Fraudulent substitution of names on formal papers is a forgery, the penalty for which is an amputation of a hand, and then exile forever from Florence." All mournfully repeat Schicchi's admonition, unable to bear the thought of leaving Florence, and certainly with a severed hand.

“Addio Firenze”

Andante giusto
GIANNI SCHICCHI



There is a knock on the door. Schicchi scurries into Buoso's bed while the relatives close the shutters to darken the room, carefully placing a candle on the table to provide sufficient light for the Notary to write the will.

Rinuccio arrives with the Notary, Amantio di Nicolao, who is accompanied by Pinellino, the shoemaker, and Guccio, the dyer. Schicchi lies in bed, concealed behind curtains, and greets them by thanking them for coming to witness the signing of his will.

Gianni/Buoso advises the Notary that he had hoped to write his will himself, but he is impeded by paralysis, so he must depend on the Notary; he raises a trembling arm to demonstrate his suffering, causing the relatives to feign compassion; "Poor Buoso!"

The Notary invokes a Latin preamble to the will: that he, Amantio di Nicolao, a Notary of Florence, on this first day of September 1299, inscribes at the request of Buoso Donati, his last will and testament, which revokes and annuls all preceding wills. The relatives respond with warm approval.

The Notary asks Buoso about his funeral. Gianni/Buoso replies that it is not to be luxurious or ostentatious, something costing no more than a couple of florins. The relatives thoroughly approve of Buoso's modesty.

Then Gianni/Buoso begins to dictate his will: "To the Friars and their fund for Santa Reparata, I bequeath" — the relatives exhibit terror, but sigh in relief when they hear him say five lire; they breathe freely and compliment his charity. Slyly, the Notary questions the small bequest, but Gianni/Buoso advises him that if it was more, the people would say it was because he had stolen that money. The relatives congratulate his wisdom and understanding.

Gianni/Buoso bequeaths any money to the relatives in equal shares. Then, he bequeaths his other possessions: the property at Fucecchio to Simone; the farms at Figline to Zita; the fields in Prato to Betto; the property at Empoli to Nella and Gherardo; and the property at Quintole to La Ciesca and Marco. Each beneficiary murmurs his grateful appreciation, but under their breath they reveal their real concern: the disposition of the most important property; the Signa house, mule and sawmills.

Gianni/Buoso continues. He bequeaths the mule — the finest in Tuscany — to his devoted friend Gianni Schicchi. As the notary records the bequest, the relatives jump in fright, believing that he is mad. Simone erupts, asking what on earth Gianni Schicchi would want with the mule, but Gianni/Buoso assures him that he knows well what Gianni Schicchi wants. Simone is stunned, but retracts his objection. Meanwhile the relatives begin to grumble, cursing Schicchi as a rascal, villain and scoundrel for bequeathing property to himself.

Gianni/Buoso next bequeaths his mansion in Florence to his devoted and affectionate friend, Gianni Schicchi. The relatives burst out in a fury, shouting that the bequest is an injustice that they will not permit; Gianni/Buoso, in a thin and squeaky voice, invokes his "Addio, Firenze" ("Farewell, Florence"), a reminder that they are abetting a fraud and can be exiled from Florence with one hand. The relatives quickly become silent, fully understanding the dark significance of Schicchi's "farewell" reminder.

Nevertheless, all is not lost: What about the properties at Signa? The relatives wait in great anticipation, but turn to shock when the roguish Gianni/Buoso likewise bequeaths all the Signa properties to his affectionate friend, Gianni Schicchi, each phrase of his dictation injected with the “farewell,” a subtle reminder to the relatives of the penalties attached to their complicity in abetting a fraudulent testament. The relatives have been caught in their own net; all they can do is groan. But Rinuccio, realizing the significance of Gianni/Buoso’s bequests, excitedly slips out to the terrace to join Laretta.

Gianni/Buoso adds insult to injury and directs Zita to give twenty florins from her own purse to the two witnesses, and a hundred to the Notary. The three depart, expressing their gratitude to Buoso, and their sadness because they will see this humane man no more; they exit weeping.

After they have left, the relatives assault Gianni Schicchi in a vigorous fury, cursing and condemning him as a rascal, thief and traitor. Schicchi leaps up from Buoso’s bed, brandishing Buoso’s staff, dealing blows at the relatives. Then he orders them from his house. In revenge, they begin to pillage the house, each trying to leave with as much as he can carry. Their arms full, they rush out, pursued vigorously by Schicchi. In the distance, the relatives are heard cursing Schicchi: that robber and traitor.

After they have gone, the large window opens, revealing Florence, bathed in glorious sunshine, and Rinuccio and Laretta on the terrace, embracing each other and blissfully celebrating their love.

Gianni Schicchi returns from his pursuit, loaded with bundles he has retrieved from the marauding relatives. When he catches sight of Rinuccio and Laretta embraced on the terrace, his heart melts and he smiles understandingly. He turns to the audience and in a spoken epilogue inquires if Buoso’s money could have come to a better use than for his daughter’s dowry. For this little trick he has played, he has been consigned to Dante’s Inferno. But, he reasons, with all due respect to the great master, securing a dowry for his daughter was an “extenuating circumstances.” If the audience agrees, he hopes they will return a verdict of “Not guilty.”

Schicchi motions applause from the audience, bows gracefully, and the curtain descends.

Irrespective of the great Dante, Gianni Schicchi’s actions were indeed immoral. Nevertheless, the world finds its rogues more companionable than its saints.



Commentary and Analysis

With *Gianni Schicchi*, Puccini combined his signature style of touching sentiment with the broad farce of opera buffa. The opera is populated by bizarre characterizations, archetypal figures whose interrelationships are richly textured; these characters are prisoners of their primal lust for money, and it is their absurdity — yet the truth of their yearnings — that generates the story's humor.

The story is driven by the hopes and fears of expectant relatives of the rich, or supposedly rich. Nevertheless, the relatives become dupes of their own clever stratagems and schemes, generating a malicious enjoyment and vengeful delight in the troubles, disappointments and failures of others: a Schadenfreude.

The underlying plot of *Gianni Schicchi* was a favorite of the Renaissance commedia dell'arte theatrical tradition, or Comedy of Masks. For the most part, *Gianni Schicchi*'s parade of characters are disguised versions of those same stock figures of the commedia dell'arte: Gianni Schicchi himself recalls Harlequin, the astute and roguish servant; and the vexatious Lauretta clearly recalls Columbine when her marriage to Rinuccio is opposed by elderly relatives.

All the Donati relatives are plucked right out of the commedia dell'arte tradition, particularly Simone, who is reminiscent of Pantaloon, usually a crusty old bachelor; the impoverished Betto di Signa recalls a Zany, a clumsy and buffoonish valet; and the pompous Notary, Amantio di Nicolao, and the equally arrogant Doctor Spinelloccio, who praises his scientific genius in his native Bolognese dialect.

Ben Jonson's play *Volpone* (1605) bears many striking parallels to Puccini's opera, another brilliant illustration of the same comic theme that has its provenance in the commedia dell'arte tradition. Jonson's plot and characters similarly exude greed as they offer bribes to Volpone's servant Mosca to achieve their ends; but just like the Donati relatives in *Gianni Schicchi*, they are eventually duped. It is the sly Volpone, who pretends to be at death's door, and his roguish servant Mosca, who mirror Gianni Schicchi's actions: both enjoy a sadistic delight in exploiting the avarice of their victims. And at the close of the play, Volpone addresses the audience, inviting them to censure or praise the spectacle they have witnessed, quite similar to Gianni Schicchi's final apostrophe, the old theatrical device of an epilogue that was later used in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and Verdi's *Falstaff*.

Underlying these stories is a contempt of humanity; therefore, the scenarios are caustic satires on human weaknesses. But Puccini's hero, Gianni Schicchi, is involved primarily in pure comedy and even practical joking situations; in that sense, his opera is far from a satire from which a moral lesson could be drawn, but rather, a farcical portrayal of the stupid things people are capable of doing to fulfill their inherent greed.

Puccini's librettist, Giovacchino Forzano, selected the subject dealing with the notorious Gianni Schicchi from a chapter in Dante's *Inferno*, an episode from *The Divine Comedy* that is based upon historical events that took place in Florentine during the Middle ages: the action of the opera takes place in the year 1299.

Dante's story relates the preposterous swindle perpetrated by the Florentine rogue Gianni Schicchi in connection with the last will and testament of Buoso Donati; Gianni Schicchi placed his talents as an impersonator at the services of certain relatives of the recently deceased Buoso Donati, whose wealth the relatives were determined to secure for themselves.

After the wealthy Buoso Donati died, his son Simone was haunted by fears that his father might leave the Church some of the property he had dishonestly acquired in order to atone for his crimes. (A Dante commentator has suggested that Simone was later accused of having caused his father's death.) Before making his father's death known, Simone consulted

Gianni Schicchi, a Florentine of the Cavalcanti family, whose reputation was that of a clever mimic and schemer. Schicchi offered to impersonate Buoso in his deathbed and dictate a will according to Simone's wishes.

The Donati relatives concealed the fact that Buoso had died, and immediately placed Schicchi in Buoso's bed, where the consummate rogue dictated the will to a notary, one that included a bequest to himself of a valuable mare known as "Donna della torma" ("The lady of the stud.")

Dante's inclusion of Schicchi's crime in the *Inferno* ensured a humorous immortality for the rogue. It was in Canto XXX of the *Inferno* that Dante released his relentless wrath on Gianni Schicchi. It is related that Dante and his guide Virgil descend to the Eighth Circle that is peopled by the Falsifiers of Words, Persons and Coins: a crowd of thieves, panderers, swindlers, and those who sold or purchased offices in church or state.

They meet two naked and pale spirits who are possessed by their iniquity, biting and savaging all the rest: "Due ombre smorte e nude, che mordendo correvan di quel modo ch'è 'l porco quando del porcil si schiude." ("Two pallid, naked spirits who ran biting like a hog let out from the sty.")

The first spirit was Myrrha, the daughter of the King of Cyprus, who conceived an incestuous passion for her father, and achieved her objective by disguising herself and taking a false name; her punishment was her transformation into a myrtle tree.

And the second spirit: "Giunse a Capocchio, ed in sil nodo del collo l'assanò, sì che, tirando, grattar li fece il ventre el fondo sodo" ("Came at Capocchio and buried its teeth in the nape of his neck and then dragged him so that he made his belly scrape on the hard bottom." Virgil points the criminal out to Dante: "Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi, e va rabbioso altrui così conciano" ("That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and he goes raging and dealing in this manner with the rest.")

Just as Myrrha had created a pretence for her own ends, so did the crazed and hell-bound Schicchi. Nothing could deter him in pursuing his objectives: "Per guadagnar la donna della torma, falsificar in sè Buoso Donati, testando e dando al testamento norma." ("To impersonate Buoso Donati, making the will in legal form, that he might get for himself the 'lady of the stud.'")

Dante poured out his venom towards Gianni Schicchi, a peasant he considered the vilest of criminals. Nevertheless, Puccini and librettist Forzano elevate Schicchi to that of a hero, presenting his dubious actions in impersonating the dead Buoso as an act of justice against the gluttonous relatives, but more importantly, as a deeply loving and sentimental father who exploited an opportunity to provide a dowry for his daughter.

Forzano's libretto faithfully reflects the spirit of medieval Florence, particularly its social conflicts that Dante addressed with relentless prejudice.

Dante relegated Gianni Schicchi to the Souls of the Damned in posthumous punishment for his misdeeds, but the great poet is reputed to have been prompted to condemn Schicchi for personal reasons. Dante's wife, Gemma, was a Donati, the family who became the victim of Schicchi's trickery. Schicchi was a peasant, a class that Dante despised; the poet himself was a descendant of a Guelph family which prided its pure Florentine blood.

Indeed, in several places of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante vents his xenophobia, his contempt for the peasantry who were invading aristocratic Florence from the surrounding countryside. Dante's class antagonism is revealed in Canto XVI of the *Inferno* when he meets the spirits of three noble Florentines who inquire about news of their native city. The poet replies and vents his disgust at the lower classes: "A glut of self-made men and quick-got gain have bred excess in thee and pride, forsooth, O Florence! till e'en now thou criest for pain."

Likewise, librettist Forzano dutifully incorporated Dante's class antagonism in the opera; the patrician Donati relatives of Buoso, although virtually impoverished, reject the help of the peasant upstart, Gianni Schicchi, even though he might resolve their predicament. Like Mozart and librettist da Ponte in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the sympathies of Forzano and Puccini leaned toward notions of social equality, ideals represented by Schicchi himself, as well as the young Rinuccio, who, although a Donati, identifies with a new generation that favors liberal ideas and social progress. Significantly, it is Rinuccio who praises the great city of Florence and its new breed of society: men like Gianni Schicchi. In the spirit of Mozart and da Ponte, the underclasses are heroic, and like Gianni Schicchi, lovable rogues; they not only provide laughter, but command sympathy and compassion. Gianni Schicchi, like Figaro, is a hero of the opera buffa genre, the theatrical voice for the ideals of democracy that began during the eighteenth century Enlightenment.

Forzano also alluded to a significant chapter of Florentine political history. Gianni Schicchi warns Donati's heirs of the dire punishment that awaits the forger of wills and his fellow conspirators: "Prima un avvertimento!" ("First a warning"), which concludes with "Addio, Firenze" ("Farewell, Florence"), his warning about the ancient law in which the penalty for their fraud is a severed hand and exile. But Schicchi concludes the aria with an historical reference: "Io ti saluto con questo moncherino, e vo randagio come un Ghibellino!" ("I wave good-bye with this stump, to wander around like a Ghibelline!"), a reference to the lengthy warfare between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, which virtually destroyed the whole of medieval Italy; the Florentines expelled the Ghibellines in 1267.

Nevertheless, the creators of *Gianni Schicchi* took their revenge on Dante by slyly rebuking the great poet in Schicchi's final address to the audience: "For this little trick of mine I've been condemned to Hell. So be it! But if, by permission of the great Dante ("con licenza del grande padre Dante"), you have enjoyed yourself this evening, you will grant me extenuating circumstances!" Gianni Schicchi's unethical actions are elevated to heroic deed; in Puccini's version of Dante, energetic rogues are more companionable than its saints.

Dramatically, Gianni Schicchi's action progresses with perfect theatrical timing, its focus always concentrated on the hopes and fears of Donati's heirs. It is the relatives' lust and greed that makes *Gianni Schicchi* pure comedy from beginning to end, Puccini's only opera in which the erotic element is not only of secondary importance, but is treated in a lighthearted, sentimental manner. (The lovers: Lauretta and Rinuccio.) Nevertheless, it is the opera's blend of sentiment with pure opera buffa farce that contributes to its greatness.

Up until *Gianni Schicchi*, Puccini's art was kindled by his tragic muse, but *Gianni Schicchi* was his only comic opera. Nevertheless, some comic elements do indeed appear in his other operas: the Sacristan in *Tosca*, or the Bohemians' antics in *La Bohème*, the latter no doubt inserted for momentary relief from its tragic elements.

But even in a comedy Puccini found a way to satisfy his macabre instincts. Behind the riotous fun and humor of *Gianni Schicchi* there are some gruesome plot elements bordering on the sadistic: Buoso's corpse remains on stage for a considerable portion of the action, its later removal rather crude and distasteful; Schicchi slips into Donati's bed only a couple of hours after he has died; and Schicchi's threat of the mutilation of a hand if the conspiratorial relatives' crime is uncovered is no less gruesome.

Gianni Schicchi has often been compared with another comic masterpiece: Verdi's *Falstaff*, both representing a rejuvenation of the *comedia dell'arte* and opera buffa genres; their inherent robust wit and gaiety continues the Italian opera legacy from Pergolesi to Paisiello to Rossini to Verdi and to Puccini. Both *Gianni Schicchi* and *Falstaff* are the creations of

composers whose lifetime oeuvre was tragic music drama, but who suddenly turned to comedy, exhibiting talent that thoroughly surprised their critics as well as their adherents. (Verdi's second opera, the comedy *Un Giorno di Regno* (1840), was a complete failure.)

In both operas the comic hero is a baritone, a tradition from eighteenth-century comic opera. And the young lovers, Nannetta and Fenton in *Falstaff*, and Lauretta and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, provide sentimental emotional relief in a world populated by utterly comic and sometimes grotesque figures.

Verdi's *Falstaff* is a character comedy, embellished by horseplay and practical jokes, and saturated with chuckling and good-natured humor; Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* is pure farce, its fun lying more in its inherent action than in its musical characterization, which more often than not accompanies and underlines the comic situations rather than translates them.

Gianni Schicchi possesses a harsh cynicism, its laughter loud and hearty. Verdi's creation is a sublime testament to the old master, his swan song in which he concluded with a parody about life: "Tutto nel mondo è burla" ("The whole world is a joke.") Certainly, Puccini's opera is not as rich or varied as Verdi's, but in that sense, *Falstaff* has the benefit of being a full-length opera; Puccini created a one-act comedy, its very nature demanding brevity, which he achieved to brilliant effect. Nevertheless, both created ingenious comic masterpieces, supreme examples of the great Italian opera buffa tradition.

Puccini, the quintessential musical dramatist, provided sheer comedy in *Gianni Schicchi*: pure farce with gusto and zest. The action unfolds rapidly with a dynamic thrust, each scene and its impending disaster succeeds another almost mercurially yet fluently, with straightforward and incisive rhythms, most of which are in two/four and four/four. After the brief orchestra prelude, the anxious and whining "Mourning" motive immediately catapults the action, the comedy set in motion with its mock solemnity and phony grieving. But the music for the two young lovers, Rinuccio and Lauretta, is an exception, their motives brief and with clear-cut lushness, particularly in the string orchestral accompaniment, so typical of Puccini's musical signature.

The melodic style is predominantly diatonic, its vocal parts highlighted by wide leaps, offbeat phrases, and orchestrally, many brass and percussive fanfares that sometimes sound grotesque, yet provide pungent comic effects. There are some grating dissonances: Schicchi's furious cries "Niente! Niente! Niente!" ("Never! Never! Never!"), his outburst when he refuses to offer his services to benefit the predator relatives just before Lauretta pleads with him, "O mio babbino caro" (Oh, my beloved daddy"), and the raging ensembles, such as the Donati's relatives accusing Schicchi of betrayal and monstrous deception after he has bequeathed the choice Donati properties to himself. Although much of the opera is written in the major keys, Puccini turns to the minor to suggest the relatives' hypocrisy (their lament for the dead Buoso: the "Mourning" motive.)

Gianni Schicchi himself is the center of the opera: its comic spirit. His motives are all short, incisive, sprightly and fanfare-like, such as the short theme that is associated with his cleverness that appears in the opening preamble while the relatives are mourning. It is introduced long before Schicchi's arrival, a typical Puccini technique in which the music of his heroines is heard before their appearance: Tosca, Butterfly, Mimi. And likewise a Schicchi motive is heard during the relatives' "Whisper" scene and the scene of the reading of he will, a hint of the savage prank that Schicchi is to play on them. The fanfare, first introduced in Rinuccio's aria, appears to symbolize Schicchi's superiority, his vitality and zest as a member of the new breed of Florentines; it is the theme that closes the opera.

Schicchi's aria, his "Warning" to the relatives, "Primo un avvertimento" ("First a warning") cautions the Donati's about the dire punishment awaiting the forger of wills, pure comic irony that begins in a mood of sham mystery, but concludes with the menacing farewell: "Addio, Firenze," an example of Schicchi's macabre humor. And that theme later underscores Schicchi's words as he dictates his will to the Notary, a moment of sublime vocal characterization and histrionic agility; Schicchi uses it to hold the fuming relatives in complete arrest by injecting them with fear and fright for their complicity in a fraud.

The music of the two lovers is vintage Puccini, their music expanded as they embrace against the towers of Florence while bathing in the midday sun; the love duet closes the opera, conveying a sense of eminent triumph.

Rinuccio provides a brief characterization of Schicchi followed by "Firenze è un albero" is a vigorous and fervent paean to the glory of Florence and its new spirits, who are represented by Gianni Schicchi. The music is like a festive march with rousing flourishes, but in the middle of this hymn, its broad and flowing phrases suggest ancient Florence and the River Arno.

Lauretta's signature aria, "O mio babbino caro," in which she threatens to throw herself into the River Arno unless she is allowed to go to Porta Rossa and buy herself a wedding ring, seems to arise naturally from the action. Nevertheless, its sentimentality and weeping expression provide a needed repose after the agitation of the preceding scene. It is the music of Gianni Schicchi's motive that was heard when he first arrived at Donati's house.

Puccini portrays Donati's relatives not so much as individual characters, but as a group expressing shared emotions: initially, their feigned grief at Buoso's demise is captured in the "Mourning" motive, which also represents Donati's death. The parody in the music is punctuated by its drooping melody, a woeful appoggiatura technique that perhaps suggests the relatives' drooping heads. It is the most important single musical idea associated with the relatives. It dominates the opening scenes and undergoes some striking transformations when it appears again and again throughout the opera.

Essentially, there are no elaborate ensembles in *Gianni Schicchi*, but rather violent explosions of sound that are so reminiscent of Rossini: the "Quarrel" scene, and the finale in which the relatives vent their fury at Schicchi's betrayal of them. Yet, there is one self-contained ensemble: the trio of Zita, Ciesca and Nella, in which these three flowers of Florentine womanhood express their admiration for Schicchi's roguery as they busy themselves with dressing him in one of Buoso's nightgowns. This trio — actually a lullaby — reaches its grand climax in the deliciously parodistic phrase, "O Gianni Schicchi, nostro salvatore!" ("Oh Gianni Schicchi, our savior!")

In many respects, *Gianni Schicchi* is a paean to the spirit of the famous old city of Florence and its glory. In that sense, it parallels Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. At the end of the opera, Gianni Schicchi expels the Donati relatives from the house in a scene of great commotion; it is followed by a sudden calm, and the appearance of the towers of ancient Florence in the background, bathing gloriously in the midday sun. Similarly, Wagner's closing of Act II of *Die Meistersinger* concludes in calm, the full moon stealing over old Nuremberg's streets. Wagner's comic opera may be said to be his most German in spirit, Puccini's is his most Italian.

Nevertheless, the real hero of *Gianni Schicchi* is medieval Florence, its plot, characters and music springing from the glory of Florentine soil: it is vintage commedia dell'arte and opera buffa, branches on the tree of Italian humor which Giacomo Puccini embellished with his great comic genius: a magical creation from Puccini's pen that is a magnificent blend of sentiment and comedy.

Libretto
Gianni Schicchi

The city of Florence, Italy. September 1, 1299. It is 9 o'clock in the morning.

The bed-chamber of Buoso Donati.

The room has a large French window that provides access to a terrace that surrounds the front of the house. Another window provides a view of Arnolfo's tower. There is a narrow staircase that leads to a small balcony. The furniture includes a chest of drawers, chairs, coffers scattered around, and a table bearing silverware.

The four corners of a bed are surrounded by candelbra, its candlesticks lighted. In front of the bed there is an unlighted three-branch candelabrum. Through the half-open bed-curtains can be seen a red silk drapery covering a body.

Buoso Donati's relatives face the bed, all kneeling, murmuring prayers and sobbing loudly.

Little Gherardino is seated on the floor by a wall, his back to the other relatives, bored and disinterested in the relatives' grief and intent on playing marbles.

Largo



Zita:
Povero Buoso!

Simone:
Povero cugino!

Rinuccio:
Povero zio!

Ciesca e Marco:
Oh! Buoso!

Nella e Gherardo:
Buoso!

Betto:
O cognato!

Zita:
Poor Buoso!

Simone:
Poor cousin!

Rinuccio:
Poor uncle!

Ciesca and Marco:
Oh! Buoso!

Nella and Gherardo:
Buoso!

Betto:
Poor brother-in-law!

*Little Gherardino lets a chair drop to the floor with a crash;
the relatives quiet Gherardino.*

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone:**
Sciii!

Gherardo:
Io piangerò per giorni e giorni.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone:**
Shhh!

Gherardo:
I'll weep for days and days.

*Gherardo turns to his son Gherardino, who tugs at his clothing
and whispers something in his ear.*

Sciò!

Shhh!

Nella:

Giorni? Per mesi!

Nella:

For days? For months!

(to Gherardino)

Sciò!

Shhh!

Nella:

Mesi? Per anni ed anni!

Nella:

For months? For years and years!

Zita:

Ti piangerò tutta la vita mia!

Zita:

I'll weep for the rest of my life!

Ciesca e Marco:

Povero Buoso!

Ciesca and Marco:

Poor Buoso!

Gherardino approaches old Zita, who becomes annoyed and pushes him away.

Zita:

Portatecelo voi, Gherardino, via!

Zita:

Take that boy away. Gherardino, get away!

Gherardo gets up, takes his son by the hand, and drags him to another room.

Zita, Ciesca, Rinuccio, Marco, Simone:

Oh! Buoso, Buoso, tutta la vita
piangeremo la tua dipartita!

Zita, Ciesca, Rinuccio, Marco, Simone:

Oh! Buoso, Buoso, we'll mourn your death all
our lives!

Ciesca:

Piangerem!

Ciesca:

We'll mourn!

Rinuccio:

Piangerem!

Rinuccio:

We'll mourn!

Zita:

Buoso! Buoso!

Zita:

Buoso! Buoso!

Ciesca:

Tutta la vita!

Ciesca:

All our lives!

While all feign grief, Betto whispers something into Nella's ear.

Nella:

Ma come? Davvero?

Nella:

What? Is that true?

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Betto:

That's what they're saying in Signa.



Rinuccio:

Che dicono a Signa?

Nella:

Si dice che...

Rinuccio:

Giaaa?!

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Ciesca:

Che dicono a Signa?

Betto:

Si dice che...

Ciesca:

Noooo!?

Marco, lo senti che dicono a Signa?

Si dice che...

Marco:

Eeeh?!

Zita:

Ma in somma possiamo sopere.

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Zita:

Che diamine dicono a Signa?

Betto:

Ci son delle voci, dei mezzi discorsi.

Dicevan iersera dal Cisti fornaio:

“Se Buoso crepa, pei frati è manna!

Diranno: pancia mia, fatti capanna!”

E un altro: sì, sì, nel testamento

ha lasciato ogni cosa ad un convento!

Simone:

Ma che?!?! Chi lo dice?

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Simone:

Lo dicono a Signa????

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,**Marco, Betto:**

Lo dicono a Signa!

Rinuccio: (to Nella)

What are they saying in Signa?

Nella: (whispering to Rinuccio)

They're saying that...

Rinuccio:

What?!

Betto:

That's what they're saying.

Ciesca: (bending over to Betto)

What are they saying in Signa?

Betto: (whispers to Ciesca)

They're saying that...

Ciesca: (loudly)

Noooo!?

Marco, did you hear what they're saying in

Signa? They're saying that...

Marco:

Eeeh?!

Zita:

Let's all hear it.

Betto:

They're saying it in Signa.

Zita:

What is it they're saying in Signa?

Betto:

There's been gossip and horrible rumors.

They were saying last night at Cislì's bakery:

“If Buoso dies, the monks will have bread from Heaven! And enormous paunches!”

And others said that in his will, Buoso left everything to a monastery!

Simone:

But why?!?! Who said it?

Betto:

They're saying it in Signa.

Simone:

Is that what they're saying in Signa????

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,**Marco, Betto:**

That's what they're saying in Signa!!

Gherardo:
O Simone?

Gherardo:
Oh Simone?

Ciesca:
Simone?

Ciesca:
Simone?

Zita:
Parla, tu se' il più vecchio.

Zita:
Speak first Simone, you're the oldest.

Marco:
Tu se' anche stato podestà a Fucecchio.

Marco:
You were once mayor of Fucecchio.

Zita:
Che ne pensi?

Zita:
What do you think?

Marco:
Che ne pensi?

Marco:
What do you think?

Simone:
Se il testamento è in mano d'un notaio.
chi lo sa? Forse è un guajo!
Se però ce l'avesse lasciato in questa stanza,
guaio pei frati, ma per noi: speranza!

Simone: *(rising with an air of gravity)*
If Buoso's will is in the hands of the notary, who
knows? Perhaps it's a disaster for us!
But if it is hidden in this room, perhaps it's a
disaster for the monks and hope for us!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Betto:**
Guaio pei frati, ma per noi speranza!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Betto:**
Misfortune for the monks, but hope for us!

Rinuccio:
(O Lauretta, amore mio, speriam nel testamento
dello zio!)

Rinuccio:
(Oh Lauretta, my love, let's place our hopes in
my uncle's will!)

*Gherardo comes back alone and joins the relatives in a feverish search for the will.
Betto looks at the table and notices a silver tray, silver seal and silver scissors. He cautiously
stretches his hand towards the tray, but is disturbed by a false alarm from Simone.*

Simone:
Ah! No. Non è!

Simone: *(scanning a parchment closely)*
Ah! No. That's not it!

All turn round to look at Betto, who feigns an innocent look on his face.

*The search begins again. Betto grabs the seal and scissors; he breathes hard on them, and wipes
them on his sleeve. After examining them critically, he puts them in his pocket. As he slowly pulls the
tray toward himself, an exclamation from old Zita makes them all turn around.*

Zita:
Ah! No. Non c'è!

Zita: *(scanning a parchment more closely)*
Ah! No. That's not it!

*The relatives continue their frenzied search for the will, not knowing where to look. They turn over
everything in the room, rummage in the boxes, chests, and under the bed.*

The air is full of strewn papers.

*Betto, profiting by the confusion, grabs the silver tray and puts it under his coat, holding it tightly in
place with his arm.*

Rinuccio is on top of a ladder on a chest of drawers, and succeeds in opening a drawer.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

No! Non c'è!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

No! That's not it!

Gherardo:

Dove sia?

Gherardo:

Where could it be?

Marco:

Dove sia?

Marco:

Where could it be?

Simone, Betto:

No! Non c'è!

Simone, Betto:

No! That's not it!

Rinuccio:

Salvati! Salvati!

Rinuccio: (*crying out*)

I've found it!

All rush toward Rinuccio, their hands outstretched to grab the will. But Rinuccio holds the parchment tightly in his left hand, keeping it away from the relatives.

Rinuccio:

Il testamento di Buoso Donati!

Zia, l'ho trovato io!

Rinuccio:

Buoso Donati's will!

Aunt, I've found it!

Allegro

Come compenso, dimmi se lo zio, povero zio!

M'avesse lasciato bene bene

se tra poco si fosse tutti ricchi

in un giorno di festa come questo,

mi daresti il consenso disporre

la Lauretta figliola dello Schicchi?

Mi sembrerà più dolce il mio redaggio

potrei sposarla per Calendimaggio!

As a reward, tell me if my dear uncle provided well for me!

If this is such a happy day,

and we're all about to be rich

will you give me your consent to marry Lauretta,

Gianni Schicchi's daughter?

My inheritance would seem even sweeter if I

could marry her on May Day!

Simone:

Ma sì!

Simone:

Of course!

Gherardo:

Ma sì!

Gherardo:

Of course!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

Ma sì!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

Of course!

Nella, Gherardo:

C'è tempo a riparlare!

Nella, Gherardo:

We'll talk about it later!

Rinuccio:

Potrei sposarla per Calendimaggio!

Rinuccio: (*insistently*)

I could marry her on May Day!!

Marco, Gherardo:

Qui, presto il testamento!

Marco, Gherardo:

Here, give me the will!

Ciesca:
Lo vedi che si sta colle spine sotto i piedi?

Rinuccio:
Zia!

Zita:
Se tutto andrà come si spera,
sposa chi vuoi, sia pure la versiera.

Ciesca:
Can't you see that we're all nervous?

Rinuccio: (*hands the will to Zita*)
Aunt!

Zita:
If all goes as we hope, marry whoever you like,
even the devil's daughter.

Zita sits down at the table. The relatives follow her in great anticipation. She looks for the scissors to cut the ribbon around the parchment, but she cannot find them. She looks around and scans the faces of the other relatives. Betto's expression is inscrutable. Zita tears the ribbon off with her fingers. She unrolls the parchment; a second roll contains the will.

Rinuccio:
Ah! lo zio mi voleva tanto bene,
m'avrà lasciato colle tasche piene!

Corri da Gianni Schicchi,
digli che venga qui colla Lauretta:
c'è Rinuccio di Buoso che l'aspetta!

A te due popolini: comprati i confortini!

Zita:
"Ai miei cugini Zita e Simone!"

Simone:
Povero Buoso!

Zita:
Povero Buoso!

Simone:
Tutta la cera tu devi avere!

Rinuccio:
My uncle was always so fond of me, he must
have left my pockets full!

(Rinuccio whispers to Gherardino)

Hurry to Gianni Schicchi, and tell him to come
at once with Lauretta: tell him that, Rinuccio,
Buoso's nephew, awaits him!

(Rinuccio gives Gherardino two coins)

Here are some coins for you to buy some candy!
(Gherardino rushes out.)

Zita: (*reading*)
"To my cousins Zita and Simone!"

Simone:
Poor Buoso!

Zita:
Poor Buoso!

Simone:
He'll have the finest funeral!

In an impulse of gratitude, Simone lights the three candles on the candelabra.

In sino in fondo si deve struggere!
Sì! Godi, godi! Povero Buoso!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Betto:**
Povero Buoso!

Nella, Marco:
Se m'avesse lasciato questa casa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Se m'avesse lasciato questa casa!

He must have all the candles burned in his
memory. Yes! Enjoy them! Poor Buoso!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Betto:**
Poor Buoso!

Nella, Marco:
If only he left me this house!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
If only he left me this house!

Zita, Marco:
E i mulini di Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
E i mulini di Signa!

Nella, Marco:
Poi la mula!

Betto:
Se m'avesse lasciato...

Simone:
La mula e i mulini di Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
I mulini di Signa!

Marco:
La mula e i muli...

Zita:
Zitti! È aperto!

Zita, Marco:
And the sawmills at Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
And the sawmills at Signa!

Nella, Marco:
And the mule!

Betto:
I hope he's left me...

Simone:
The mule and sawmills at Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
The sawmills at Signa!

Marco:
The mule and the sawmills...

Zita:
Silence! It's open!

Andante moderato



Old Zita stands amid the relatives with the will in her hand: all press tightly around her; Marco and Betto have climbed on a chair to see better. Everyone is absorbed in reading the will. They read silently, mouthing the words. Suddenly a cloud overshadows all their faces, and they gradually become grave. Zita sinks in a chair, letting the will fall to the ground. All are petrified.

Simone is the first to move; he extinguishes the three candles, lowers the bed curtains and snuffs out the other candles. Slowly, the other relatives move toward chairs and sit down, appearing to be graven images, their eyes wide open and staring blankly ahead of them.

Simone:
Dunque era vero! Noi vedremo i frati ingrassare alla barba dei Donati!

Ciesca:
Tutti quei bei fiorini accumulati finire nelle tonache dei frati!

Marco:
Privare tutti noi d'una sostanza, e i frati far sguazzar nell'abbondanza!

Betto:
Io dovrò misurarmi il bere a Signa e i frati bevveranno il vin di vigna!

Simone: *(with suppressed rage)*
So it was true! We must watch the monks grow fat on Donati's money!

Ciesca:
All those lovely florins ending up in the monk's cassocks!

Marco:
Depriving us of our inheritance, while the monks wallow in plenty!

Betto:
I'll have to ration my drinking at Signa, while the monks drink wine from our vines!

Nella:

Si faranno slargar spesso la cappa,
noi schianterem di bile, e loro pappa!

Rinuccio:

La mia felicità sarà rubata
dall "Opera di Santa Reparata!"

Gherardo:

Aprite le dispense dei conventi!
Allegri, frati, ed arrotate i denti!

Little by little, the frenzy of the relatives peaks. They begin to run frantically about the room, cursing and swearing, and breaking into bursts of sardonic laughter, like the cries of the damned.

Zita:

Eccovi le primizie di mercato!
Fate schioccar la lingua col palato!
A voi, poveri frati! Tordi grassi!

Simone:

Quaglie pinate!

Nella:

Lodole!

Gherardo:

Ortolani!

Zita:

Beccafichi!

Simone:

Quaglie pinate! O che ingrassate!

Zita:

Ortolani!

Betto:

E galletti!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Galletti??

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,**Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Galettini!!

Rinuccio:

Galletti di canto tenerini!

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

E colle facce rosse e ben pasciute,

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

Lodole e gallettini!!

Nella:

Every meal that is served will be a banquet,
while we are left here starving!

Rinuccio:

My happiness will be stolen by the "Order of
Santa Reparata!"

Gherardo:

Brothers, open the pantries of the monasteries
and sharpen your teeth!

Zita:

We must be content with bread and water while
they live a life of ease and plenty! You stupid
lazy friars! Good for nothings!

Simone:

Open the pantry!

Nella:

Venison!

Gherardo:

Partridge!

Zita:

Salmon!

Simone:

Stuffed turkey with chestnuts!

Zita:

Partridge!

Betto:

And chicken!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Chickens??

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,**Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Pheasants!!

Rinuccio: (shouting)

Pheasants with watercress and truffles!

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

And with their faces rosy and red,

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

Venison stewed with gravy!!

Zita, Marco:

...ridetevi di noi: ha! ha! ha! ha!

Simone, Betto:

...schizzando dalle gote la salute!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Eccolo là un Donati!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**

ah! ah! ah! Eccolo là!

Eccolo là un Donati!

ah! ah! ah! Eccolo là!

E la voleva lui l'eredità!

Ridete, o frati, ridete alla barba dei Donati!

Ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! ah!

Zita, Marco:

...they'll laugh at us: ha! ha! ha! ha!

Simone, Betto:

...bloated with grease and gravy!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

There are the Donati's!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Ah! Ah! Ah! There they are!

Look at the Donati's!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Look at them!

They wanted all of his inheritance!

Laugh, Friars, laugh at the expense of the

Donati's! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

*Their frenzy reaches a climax. Afterwards their argument starts again,
but a few of the relatives weep earnestly over their predicament.*

Zita:

(Chi l'avrebbe mai detto

che quando Buoso andava al cimitero,

si sarebbe pianto per davvero!)

Zita: (weeping)

(Who would have ever thought that when our

cousin departed from the living we would feel so

brokenhearted!)

Slowly, each one sinks into a chair. All are subdued, and once again overcome with tears.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

E non c'è nessun mezzo...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

If it were only possible...

Simone, Betto:

...per cambiarlo?

Simone, Betto:

...to change it?

Zita, Marco:

...per girarlo?

Zita, Marco:

...to rearrange it?

Gherardo

... addolcirlo?

Gherardo:

...to exchange it?

Marco:

O Simone, Simone?

Marco:

Oh Simone, Simone?

Zita:

Tu sei il più vecchio!

Zita:

You are the oldest!

Marco:

Tu se' anche stato podestà a Fucecchio!

Marco:

You were also once the mayor of Fucecchio!

Simone gestures, as if to indicate that it is impossible to find a remedy.

Rinuccio:

C'è una persona sola che ci può consigliare,

forse salvare.

Rinuccio:

There's only one man who can advise us, and

perhaps save us.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Chi?

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Who?

Rinuccio:

Gianni Schicchi!

Zita:

Di Gianni Schicchi, della figliuola,
non vo' sentirne parlar mai più!
E intendi bene!

Gherardino:

E qui che viene!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Chi?

Gherardino:

Gianni Schicchi!

Zita:

Chi l'ha chiamato?

RinuccioL

Io l'ho mandato, perchè speravo...

Ciesca, Nella:

È proprio il momento d'aver Gianni Schicchi.

Zita:

Ah! bada! se sal.e...

Ciesca, Nella:

...fra i piedi...

Zita:

...gli fo ruzzolare le scale!

Marco, Simone:

È proprio il momento d'aver Gianni Schicchi.

Gherardo:

Tu devi obbedire soltanto a tuo padre.

Marco, Simone:

...fra i piedi!

Gherardo:

là! là!

Rinuccio:

Gianni Schicchi!

Zita: (*furious, gesturing disappointment*)

I don't want to hear another word about Gianni
Schicchi and his daughter!
And I mean it!

Gherardino: (*excitedly*)

He's coming!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Who?

Gherardino:

Gianni Schicchi!

Zita:

Who sent for him?

Rinuccio:

I sent for him, because I hoped...

Ciesca, Nella: (*grumbling*)

It's inappropriate to have Gianni Schicchi here at
this moment.

Zita: (*furious*)

If he comes near me...

Ciesca, Nella:

...on his feet...

Zita:

...where he can feel it!

Marco, Simone: (*grumbling*)

It's inappropriate to have Gianni Schicchi here at
this moment.

Gherardo: (*spanking Gherardino*)

You must only obey your father.

Marco, Simone:

...on his feet!

Gherardo:

là! là!

Gherardo throws Gherardino into the room at the top of the stairs.

Simone:

Un Donati sposare la figlia d'un villano!

Simone:

A Donati marrying the daughter of a peasant!

Zita:

D'uno sceso a Firenze dal contado!
 Imparentarsi colla gente nova!
 Io non voglio che venga! Non voglio!

Rinuccio:

Avete torto! È fine! astuto.
 Ogni malizia di leggi e codici conosce e sa.
 Motteggiatore! Beffeggiatore!
 C'è da fare una beffa nuova e rara?
 È Gianni Schicchi che la prepara!

Gli occhi furbi gli illuminan di riso lo strano
 viso,
 ombreggiato da quel suo gran nasone
 che pare un torrachione per così!
 Vieni dal contado? Ebbene? Che vuol dire?
 Basta con queste ubbie grette e piccine!

Zita: (emphatically)

A man who came to Florence from the country!
 And married into a family of upstarts!
 I don't want him here! That's final!

Rinuccio:

You're mistaken! He's clever and cunning. He
 knows all the tricks of the trade, and he's
 nobody's fool! Sly as a vixen, sharp as a needle.
 Who else can think of new tricks?
 It's always Gianni Schicchi!

His cunning eyes light up his strange face with
 laughter, a face
 overshadowed by that big nose, which looks like
 an overturned tower.
 Does he come from the country? So what?
 Enough of these petty prejudices!

Andante mosso**RINUCCIO**

Fi - ren - ze è co - me un al - bero - fio - ri - to.

Firenze è come un albero fiorito
 che in piazza dei Signori ha tronco e fronde,
 ma le radici forze nuove apportano
 dalle convalli limpide e feconde!
 E Firenze germoglia ed alle stelle
 salgon palagi saldi e torri snelle!

L'Arno, prima di correre alla foce,
 canta baciando piazza Santa Croce,
 e il suo canto è sì dolce e sì sonoro
 che a lui son scesi i ruscelletti in coro!
 Così scendanvi dotti in arti e scienze
 a far più ricca e splendida Firenze!

E di val d'Elsa giù dalle castella
 ben venga Arnolfo a far la torre bella!
 E venga Giotto dal Mugel selvoso,
 e il Medici mercante coraggioso!
 Basta con gli odi gretti e coi ripicchi!
 Viva la gente nova e Gianni Schicchi!

Florence is like a flowering tree that grows in the
 Piazza dei Signori.
 But its roots grow new strength from the fertile
 valleys.
 Florence blossoms, and strong palaces and
 towers rise to the stars!

The Arno sings and kisses the Piazza Santa
 Croce, before hurrying to its mouth,
 its song is so sweet
 that all the streams join in as a chorus.
 So let those versed in arts and sciences join in
 making Florence richer!

Welcome Arnolfo from the Val d'Elsa,
 to build his beautiful tower.
 Welcome Giotto from the Mugello woods, and
 the bold Medici merchants!
 Enough of these mean, petty prejudices!
 Long live the newcomers and Gianni Schicchi!

There is a knock at the door.

È lui!

It's him!

Rinuccio opens the door; Gianni Schicchi appears, followed by his daughter, Lauretta. He stops on the threshold, and marvels at the desolate countenances of the relatives.

Gianni Schicchi:

(Quale aspetto sgomento e desolato!
Buoso Donati, certo è migliorato!)

Rinuccio:

(Lauretta!)

Lauretta:

(Rino!)

Rinuccio:

Amore mio!

Lauretta:

Perchè si pallido?

Rinuccio:

Ahimè, lo zio.

Lauretta:

Ebbene, parla.

Rinuccio:

Amore, amore, quanto dolore!

Lauretta:

(Quanto dolore!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(What sorrow and desolation! Buoso Donati's
health certainly must have improved!)

Rinuccio:

(Lauretta!)

Lauretta:

(Rino!)

Rinuccio: (*whispering*)

My beloved!

Lauretta: (*whispering*)

What's troubling you?

Rinuccio:

It's poor uncle Buoso.

Lauretta:

Then tell me.

Rinuccio:

My love, what misfortune!

Lauretta:

(What misfortune!)

As Gianni Schicchi slowly advances into the room, he notices the candelabras surrounding the bed.

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Andato?

(Perchè stanno a lagrimare? Ti recitano meglio
d'un giullare!)

Ah! comprendo il dolor di tanta perdita. Ne ho
l'anima commossa.

Gherardo:

Eh! la perdita è stata proprio grossa!

Gianni Schicchi:

Eh! son cose. Mah! Come si fa! In questo
mondo una cosa si perde, una si trova; si perde
Buoso, c'è l'eredità!

Zita:

Sicuro! Ai frati!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Diseredati?

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! He's dead?

(But why are they mourning? Their tears are
better acted than a jester's!)

Ah! I understand your unbearable grief. Your
sorrow moves me deeply.

Gherardo:

Yes! Our loss is truly enormous!

Gianni Schicchi:

Eh! But those things happen. In this world it's
common knowledge, if you lose one thing, you
gain another. You've lost Buoso, but there's the
inheritance!

Zita: (*springing up*)

Exactly! For the monks!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! You're disinherited?

Zita:

Diseredati! Sì, sì, diseredati! E perciò velo canto: pigliate la figliola, levatevi di torno, io non do mio nipote ad una senza dote!

Rinuccio:

O zia, io l'amo, l'amo!

Lauretta:

Babbo, babbo, lo voglio!

Gianni Schicchi:

Figliola, un po' d'orgoglio!

Zita:

Non me n'importa un corno!

Gianni Schicchi:

Brava la vecchia! Brava! Per la dote sacrifichi mia figlia e tuo nipote! Brava la vecchia! Brava! Vecchia taccagna! stillina! sordida! spilorcia! gretta!

Lauretta:

Rinuccio non lasciarmi! L'hai giurato!

Rinuccio:

Lauretta mia, ricordati!

Rinuccio:

Tu m'hai giurato amore! E quella sera Fiesole sembrava tutto un fiore!

Zita:

Anche m'insulta! Senza la dote non do, non do il nipote, non do, non do il nipote! Rinuccio, vieni lasciali andare, sarebbe un volerti rovinare! Vieni!

Lauretta:

L'hai giurato quando tu m'hai baciato! No, non lasciarmi! No, non lasciarmi, Rinuccio!

Rinuccio:

Ricordati, ricordati, amore, amore!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! vieni! vieni! Un po' d'orgoglio! Vieni!

Zita:

Vieni! Ma vieni! Rinuccio vieni!

Lauretta:

no! no! Addio, speranza bella!

Zita:

He's left us nothing. Yes, nothing! But it doesn't concern you! Take your little daughter and be off! I will never give my nephew to a girl without a dowry!

Rinuccio:

Aunt, I love her!

Lauretta:

Daddy, I love him!

Gianni Schicchi:

My child, have your pride!

Zita:

I don't give a damn!

Gianni Schicchi:

Bravo old witch! For a dowry you'd sacrifice my daughter and your nephew! You old miser, greedy, mean and wicked woman!

Lauretta:

Rinuccio don't leave me! You swore to be true!

Rinuccio:

My Lauretta, you swore to love me!

Rinuccio:

You promised to love me forever! That night at Fiesole!

Zita:

That is an insult! I won't give my nephew to a girl without a dowry. Rinuccio, come, let's go. You don't want to ruin yourself! Come!

Lauretta:

You promised me when you kissed me! No, don't leave me, don't leave me, Rinuccio!

Rinuccio:

Forever more, my love!

Gianni Schicchi: (*pulling Lauretta away*)

Come! Keep your pride! Come!

Zita:

Come Rinuccio, come!

Lauretta:

No! No! Farewell, beautiful hopes!

Rinuccio:

Addio, speranza bella, speranza bella!

Gianni Schicchi:

Vieni! Ah! Vieni, Lauretta, vieni, rasciuga gli occhi.

Zita:

ma vieni, vieni,

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

...s'è spento ogni tuo raggio;

Gianni Schicchi :

Sarebbe un parentado di pitocchi!
Un po' d'orgoglio!

Zita:

Lasciali andare! Via, via di qua!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

Non ci potrem sposare per il Calendimaggio!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! vieni vieni!

Marco, Simone, Betto:

Anche le dispute.

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

...fra innamorati!

Lauretta:

Babbo, lo voglio!

Rinuccio:

O Zia, la voglio!

Zita:

Ed io non voglio!

Gianni Schicchi :

Un po' d'orgoglio!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Proprio il momento! Pensate al testamento!

Gianni Schicchi:

Vecchia taccagna, gretta, sordida, spilorcia! Via!

Zita:

Ma vieni, vieni!

Rinuccio:

Farewell, beautiful hopes!

Gianni Schicchi :

Let's get out of here, Lauretta. Come, dry your eyes.

Zita:

Come, come.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

...our dream is shattered;

Gianni Schicchi :

You'd never be content with such a marriage!
Have your pride!

Zita:

Let her leave! Get out of here!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

We can't marry by May!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Come, come!

Marco, Simone, Betto:

There are always quarrels.

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

...between lovers!

Lauretta: (*rushing to Rinuccio*)

Daddy, I love him!

Rinuccio: (*rushing to Lauretta*)

Oh Aunt, I love her!

Zita:

And I won't have it!

Gianni Schicchi :

A little pride!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

This is the moment! Let's think about the will!

Gianni Schicchi:

You mean old woman, you horrible and greedy wretch! Out!

Zita:

Come, come Rinuccio!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Pensate al testamento!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
Amore!

Gianni Schicchi:
via di qua! Ah! vieni, vieni!

Zita:
No, no, non voglio! Via di qua!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Pensate al testamento!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
Amore!

Zita:
No! no! no!

Gianni Schicchi:
Vien! vien! vien!

Rinuccio:
Signor Giovanni, rimanete un momento!

Invece di sbraitare, dategli il testamento!

Cercate di salvarci! A voi non può mancare un'idea portentosa, una trovata, un rimedio, un ripiego, un espediente!

Gianni Schicchi:
A pro di quella gente!

Niente! Niente! Niente!

Andante ingenuo
LAURETTA



Lauretta:
O mio babbino caro, mi piace è bello, bello;
vo' andare in Porta Rossa a comperar l'anello!
Sì, sì, ci voglio andare! e se l'amassi indarno,
andrei sul Ponte Vecchio, ma per buttarmi in
Arno! Mi struggo e mi tormento! O Dio, vorrei
morir! Babbo, pietà, pietà!
Babbo, pietà, pietà!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Let's thinks about the will!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
My love!

Gianni Schicchi:
Out of here! Come Lauretta!

Zita:
I won't hear of it! Come here Rinuccio!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Let's think about the will!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
My love!

Zita:
No! No! No!

Gianni Schicchi: (*pulling Lauretta to the door*)
Come, Lauretta!

Rinuccio: (*holding Schicchi*)
Signor Giovanni, stay a moment!
(*to Zita*)
Instead of all this shouting, show him the will!
(*to Gianni*)
Try to save us! You can't fail to think of some
ingenious idea, a scheme, a solution, a loophole,
a remedy, to solve the problem!

Gianni Schicchi: (*indicating the relatives*)
To benefit those vultures!
(*to Rinuccio*)
Never! Never! Never!

Lauretta: (*kneeling before Gianni*)
Oh, my beloved daddy, be kind and help us. I
love Rinuccio. He's handsome. I want to go to
Porta Rosa to buy the ring! I really mean it, and
if I can't love him, I'll go to the Ponte Vecchio
and throw myself in the Arno. I'm tormented
with anguish. I want to die!
Father have pity!

Gianni Schicchi:
Datemi il testamento!

Gianni Schicchi: (*reluctantly*)
Give me the will!

Rinuccio hands the will to Schicchi, who paces about, while absorbed in reading it. The relatives follow him with their eyes, then unconsciously begin following his footsteps. Simone, seated, shakes his head doubtfully. Schicchi suddenly stops.

Gianni Schicchi:
Niente da fare!

Gianni Schicchi:
Nothing can help!

The relatives leave Schicchi and move about. Lauretta and Rinuccio, apart from them, are only preoccupied with their disappointment.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
Addio, speranza bella, dolce miraggio; non ci
potrem sposare per il Calendimaggio!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
Farewell, my sweet beloved. All hope is
shattered. Fate will never let us marry!

Gianni Schicchi begins to pace about again, reading the will more closely.

Gianni Schicchi:
Niente da fare!

Gianni Schicchi: (*stops suddenly*)
Nothing can help!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
Addio, speranza bella, s'è spento ogni tuo raggio.

Lauretta, Rinuccio: (*sadly*)
Farewell, my sweet beloved, our last rays of hope
have faded.

Gianni Schicchi:
Però!

Gianni Schicchi: (*thunderingly*)
Although!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:
(Forse ci sposeremo per il Calendimaggio!

Lauretta, Rinuccio: (*joyfully*)
(Perhaps it's possible we can still marry!)

The relatives rise up and surround Schicchi, looking at him with great anxiety. Schicchi stands motionless, gazing straight ahead. Gradually his face lights up and he begins to smile triumphantly.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Ebbene?

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Well?

Gianni Schicchi:
Laurettina! va sui terrazzino; porta i minuzzolini
all'uccellino.

Gianni Schicchi: (*in a childish voice*)
Laurettina! Go on the terrace and feed crumbs to
the little bird!

As soon as Lauretta has gone, Schicchi turns and addresses the relatives

Sola.
Nessuno sa che Buoso ha reso il fiato?

Alone.
Does anyone know that Buoso died?

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Nessuno!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
No one!

Gianni Schicchi:
Bene! Ancora nessuno deve saperlo!

Gianni Schicchi:
Perfect! Be careful that no one even suspects it!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Nessuno lo saprà!

Gianni Schicchi:
E i servi?

Zita:
Dopo l'aggravamento in camera, nessuno!

Gianni Schicchi:
Voi due portate il morto e i candelabri là dentro
nella stanza di rimpetto!

*Marco and Gherardo disappear among the bed-curtains and reappear with a red bundle, which they
take into the room on the right. Simone, Betto, and Rinuccio remove the candelabras.*

Donne! Rifate il letto!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
ma...

Gianni Schicchi:
Zitte. Obbedite!

As the women begin to remake the bed, there is a knock at the door. All stop and are startled.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Ah!

Gianni Schicchi:
Chi può essere? Ah!

Zita:
Maestro Spinelloccio il dottore!

Gianni Schicchi:
Guardate che non passi! Ditegli qualche cosa
che Buoso è migliorato e che riposa.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Nobody knows!

Gianni Schicchi: (*assailed by doubts*)
And the servants?

Zita:
After he got worse, no one came in!

Gianni Schicchi: (*to Marco and Gherardo*)
You, take the body and the candles out of this
room!

Ladies, arrange the bed!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
but...

Gianni Schicchi: (*gesturing to them*)
Quiet. Do as I say!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Ah!

Gianni Schicchi: (*in a stifled voice*)
Who could that be?

Zita: (*to Gianni*)
Master Spinelloccio, the doctor!

Gianni Schicchi:
Don't let him in! Tell him Buoso is better, and
that it's better that he rest.

*The relatives crowd around the door, holding it barely ajar.
Schicchi hides himself behind the curtains, on the far side of the room from the door.
Betto closes the window shutters to darken the room.*

Spinelloccio:
L'è permesso.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Buon giorno, Maestro Spinelloccio!

Zita, Marco, Betto:
Va meglio!

Spinelloccio:
(*in a nasal voice and with a Bolognese accent*)
With your permission!.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Good morning, Master Spinelloccio!

Zita, Marco, Betto:
He's better!

Ciesca, Rinuccio, Gherardo:
Va meglio!

Nella:
Va meglio!

Simone:
Va meglio!

Spinelloccio:
Ha avuto il benefissio?

Zita, Simone, Betto:
Altro che!

Ciesca, Nella, Marco:
Altro che!

Spinelloccio:
A che potensa l'è arrivata la scienza! Be',
vediamo, vediamo!

Ciesca, Rinuccio, Gherardo:
He's better!

Nella:
He's better!

Simone:
He's better!

Spinelloccio:
Has he really improved?

Zita, Simone, Betto:
Certainly!

Ciesca, Nella, Marco:
Certainly!

Spinelloccio:
The miracles of modern science!
Let's see him!

Spinelloccio tries to go to Buoso's bed, but the relatives restrain him.

Zita, Marco:
No! riposa!

Spinelloccio:
...ma io...

Ciesca, Simone:
riposa!

Gianni Schicchi:

No! No! Maestro Spinelloccio!

Spinelloccio:
Oh Messer Buoso!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ho tanta voglia di riposare. Potreste ripassare
questa sera? Son quasi addormentato.

Spinelloccio:
Sì. Messer Buoso! Ma va meglio?

Gianni Schicchi:
Da morto son rinato! A sta sera.

Spinelloccio:
A sta sera!

Anche all voce sento: è migliorato! Eh! a me non
è mai morto un ammalato! Non ho delle pretese,
il merito l'è tutto della scuola bolognese!

Zita, Marco:
No! He's resting!

Spinelloccio: (*insisting*)
...but I...

Ciesca, Simone:
he's resting!

Gianni Schicchi: (*in a false and trembling
voice*)
No! No! Master Spinelloccio!

Spinelloccio:
Oh Master Buoso!

Gianni Schicchi:
I want to rest. I'm neatly asleep.
Could you call again this evening?

Spinelloccio:
Yes, Master Buoso! But are you better?

Gianni Schicchi:
I'm born again from the dead! Come this evening.

Spinelloccio:
This evening!
(*to the relatives*)
Even his voice sounds better. None of my patients
has ever died. No credit to me, but to the
Bolognese school of medicine!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
A sta sera, Maestro!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
This evening, Master!

Spinelloccio:
A questa sera!

Spinelloccio:
This evening!

After Spinnelloccio leaves, Gianni Schicchi emerges from behind the curtains.

Gianni Schicchi:
Era eguale la voce?

Gianni Schicchi:
Was my voice like Buoso's?

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Tale e quale!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Exactly!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! Vittoria! vittoria!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! Victory! Victory!



Ma non capite?

Don't you understand?

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
No!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
No!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! Che zucconi!
Si corre dal notaio.
"Messer notaio, presto, Via da Buoso Donati!
C'è un gran peggioramento! Vuol fare
testamento! Portate su con voi le pergamene,
presto, messere, se no è tardi!"

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! What blockheads!
Run to the notary:
"Master notary, quickly, come to Buoso Donati.
He's worse and he wants to make his will. Bring
the parchment with you, and hurry, or you'll be
too late!"

Ed il notario viene. Entra: la stanza è semi
oscura, dentro il letto intravede di Buoso la
figura! In testa la cappellina! Al viso la
pezzolina! Fra cappellina e pezzolina un naso
che par quuello di Buoso e invece è il mio,
perchè al posto di Buoso ci son io. Io, lo Schicchi
con altra voce e forma! Io falsifico in me Buoso
Donati, testando e dando il testamento norma!

The notary arrives. He enters, and the room is
dark. He can just see the shape of Buoso on the
bed, a nightcap on his head, and a piece of linen
under his chin. Between the nightcap and the linen,
a nose that looks like Buoso's, but is really mine,
because I shall be Buoso Donati. I, Schicchi, with
another voice, will pretend to be Buoso Donati,
dictating his last will and testament.

O gente! questa matta bizzarria che mi zampilla
nella fantasia è tale da sfidar l'eternità!!

This mad idea arising from my imagination is
good enough to challenge the eternal!!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Schicchi! Schicchi! Schicchi!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Schicchi! Schicchi! Schicchi!

*As if choked with emotion the relatives surround Gianni Schicchi:
they kiss his hands and garments.*

Nella, Marc:o:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Zita:
Va, corri dal notaio.

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Rinuccio:
Io corro dal notaio!

Simone:
Caro Gherardo, Marco, Zita, Ciesca, Nella,
Gherardo, Zita, Betto.

Betto:
Ciesca, Marco, Gherardo, Nella, caro Gherardo,
Marco, Ciesca, Nella,

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Simone:
Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo...

Betto:
Nella, caro Gherardo, Marco...

Gianni Schicchi:
(Oh quale commozione!)

Zita:
Nella, Ciesca, Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Oh giorno d'allegrezza! La beffa ai frati è bella!
Schicchi!!

Gianni Schicchi:
(Oh quale commozione!)

Gherardo:
Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**
Com'è bello l'amore fra i parenti!

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Zita:
Go, rush for the notary.

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Rinuccio:
I'm going for the notary!

Simone:
Dear Gherardo, Marco, Zita, Ciesca, Nella,
Gherardo, Zita, Betto.

Betto:
Ciesca, Marco, Gherardo, Nella, dear Gherardo,
Marco, Ciesca, Nella,

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Simone:
Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo...

Betto:
Nella, dear Gherardo, Marco...

Gianni Schicchi:
(Their love is so touching!)

Zita:
Nella, Ciesca, Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Oh what a happy day. What a good joke to play
on the monks! Schicchi!!

Gianni Schicchi:
(Their love is so touching!)

Gherardo:
Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**
It's so good to have loving relatives!

Simone:

O Gianni, ora pensiamo un po' alla divisione:
i fiorini in contanti.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Betto:
In parti eguali!

Simone:

A me i poderi di Fucecchio.

Zita:

A me quelli di Figline.

Betto:

A me quelli di Prato.

Gherardo:

A noi le terre d'Empoli.

Marco:

A me quelle di Quintole.

Betto:

A me quelli di Prato.

Simone:

E quelle di Fucecchio.

Zita:

Resterebbero ancora: la mula, questa casa e i
mulini di Signa.

Marco:

Son le cose migliore.

Simone:

Ah! capisco, capisco! perchè sono il più vecchio
e sono stato podestà a Fucecchio, volete darli a
me! Io vi ringrazio!

Zita:

No, no, no, no! Un momento! Se tu se' vecchio
peggio per te, peggio per te!

Ciesca, Nella:

Sentilo, sentilo, il podestà!

Gherardo:

...il podestà!

Marco:

...il podestà!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

Vorrebbe il meglio dell'eredità!

Simone:

Oh Gianni, let's think for a moment about how
we're going to divide the money.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Betto:
In equal shares!

Simone:

For me, the farms at Fucecchio.

Zita:

For me, the farms at Figline.

Betto:

For me, those at Prato.

Gherardo:

For us, the land at Empoli.

Marco:

For me, Quintole.

Betto:

For me, Prato.

Simone:

And those at Fucecchio.

Zita:

There would also be the mule, this house, and
the mills at Signa

Marco:

They're the best properties.

Simone:

I understand. Because I'm the oldest, and was
mayor of Fucecchio, you want me to have them.
Thank you!

Zita:

No, no, no, no! One moment. If you're the
oldest, that's even worse for you!

Ciesca, Nella:

Listen to him, he wants it all!

Gherardo:

...the mayor!

Marco:

...the mayor!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

He wants the best part of the inheritance!

Zita, Nella, Gherardo:

Sentilo, sentilo!

Gianni Schicchi:

(Quanto dura l'amore fra i parenti!)

Marco:

La casa, la mula i mulini di Signa toccano a me!

Betto:

La casa, i mulini di Signa, la mula toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! ah!

Gherardo, Simone:

La mula, la casa, i mulini di Signa toccano a me!

Marco:

Di Signa i mulini, la mula, la casa toccano a me!

Zita, Nella:

La mula, i mulini, la casa toccano a me!

Ciesca:

La casa, la mula, i mulini toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

ah! ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

La casa, i mulini toccano a me!

Ciesca:

La casa a me!

Nella, Gherardo:

La mula, la casa toccano a me!

Marco:

I mulini di Signa toccano a me!

Marco:

Di Signa i mulini, la mula, la casa toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

ah! ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

La mula, la casa toccano a me!

Ciesca:

La mula, i mulini toccano a me!

Nella:

La casa a me!

Zita, Nella, Gherardo:

Listen to him!

Gianni Schicchi: (*aside, laughing*)

(So much for loving relatives!)

Marco:

I deserve the house, mule and sawmills!

Betto:

I deserve the house and sawmills at Signa!

Gianni Schicchi: (*aside, laughing*)

Ah! ah!

Gherardo, Simone:

I deserve the mule, house and sawmills!!

Marco:

I deserve the sawmills and mule at Signa!

Zita, Nella:

I deserve the house, mule and sawmills!

Ciesca:

I deserve the house, mule and sawmills!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

I deserve the house and sawmills!

Ciesca:

The house is for me!

Nella, Gherardo:

I deserve the mule and the house!

Marco:

I deserve the sawmills at Signa!

Marco:

I deserve the mule, house and sawmills!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

I deserve the mule and house!

Ciesca:

I deserve the mule and sawmills!

Nella:

The house is for me!

Gherardo:

I mulini di Signa toccano a me!

Marco:

La casa, la mula toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

ah! ah! ah! ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

La casa, la mula, sì, toccano a me!

Ciesca:

La mula, la casa, sì, toccano a me!

Nella, Simone, Betto:

La mula, i mulini, sì, toccano a me!

Gherardo:

I mulini di Signa, sì, toccano a me!

Marco:

La casa, i mulini, sì, toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

ah! ah! ah! ah!

Gherardo:

The house, the mule, the sawmills at Signa!

Marco:

The house, the mule, the sawmills at Signa!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

The mule, the sawmills at Signa, the house!

Ciesca:

The house, the sawmills at Signa, the mule!

Nella, Simone, Betto:

At Signa, the sawmills, the mule, the house!

Gherardo:

The sawmills at Signa are for me!

Marco:

The house, the sawmills and the mule for me!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah!

The pealing of a funeral bell is heard. All the relatives are struck dumb with confusion.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**

L'hanno saputo!

Hanno saputo che Buoso è crepato!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:** *(in a stifled voice)*

They already know!

The bell tolls for Buoso's death!

Gherardo rushes down the stairs.

Gianni Schicchi:

Tutto crollato!

Gianni Schicchi:

All is lost!

Lauretta:

Babbo, si può sapere?

L'uccellino non vuole più minuzzoli.

Lauretta: *(appearing from the terrace)*

Father, what shall I do?

The bird doesn't want any more to eat.

Gianni Schicchi:

Ora dàgli da bere!

Gianni Schicchi: *(dryly)*

Give him water!

Lauretta again disappears on the terrace. Gherardo returns breathlessly; he can't speak, but relatives crowd around him and he motions negatively.

Gherardo:È preso un accidentale moro battezzato
del signor capitano!**Gherardo:** *(out of breath)*The captain's servant, the moor, died in an
accident!**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone, Betto:**

Requiescat in pace!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone, Betto:

May he rest in peace!

Simone:

Per la casa, la mula, i mulini
propongo di rimetterci all'giustizia,
all'onestà di Schicchi!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**
Rimettiamoci a Schicchi!

Gianni Schicchi:

Come volete.
Datemi i panni per vestirmi.
Presto! Presto!

Simone: (with authority)

The mule, the sawmills, and the house, I suggest
we leave to Schicchi's sense of honesty and
justice!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**
We bow to Schicchi!!

Gianni Schicchi:

As you wish.
Give me the clothes so I can dress.
Quickly! Quickly!

*Zita, Nella and Ciesca take Buoso's kerchief, night-hat, and nightgown from a chest,
and pass them to Gianni Schicchi for him to put on.*

Zita:

Ecco la cappellina!

(Se mi lasci la mula, questa casa, i mulini di
Signa, ti do trenta fiorini!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Zita: (coming close to Schicchi)

Here's the nightcap!!

(in a whisper)

(If you leave me the mule, the house and the
sawmills at Signa, I'll give you thirty florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Zita moves away, rubbing her hands in delight.

Simone:

(Se lasci a me la casa, la mula ed i mulini,
ti do cento fiorini!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Simone: (in a whisper)

(If you leave me the mule, this house and the
mills, I'll give you one hundred florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Betto:

(Gianni, se tu mi lasci questa casa, la mula ed i
mulini di Signa, ti gonfio di quattrini!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Betto: (whispering to Schicchi)

(Gianni, if you leave me the house, the mule and
the sawmills I'll stuff you with florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Nella:

Ecco la pezzolina!

(Se lasci a noi la mula, i mulini di Signa e questa
casa, a furia di fiorini ti s'intasa!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Nella: (aloud)

Here's the kerchief!

(in a whisper to Schicchi)

(If you leave me the mule, the sawmills and the
house at Signa, I'll smother you with florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Nella moves off, goes to Gherardo, and both rub their hands as a sign of victory.

Ciesca:

Ed ecco la camicia!

(Se ci lasci la mula, i mulini di Signa e questa casa, per te mille fiorini!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Ciesca:

And here's the nightshirt!

(in a whisper to Gianni Schicchi)

(If you leave me the mule, the sawmills at Signa and this house, I'll give you 1000 florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

All are satisfied and rub their hands. Meanwhile Gianni Schicchi puts on the nightgown, and then with a mirror in one hand, arranges the kerchief and nightcap.

The three women gather round Gianni Schicchi and admire him comically; Simone is at the window to watch for the arrival of the notary. Gherardo clears the table for the notary to sit at; Marco and Betto draw the bed curtains and tidy up the bedchamber.

Zita:

È bello portentoso! Chi vuoi che non s'inganni?

Zita:

A wonderful situation! Who would not be deluded?

Ciesca:

Fa' presto, bambolino, chè devi andare a letto.

Ciesca: *(to Schicchi)*

Hurry and go to bed little boy.

Nella:

Spogliati, bambolino, chè ti mettiamo in letto.

Nella: *(to Schicchi)*

Hurry little darling, soon it will be bedtime

Zita:

È Gianni che fa Buoso?

Zita:

Is Gianni playing Buoso?

Ciesca:

Se va bene il giochetto...

Ciesca:

If this prank is successful...

Nella:

E non aver, non aver dispetto, no, no,

Nella:

And don't mind it at all...

Zita:

È Buoso che fa Gianni?

Zita:

Is Buoso playing Gianni?

Ciesca:

...ti diamo un confortino!

Ciesca:

...we promise to reward you!

Zita:

...il testamento è odioso?

Zita:

...is there a will that's odious?

Ciesca:

L'uovo divien pulcino.

Ciesca:

Acorns become great oak trees.

Nella:

...se cambio il camicino!

Nella:

...if I should change your nightshirt!

Zita:

Un camicion maestoso...

Zita:

A grand nightshirt...

Ciesca:

...il fior, il fior diventa frutto...

Ciesca:

...buds flower into blossoms...

Nella:

Si spiuma il canarino...

Zita:

...il viso, il viso dormiglioso...

Ciesca:

...i frati mangian tutto...

Nella:

...la volpe cambia pelo, il ragno...

Zita:

...il naso, poderoso...

Ciesca:

...ma il frate impoverisce...

Nella:

...ragnatela, il cane cambia...

Zita:

...l'accento lamentoso, ah!

Ciesca:

La Cesca s'arricchisce, ah!

Nella:

...cuccia, la serpe cambia buccia, e il buon Gianni...

Zita:

...cambia panni...

Nella:

...per poterci servir!

Ciesca:

Cambia viso...

Zita:

...muso e naso...

Ciesca:

...per poterci servir!

Nella:

Cambia accento...

Zita:

...testamento...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

...per poterci servir!

Gianni Schicchi:

Vi servirò a dover!

Nella:

Birds often change their plumage...

Zita:

...a face tired and sleepy...

Ciesca:

...the monks eat too much...

Nella:

...chameleons change colors, the breezes...

Zita:

...his nose, so important...

Ciesca:

...but the impoverished monks...

Nella:

...change directions, canaries change...

Zita:

...a lamenting voice!

Ciesca:

Ciesca will have her own money, ah!

Nella:

...the worm turns, and our Gianni Schicchi...

Zita:

...change clothing...

Nella:

...so our will might prevail!

Ciesca:

His face changes...

Zita:

...his nose changes...

Ciesca:

...so our will might prevail!

Nella:

His accent changes...

Zita:

...the will...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

...so our will might prevail!

Gianni Schicchi:

Leave everything to me!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Bravo così!

Gianni Schicchi:
Contente vi farò!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Proprio così!
O Gianni, Gianni, nostro salvatore!

Ciesca, Nella:
O Gianni Schicchi, nostro salvatore!

Zita:
O Schicchi,

Ciesca, Nella:
O Schicchi,

Zita:
O Gianni Schicchi, nostro salvatore!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Wonderful!

Gianni Schicchi:
I want to make you happy!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Anything you say!
Oh Gianni, Gianni, our savior!

Ciesca, Nella:
Oh Gianni Schicchi, our savior!

Zita:
Oh Schicchi,

Ciesca, Nella:
Oh Schicchi,

Zita:
Oh Gianni Schicchi, our savior!

The men also gather around Schicchi.

Nella, Gherardo:
È preciso!

Ciesca, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Perfetto!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
A letto!

Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
A letto!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
A letto!

Marco, Simone, Betto:
A letto!

Nella, Gherardo:
Precisely!

Ciesca, Marco, Simone, Betto:
Perfect!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
To bed!

Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:
To bed!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
To bed!

Marco, Simone, Betto:
To bed!

They push Schicchi toward the bed, but he stops them with a solemn gesture.

Gianni Schicchi:
Prima un avvertimento!
O Signori, giudizio!
Voi lo sapete il bando?
“Per chi sostituisce se stesso
in luogo d’altri in testamenti
e lasciti, per lui e per i complici
c’è il taglio della mano
e poi l’esilio!”
Ricordatelo bene! Se fossimo scoperti.
la vedete Firenze?

Gianni Schicchi:
First a warning.
Be careful!
Do you know the law?
“Anyone who impersonates
for the sake of a will or legacy,
he and his accomplices
shall have a hand cut off,
and be exiled.”
Remember that if we’re found out.
Do you see Florence?

Gianni points to Arnolfo's Tower, visible beyond the balcony.

Andante giusto
GIANNI SCHICCHI



Ad - dio, Fi - ren - ze, ad - dio, cie-lo di - vi - no.

Addio, Firenze, addio cielo divino,
io ti saluto con questo moncherino,
e vo randagio come un Ghibellino!

Farewell, Florence, heavenly sky,
I wave good-bye with this stump,
to wander around like a Ghibelline!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**

Addio, Firenze, addio cielo divino,
io ti saluto con questo moncherino,
e vo randagio come un Ghibellino!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:** (*looking out nervously*)

Farewell, Florence, heavenly sky,
I wave good-bye with this stump,
to wander around like a Ghibelline!

There is a knock at the door.

Gianni scrambles into bed; the relatives help him in great haste, then darken the room by drawing the curtains. They place a candle on the writing table for the notary, and then open the door.

Rinuccio:

Ecco il notaro!

Rinuccio:

Here's the notary!

Il Notaio, Pinellino, Guccio:

Messer Buoso, buon giorno!

The Notary, Pinellino, Guccio: (*entering*)

Good morning, Master Buoso!

Gianni Schicchi:

Oh! siete qui? Grazie, messere Amantio!
O Pinellino calzolaio, grazie!
Grazie, Guccio tintore, troppo buoni,
troppo buoni di venirmi a servir da testimoni!

Gianni Schicchi: (*imitating the voice*)

Oh! You're here? Thank you. Master Amantio,
and Pinellino the cobbler. Thank you, Guccio,
the dyer. You're so kind to come and witness my
will!

Pinellino:

Povero Buoso! Io l'ho sempre calzato!
vederlo in quello stato vien da piangere!

Pinellino: (*moved*)

Poor Buoso! I've always made his shoes. Seeing
him like this makes me cry!

*Meanwhile, the notary takes parchments and seals and places them on the table;
he seats himself in a chair, the witnesses standing beside him.*

Gianni Schicchi:

Il testamento avrei voluto scriverlo con la
scrittura mia, me l'impedisce la paralisia.
Perciò volli un notaio, solemne et leale!

Gianni Schicchi:

I wanted to make my will with my own hand.
But paralysis prevents me, so I wanted a notary,
a proper one!

Il Notaio:

O messer Buoso, grazie!
Dunque tu soffri di paralisia?

The Notary:

Master Buoso, thank you!
So you're suffering from paralysis?

Gianni slowly raises his trembling hands. The relatives express pity.

Ciesca, Nella:
Povero Buoso!

Ciesca, Nella:
Poor Buoso!

Zita, Simone:
Povero Buoso!

Zita, Simone:
Poor Buoso!

Il Notaio:
Oh! poveretto!
Basta! I testi videro, testes viderunt!
Possiamo incominciare. Ma i parenti?

The Notary:
Oh! Poor man!
That's enough! The witnesses have seen him!
We can begin. But what about the relatives?

Gianni Schicchi:
Che restino presenti!

Gianni Schicchi:
They may be present!

Il Notaio:
Dunque incomincio:

The Notary:
Therefore, I begin:

"In Dei nomini, anno Dei nostri Jesu Christi ab eius salutifera incarnatione millesimo ducentesimo nonagesimo nono, die prima septembris, indictione undecima, ego notaro Amantio di Nicolao, civis Florentiae, per voluntatem Buosi Donati scribo hoc testamentum."

Gianni Schicchi:
Annullans, revocans, et irritans omne aliud testamentum!

Gianni Schicchi: *(holding out his hand)*
Annulling, revoking, and making null and void all former wills!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
Che previdenza!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
How prudent!

Marco, Simone, Betto:
Che previdenza!

Marco, Simone, Betto:
How prudent!

Il Notaio:
Un preambolo: dimmi, i funerali
(il più tardi possibile)
li vuoi ricchi? fastosi? dispendiosi?

The Notary:
The preamble: tell me, the funeral
(may it be delayed as long as possible)
do you want it extravagant and expensive?

Gianni Schicchi:
No, no, no! pochi quattrini!
Non si spendano più di due fiorini!

Gianni Schicchi:
No, no, no! Nothing much!
It shouldn't cost more than two florins!

Gherardo:
Oh! che modestia!

Gherardo:
Oh! How modest!

Marco:
Oh! che modestia!

Marco:
Oh! How modest!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:
Povero zio!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:
Poor uncle!

Zita:
Che animo!

Zita:
How honorable!

Betto:
Che cuore!

Betto:
What a heart!

Simone:

Gli torna onore!

Gianni Schicchi:

Lascio ai frati minori e all'opera di Santa Reparata.

Betto, Simone:

Bravo!

Zita, Marco:

Bravo!

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Bisogna sempre pensare alla beneficenza!

Il Notaio:

Non ti sembra un po' poco?

Gianni Schicchi:

Chi crepa e lascia molto alle congreghe e ai frati fa dire a chi rimane: "Eran quattrini rubati!"

Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Che massime!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

Che mente!

Zita, Simone:

Che saggezza!

Il Notaio:

Che lucidezza!

Gianni Schicchi:

I fiorini in contanti li lascio in parti eguali fra i parenti.

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:

Oh! grazie, zio!

Zita:

Grazie, cugino!

Simone, Betto:

Grazie, cognato!

Gianni Schicchi:

Lascio a Simone i beni di Fucecchio.

Simone:

Grazie!

Gianni Schicchi:

Alla Zita i poderi di Figline.

Simone:

So honorable!

Gianni Schicchi:

I leave the brothers of Santa Reparata five lire.

Betto, Simone:

Bravo!

Zita, Marco:

Bravo!

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Well done! We must remember the needy!

The Notary: (subtly)

Doesn't it seem rather little?

Gianni Schicchi:

If you leave too much to the Church, people say: "It was stolen money."'''

Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

What generosity!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

What generosity!

Zita, Simone:

What wisdom!

The Notary:

What intelligence!

Gianni Schicchi:

The money in cash I leave to my relatives in equal shares.

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:

Oh! Thank you, uncle!

Zita:

Thank you, cousin!

Simone, Betto:

Thank you, brother-in-law!

Gianni Schicchi:

I leave Simone the estates at Fucecchio.

Simone:

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Zita, the farms at Figline.

Zita:

Grazie, grazie!

Gianni Schicchi:

A Betto i campi di Prato.

Betto:

Grazie, cognato!

Gianni Schicchi:

A Nella ed a Gherardo i beni d'Empoli.

Nella, Gherardo:

Grazie, grazie!

Gianni Schicchi:

Alla Ciesca ed a Marco i beni a Quintole.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**

(Ora siamo alla mula, alla casa ed ai mulini.)

Gianni Schicchi:Lascio la mula, quella che costa trecento fiorini,
che è la migliore mula di Toscana
al mio devoto amico: Gianni Schicchi.**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**

Come? Come? Com'è?

Ciesca, Nella:

Com'è?

Il Notaio:Mulam relinquit ejus amico devoto Joanni
Schicchi.**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Betto:**
Ma...**Simone:**Cosa vuoi che gl'importi a Gianni Schicchi di
quella mula?**Gianni Schicchi:**Tienti bono, Simone! Lo so io quel che vuole
Gianni Schicchi!**I parenti:**

Ah! furfante, furfante, furfante!

Gianni Schicchi:Lascio la casa di Firenze al mio devoto
affezionato amico Gianni Schicchi!**Zita:**

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Betto, the fields of Prato.

Betto:

Thank you, brother-in-law!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Nella and Gherardo, those at Empoli.

Nella, Gherardo:

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Ciesca and Marco, those at Quintole.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:** (*with clenched teeth*)
(Now the mule, the house, the mills.)**Gianni Schicchi:**I give the mule, worth 300 florins, and best mule
in Tuscany,
to my friend: Gianni Schicchi.**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**

What? What is this?

Ciesca, Nella:

What is this?

The Notary:He bequeaths the mule to his devoted friend,
Gianni Schicchi.**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Betto:**
But...**Simone:**

Why does Gianni Schicchi want the mule?

Gianni Schicchi:Be quiet, Simone, I know what Gianni Schicchi
wants!**The Relatives:** (*grumbling*)

Ah! Scoundrel!

Gianni Schicchi:I leave my house in Florence to my devoted
friend, Gianni Schicchi!

Zita, Betto:

Ah! basta, basta! basta!

Ciesca, Nella:

Un accidente, basta!

Gherardo:

A Gianni Schicchi, basta!

Marco:

A quel furfante, basta!

Simone:

Un accidente, basta!

Zita:

Un accidente, a quel furfante.

Ciesca, Nella:

A Gianni Schicchi! A quel furfante di Gianni.

Gherardo:

A quel furfante! A quel furfante di Gianni.

Marco, Betto:

A Gianni Schicchi, a quel furfante

Simone:

A quel furfante, a quel furfante

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

di Gianni Schicchi! Ci ribelliamo

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

[Schicchi! Ci ribelliamo, ci ribelliamo.

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

Ci ribelliamo.

Betto, Simone:

A quel furfante

Zita:

A quel furfante, ci ri...

Ciesca, Nella:

A quel furfante di Gianni Schicchi! Ci ri...

Gherardo:

A quel...

Marco:

A quel furfante di Gianni Schicchi! Ci ribellia.

Simone, Betto:

di Gianni Schicchi! Ah! sì, piuttosto, ci ribelliamo.

Zita, Betto:

Ah! Enough!

Ciesca, Nella:

It's a mistake, enough!

Gherardo:

Gianni Schicchi, enough!

Marco:

That scoundrel, enough!

Simone:

It's a mistake, enough!

Zita:

It's a mistake, that scoundrel.

Ciesca, Nella:

Gianni Schicchi! That scoundrel Gianni.

Gherardo:

That scoundrel, Gianni.

Marco, Betto:

Gianni Schicchi, that scoundrel.

Simone:

That scoundrel.

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Gianni Schicchi! We'll protest.

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

Schicchi! We protest.

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

We protest.

Betto, Simone:

That scoundrel.

Zita:

That scoundrel.

Ciesca, Nella:

That scoundrel, Gianni Schicchi! We pro...

Gherardo:

That...

Marco:

That scoundrel Gianni Schicchi! We protest.

Simone, Betto:

Gianni Schicchi! We Protest.

Schicchi raises his hand to remind them about the penalty for conspiring to forge a will.

Gianni Schicchi:

Addio, Firenze...
...addio, cielo divino,

Simone, Betto:

...ci ribelliamo, ci ri...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto:

Ah!

Gianni Schicchi:

Io ti saluto.

Il Notaio:

Non si disturbi del testator la volontà!

Gianni Schicchi:

Messer Amantio, io lascio a chi mi pare!
Ho in mente un testamento e sarà quello!
Se gridano, sto calmo e canterello.

Guccio:

Ah! che uomo!

Pinellino:

Che uomo!

Gianni Schicchi:

E i mulini di Signa...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto

I mulini di Signa?

Gianni Schicchi

I mulini di Signa (addio, Firenze!)
li lascio al caro (addio, cielo divino!)
affezionato amico Gianni Schicchi!

Gianni Schicchi:

Farewell, Firenze...
...farewell, heavenly skies.

Simone, Betto:

...we protest, we pro...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto:

Ah!

Gianni Schicchi:

I salute you.

The Notary: (*sharply*)

Don't disturb a man making his will!

Gianni Schicchi:

Master Amantio. I'll leave things as I please.
I've decided my will, and that's how it shall be!
My relatives may shout, but I'm calm, and I
shall sing.

Guccio:

Ah! What a man!

Pinellino:

What a man!

Gianni Schicchi:

And the mills at Signa...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto (*rapidly*)

The mills at Signa?

Gianni Schicchi

The mills at Signa (farewell Florence!)
I leave to my devoted friend (farewell divine
skies) Gianni Schicchi!

The relatives scream in protest.

Ecco fatto! Zita, di vostra borsa date venti fiorini
ai testimoni e cento al buon notaio!

Il Notaio:

Messer Buoso, grazie!

Gianni Schicchi:

Niente saluti. Andate, andate. Siamo forti!

Zita, from your own purse, give 20 florins to the
witnesses, and 100 to the good notary!

The Notary:

Master Buoso, thank you!

Gianni Schicchi: (*spitefully*)

No farewells. Go now. We're strong!!

Il Notaio:

Ah! che uomo, che uomo!

Pinellino, Guccio:

Che uomo! che perdita!

Il Notaio:

Che peccato!

The Notary, Pinellino, Guccio:

che perdita!

Guccio:

Coraggio!

Pinellino:

Coraggio!

The Notary: (*moving towards the door*)

Ah! What a man!

Pinellino, Guccio: (*moving away, much moved*)

What a man! What a loss!

The Notary:

How sad!

The Notary, Pinellino, Guccio:

What a loss!

Guccio: (*to the relatives*)

Courage!

Pinellino: (*exits weeping*)

Courage!

As soon as the notary and witnesses have departed, the relatives rush in a mass towards Gianni Schicchi, who tries to defend himself as best as he can.

Zita:

Laadro.

Zita: (*with fury*)

Robber.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto:

Ladro, ladro, ladro, furfante, traditore,
birbante, iniquo, ladro, ladro,
furfante, birbante, traditore!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto:

Thief, thief, thief, scoundrel, traitor,
rascal, rogue, thief, thief,
scoundrel, rogue, traitor!

Gianni Schicchi:

Gente taccagna! Vi caccio via di casa mia!
È casa mia!

Gianni Schicchi:

Miserly people! Get out of my house!
It's my house now!

Schicchi brandishes Buoso's stick, with which he deals effective blows at the relatives. The relatives run around here and there, pursued by Schicchi, as they pillage the house.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto

Saccheggia! Saccheggia! Saccheggia!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,

Simone, Betto

Plunder! Plunder! Plunderer!

Zita:

Bottino! bottino!

Zita:

Grab everything!

Ciesca, Nella:

Le pezze di lino!

Ciesca, Nella:

Pieces of linen!

Marco:

La roba d'argento!

Marco:

The silver robe!

Gherardo, Simone, Betto:

[Saccheggia! saccheggia!

Gherardo, Simone, Betto:

Let's pillage!

Gianni Schicchi:

Via! Via!

Gianni Schicchi:

Get out of here!

Zita:

Le pezze di tela! La roba d'argento!

Ciesca, Nella:

La roba d'argento! Le pezze di tela!

Gherardo:

La roba d'argento! Bottino! Saccheggia!

Marco:

Bottino! bottino! Saccheggia! saccheggia!

Simone, Betto:

Saccheggia! saccheggia! Bottino! bottino!

Gianni Schicchi:

È casa mia!

Zita:

La roba d'argento! Le pezze di tela!

Ciesca, Nella:

Le pezze di tela! La roba d'argento!

Gherardo, Marco:

Saccheggia! saccheggia! Bottino! bottino!

Simone, Betto:Saccheggia! saccheggia! Saccheggia!
saccheggia!**Gianni Schicchi:**Via! Via! Via! Via! Via! Via!
È casa mia!**Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:**

ladro, ladro, furfante, traditore!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo: *(from without)*

...ladro, iniquo birbante, traditore!

Gianni Schicchi:

Via! Via! Via!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

...ladro, ladro, iniquo, traditore!

Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

...ladro, ladro, furfante, traditore!

Gianni Schicchi:

Via! Via!

Zita:

The linen! The silver robe!

Ciesca, Nella:

The silver robe! The linen!

Gherardo:

The silver robe! Grab everything! Pillage!

Marco:

Grab everything! Pillage!

Simone, Betto:

Pillage! Grab everything!

Gianni Schicchi:

It's my house now!

Zita:

The silver robe! The linen!

Ciesca, Nella:

The linen! The silver robe!

Gherardo, Marco:

Plunder! Take everything!

Simone, Betto:

Plunder! Plunder! Plunder! Plunder!

Gianni Schicchi: *(shouting)*Get out!
It's my house now!**Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:** *(from afar)*

robber, scoundrel, traitor!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

...robber, rascal, traitor!

Gianni Schicchi: *(from outside)*

Get out of here!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

...robber, traitor!

Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

...robber, scoundrel, traitor!

Gianni Schicchi:

Get out of here!

From outside, Rinuccio opens the large window: Florence appears, bathed in glorious sunshine; the two lovers are embracing each other on the terrace.

Rinuccio:

Lauretta mia, staremo sempre qui.
Guarda, Firenze è d'oro Fiesole è bella!

Lauretta:

Là mi giurasti amore!

Rinuccio:

Ti chiesi un bacio;

Lauretta:

...il primo bacio...

Rinuccio:

...tremante e bianca volgesti il viso.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

Firenze da lontano ci parve il Paradiso!

Rinuccio:

My Lauretta, we'll stay here forever.
Look, Florence is golden, Fiesole is beautiful!

Lauretta:

In Fiesole, you swore to love me!

Rinuccio:

I asked you for our first kiss;

Lauretta:

...the first kiss...

Rinuccio:

...then pale and trembling you faced me.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

In the distance, Florence looks like Paradise!

Gianni Schicchi returns, laden with bundles which he throws on the floor.

Gianni Schicchi:

La masnada fuggì!

Gianni Schicchi:

I thought they'd never leave!

Schicchi sees the lovers, and is moved; he smiles, then takes off his cap and turns to the audience.

Ditemi voi, signori, se i quattrini di Buoso
potevan finir meglio di così?
Per questa bizzarria m'han cacciato all'inferno,
e così sia; ma con licenza del gran padre
Dante, se stasera vi siete divertiti, concedetemi
voi..

Tell me, gentlemen, if you think Buoso's money
would have been better spent?
For this bizarre trick, they chased me into Hell,
Never mind; but with apologies to the great
Dante, if you were amused this evening, allow
me to plead "extenuating circumstances."

Gianni Schicchi bows gracefully to the audience.

End of Gianni Schicchi

Discography

Il Tabarro

- 1949 Petrella (Giorgetta); Scalini (Luigi); Reali (Michele);
Radio Italia Orchestra; Baroni (Conductor)
- 1955 Mas (Giorgetta); Prandelli (Luigi); Gobbi (Michele);
Rome Opera Orchestra and Chorus; Bellezza (Conductor)
- 1955 De Rosa (Giorgetta); Puma (Luigi); Bastianini (Michele);
Hamburg Radio Symphony Orchestra; Cordone (Conductor)
- 1961 Tebaldi (Giorgetta); del Monaco (Luigi); Merrill (Michele);
Florence Maggio Musicale Chorus and Orchestra; Gardelli (Conductor)
- 1969 Michieli (Giorgetta); Saldari (Luigi); Mori (Michele);
La Fenice Chorus and Orchestra; de Fabritis (Conductor)
- 1970 Price (Giorgetta); Domingo (Luigi); Milnes (Michele);
Alldia Choir/New Philharmonia Orchestra; Leinsdorf (Conductor)
- 1970 Rafanelli (Giorgetta); Bottin (Luigi); Fioravanti (Michele);
Florence Teatro Comunale Chorus and Orchestra; Delogu (Conductor)
- 1977 Scotto (Giorgetta); Domingo (Luigi); Wixell (Michele);
Ambrosian Opera Chorus/New Philharmonia Orchestra; Maazel (Conductor)
- 1979 Zchau (Giorgetta); Atlantov (Luigi); Bruson (Michele);
Vienna State Opera Orchestra; Albrecht (Conductor)
- 1987 Takody (Giorgetta); Lamberti (Luigi); Nimsgern (Michele);
Bavarian Radio Chorus/Munich Radio Orchestra; Patanè (Conductor)
- 1991 Freni (Giorgetta); Giacomini (Luigi); Pons (Lichele);
Florence Maggio Musicale Orchestra; Bartoletti (Conductor)
- 1997 Guleghina (Giorgetta); Shicoff (Luigi); Guelfi (Michele);
London Symphony Orchestra; Pappano (Conductor)

Suor Angelica

- 1950 Carteri (Angelica); Truccato Pace (Aunt Princess);
Radio Italia Chorus and Orchestra; Previtali (Conductor)
- 1957 de los Angeles (Angelica); Barbieri (Aunt Princess);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra; Serafin (Conductor)
- 1961 Tebaldi (Angelica); Simionato (Aunt Princess);
Florence Maggio Musicale Chorus and Orchestra; Gardelli (Conductor)
- 1969 Chiara (Angelica); Martino (Aunt Princess);
La Fenice Chorus and Orchestra; de Fabritis (Conductor)
- 1972 Ricciarelli (Angelica); Cossotto (Aunt Princess);
Rome Polyphonic Chorus/Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia;
Bartoletti (Conductor)
- 1976 Scotto (Angelica); Horne (Aunt Princess);
Ambrosian Opera Chorus/New Philharmonia Orchestra; Maazel (Conductor)
- 1978 Sutherland (Angelica); Ludwig (Aunt Princess);
London Opera Chorus/National Philharmonic Orchestra; Bonyng (Conductor)
- 1979 Lorengar (Angelica); Meijer (Aunt Princess);
Vienna State Opera Orchestra; Albrecht (Conductor)
- 1983 Tokody (Angelica); Poka (Aunt Princess);
Hungarian State Chorus and Orchestra; Gardelli (Conductor)
- 1987 Popp (Angelica); Lipovsek (Aunt Princess);
Bavarian Radio Chorus/Munich Boys Choir/Munich Radio Orchestra;
Patanè (Conductor)
- 1991 Frittoli (Angelica); Podles (Aunt Princess);
Florence Maggio Musicale Chorus and Orchestra; Bartoletti (Conductor)
- 1997 Gallardo-Domas (Angelica); Dinissa (Aunt Princess);
Philharmonia Orchestra; Pappano (Conductor)

Gianni Schicchi

- 1949 Taddei (Schicchi); Ripisardi (Lauretta); Savio (Rinuccio);
Radio Italia Orchestra; Simonetto (Conductor)
- 1958 Gobbi (Schicchi); de los Angeles (Lauretta); del Monte (Rinuccio);
Rome Opera Orchestra; Santini (Conductor)
- 1961 Corena (Schicchi); Tebaldi (Lauretta); Lazzari (Rinuccio);
Florence Maggio Musicale Orchestra; Gardelli (Conductor)
- 1969 Mori (Schicchi); Michieli (Lauretta); Saldari (Rinuccio);
La Fenice Orchestra and Chorus; de Fabritis (Conductor)
- 1973 Fischer-Dieskau (Schicchi); Schary (Lauretta); Ahnsjo (Rinuccio);
Bavarian State Opera Chorus and Orchestra; Sawallisch (Conductor)
- 1976 Gobbi (Schicchi); Cortubas (Lauretta); Domingo (Rinuccio);
London Symphony Orchestra; Maazel (Conductor)
- 1984 Melis (Schicchi); Kalmar (Lauretta); Gulyas (Rinuccio);
Hungarian State Opera Orchestra; Ferencsik (Conductor)
- 1988 Panerai (Schicchi); Donath (Lauretta); Seiffert (Rinuccio);
Munich Radio Orchestra; Patanè (Conductor)
- 1991 Nucci (Schicchi); Freni (Lauretta); Alagna (Rinuccio)
Florence Maggio Musical Orchestra; Bartoletti (Conductor)
- 1997 Van Dam (Schicchi); Gheorghiu (Lauretta); Alagna (Rinuccio);
London Symphony Orchestra; Pappano (Conductor)

Videography

Il Tabarro:

Warner DVD (1983)

Sass (Giorgetta); Martinucci (Luigi); Cappuccilli (Michele)

Suor Angelica:

Warner DVD (1983)

Plowright (Angelica); Vejzovic (Aunt Princess)

Gianni Schicchi:

Warner DVD (1984)

Pons (Schicchi); Gasdia (Lauretta); Marusin (Rinuccio)
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra; Gavazzeni (Conductor);
Bussotti (Director); Large (Video Director)

DICTIONARY OF OPERA AND MUSICAL TERMS

Accelerando - Play the music faster, but gradually.

Adagio - At a slow or gliding tempo, not as slow as largo, but not as fast as andante.

Agitato - Restless or agitated.

Allegro - At a brisk or lively tempo, faster than andante but not as fast as presto.

Andante - A moderately slow, easy-going tempo.

Appoggiatura - An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

Arabesque - Flourishes or fancy patterns usually applying to vocal virtuosity.

Aria - A solo song usually structured in a formal pattern. Arias generally convey reflective and introspective thoughts rather than descriptive action.

Arietta - A shortened form of aria.

Arioso - A musical passage or composition having a mixture of free recitative and metrical song.

Arpeggio - Producing the tones of a chord in succession rather than simultaneously.

Atonal - Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

Ballad opera - Eighteenth-century English opera consisting of spoken dialogue and music derived from popular ballad and folksong sources. The most famous is *The Beggar's Opera*, which is a satire of the Italian opera seria.

Bar - A vertical line across the stave that divides the music into measures.

Baritone - A male singing voice ranging between bass and tenor.

Baroque - A style of artistic expression prevalent in the 17th century that is marked by the use of complex forms, bold ornamentation, and florid decoration. The Baroque period extends from approximately 1600 to 1750 and includes the works of the original creators of modern opera, the Camerata, as well as the later works by Bach and Handel.

Bass - The lowest male voice, usually divided into categories such as:

Basso buffo - A bass voice that specializes in comic roles: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Basso cantante - A bass voice that demonstrates melodic singing quality: King Philip in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Basso profondo - the deepest, most profound, or most dramatic of bass voices: Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Bel canto - Literally, "beautiful singing." It originated in Italian opera of the 17th and 18th centuries and stressed beautiful tones produced with ease, clarity, purity, and evenness, together with an agile vocal technique and virtuosity. Bel canto flourished in the first half of the 19th century in the works of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti.

Cabaletta - A lively, concluding portion of an aria or duet. The term is derived from the Italian word "cavallo," or horse: it metaphorically describes a horse galloping to the finish line.

Cadenza - A flourish or brilliant part of an aria (or concerto) commonly inserted just before a finale. It is usually performed without accompaniment.

Camerata - A gathering of Florentine writers and musicians between 1590 and 1600 who attempted to recreate what they believed was the ancient Greek theatrical synthesis of drama, music, and stage spectacle; their experimentation led to the creation of the early structural forms of modern opera.

Cantabile - An indication that the singer should sing sweetly.

Cantata - A choral piece generally containing Scriptural narrative texts: the *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach.

Cantilena - Literally, "little song." A lyrical melody meant to be played or sung "cantabile," or with sweetness and expression.

Canzone - A short, lyrical operatic song usually containing no narrative association with the drama but rather simply reflecting the character's state of mind: Cherubino's "Voi che sapete" in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Castrato - A young male singer who was surgically castrated to retain his treble voice.

Cavatina - A short aria popular in 18th and 19th century opera that usually heralded the entrance of a principal singer.

Classical Period - A period roughly between the Baroque and Romantic periods, the late 18th through the early 19th centuries. Stylistically, the music of the period stresses clarity, precision, and rigid structural forms.

Coda - A trailer added on by the composer after the music's natural conclusion. The coda serves as a formal closing to the piece.

Coloratura - Literally, "colored": it refers to a soprano singing in the bel canto tradition. It is a singing technique that requires great agility, virtuosity, embellishments and ornamentation: The Queen of the Night's aria, "Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren," from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Commedia dell'arte - A popular form of dramatic presentation originating in Renaissance Italy in which highly stylized characters were involved in comic plots involving mistaken identities and misunderstandings. Two of the standard characters were Harlequin and Colombine: The "play within a play" in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

Comprimario - A singer who performs secondary character roles such as confidantes, servants, and messengers.

Continuo, Basso continuo - A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of an independent succession of bass notes that indicate the required chords and their appropriate harmonies. Also called *figured bass*, *thoroughbass*.

Contralto - The lowest female voice, derived from "contra" against, and "alto" voice; a voice between the tenor and mezzo-soprano.

Countertenor - A high male voice generally singing within the female high soprano ranges.

Counterpoint - The combination of two or more independent melodies into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character. The most sophisticated form of counterpoint is the fugue form, in which from two to six melodies can be used; the voices are combined, each providing a variation on the basic theme but each retaining its relation to the whole.

Crescendo - A gradual increase in the volume of a musical passage.

Da capo - Literally, "from the top"; repeat. Early 17th-century da capo arias were in the form of A B A, with the second A section repeating the first, but with ornamentation.

Deus ex machina - Literally "god out of a machine." A dramatic technique in which a person or thing appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly; it provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble dramatic difficulty.

Diatonic - A major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

Diminuendo - Gradually becoming softer; the opposite of crescendo.

Dissonance - A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

Diva - Literally, “goddess”; generally the term refers to a leading female opera star who either possesses, or pretends to possess, great rank.

Dominant - The fifth tone of the diatonic scale; in the key of C, the dominant is G.

Dramatic soprano or tenor - A voice that is powerful, possesses endurance, and is generally projected in a declamatory style.

Dramma giocoso - Literally, “amusing (or humorous) drama.” An opera whose story combines both serious and comic elements: Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Falsetto - A lighter or “false” voice; an artificially-produced high singing voice that extends above the range of the full voice.

Fioritura - It., “flowering”; a flowering ornamentation or embellishment of the vocal line within an aria.

Forte, fortissimo - Forte (*f*) means loud; mezzo forte (*mf*) is fairly loud; fortissimo (*ff*) is even louder; additional *fff*’s indicate greater degrees of loudness.

Glissando - Literally, “gliding.” A rapid sliding up or down the scale.

Grand opera - An opera in which there is no spoken dialogue and the entire text is set to music, frequently treating serious and tragic subjects. Grand opera flourished in France in the 19th century (Meyerbeer); the genre is epic in scale and combines spectacle, large choruses, scenery, and huge orchestras.

Heldentenor - A tenor with a powerful dramatic voice who possesses brilliant top notes and vocal stamina. Heldentenors are well suited to heroic (Wagnerian) roles: Lauritz Melchior in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

Imbroglia - Literally, “intrigue”; an operatic scene portraying chaos and confusion, with appropriate diverse melodies and rhythms.

Largo or larghetto - Largo indicates a very slow tempo, broad and with dignity. Larghetto is at a slightly faster tempo than largo.

Legato - Literally, “tied” or “bound”; successive tones that are connected smoothly. The opposite of legato is staccato (short and plucked tones.)

Leitmotif - Literally, “leading motive.” A musical fragment characterizing a person, thing, feeling, or idea that provides associations when it recurs.

Libretto - Literally, “little book”; the text of an opera.

Lied - A German song; the plural is “lieder.” Originally, a German art song of the late 18th century.

Lyric - A voice that is light and delicate.

Maestro - From the Italian “master”; a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.

Melodrama - Words spoken over music. Melodrama appears in Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and flourished during the late 19th century in the operas of Massenet (*Manon* and *Werther*).

Mezza voce - Literally, “medium voice”; singing with medium or half volume. It is sometimes intended as a vocal means to intensify emotion.

Mezzo-soprano - A woman’s voice with a range between soprano and contralto.

Obbligato - An accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by an important, single instrument.

Octave - A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees; from C to C is an octave.

Opera - Literally, “work”; a dramatic or comic play in which music is the primary vehicle that conveys its story.

Opera buffa - Italian comic opera that flourished during the bel canto era. Highlighting the opera buffa genre were buffo characters who were usually basses singing patter songs: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*; Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love*.

Opéra comique - A French opera characterized by spoken dialogue interspersed between the musical numbers, as opposed to grand opera in which there is no spoken dialogue. Opéra comique subjects can be either comic or tragic.

Operetta, or light opera - Operas that contain comic elements and generally a light romantic plot: Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*, Offenbach’s *La Périchole*, and Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*. In operettas, there is usually much spoken dialogue, dancing, practical jokes, and mistaken identities.

Oratorio - A lengthy choral work, usually of a religious nature and consisting chiefly of recitatives, arias, and choruses, but performed without action or scenery: Handel's *Messiah*.

Ornamentation - Extra embellishing notes—appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas—that enhance a melodic line.

Overture - The orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work that sometimes incorporates musical themes within the work. Overtures are instrumental pieces that are generally performed independently of their respective operas in concert.

Parlando - Literally, “speaking”; the imitation of speech while singing, or singing that is almost speaking over the music. Parlando sections are usually short and have minimal orchestral accompaniment.

Patter song - A song with words that are rapidly and quickly delivered. Figaro's “Largo al factotum” in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* is a patter song.

Pentatonic - A five-note scale. Pentatonic music is most prevalent in Far Eastern countries.

Piano - A performance indication for soft volume.

Pitch - The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.

Pizzicato - An indication that notes are to be played by plucking the strings instead of stroking the string with the bow.

Polyphony - Literally, “many voices.” A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed; counterpoint.

Polytonal - Several tonal schemes used simultaneously.

Portamento - A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another through all the intervening pitches.

Prelude - An orchestral introduction to an act or a whole opera that precedes the opening scene.

Presto, prestissimo - Vigorous, and with the utmost speed.

Prima donna - Literally, “first lady.” The female star or principal singer in an opera cast or opera company.

Prologue - A piece sung before the curtain goes up on the opera proper: Tonio's Prologue in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

Quaver - An eighth note.

Range - The span of tonal pitch of a particular voice: soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass.

Recitative - A formal device used to advance the plot. It is usually sung in a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech; it conveys the dialogue and narrative in operas and oratorios. *Secco*, or dry, recitative is accompanied by harpsichord and sometimes with other continuo instruments; *accompagnato* indicates that the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra.

Ritornello - A refrain, or short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition.

Romanza - A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage, or anger.

Romantic Period - The Romantic period is usually considered to be between the early 19th and early 20th centuries. Romanticists found inspiration in nature and man. Von Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805) are considered the first German Romantic operas; many of Verdi's operas as well as the early operas of Wagner are also considered Romantic operas.

Roulade - A florid, embellished melody sung to one syllable.

Rubato - An expressive technique, literally meaning "robbed"; it is a fluctuation of tempo within a musical phrase, often against a rhythmically steady accompaniment.

Secco - "Dry"; the type of accompaniment for recitative played by the harpsichord and sometimes continuo instruments.

Semitone - A half step, the smallest distance between two notes. In the key of C, the half steps are from E to F and from B to C.

Serial music - Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality.

Sforzando - Sudden loudness and force; it must stand out from the texture and be emphasized by an accent.

Singspiel - Literally, "song drama." Early German style of opera employing spoken dialogue between songs: Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Soprano - The highest range of the female voice ranging from lyric (light and graceful quality) to dramatic (fuller and heavier in tone).

Sotto voce - Literally, “below the voice”; sung softly between a whisper and a quiet conversational tone.

Soubrette - A soprano who sings supporting roles in comic opera: Adele in Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*; Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*.

Spinto - From the Italian “spingere” (to push); a singer with lyric vocal qualities who “pushes” the voice to achieve heavier dramatic qualities.

Sprechstimme - Literally, “speaking voice.” The singer half sings a note and half speaks; the declamation sounds like speaking but the duration of pitch makes it seem almost like singing.

Staccato - Short, clipped, detached, rapid articulation; the opposite of legato.

Stretto - Literally, “narrow.” A concluding passage performed in a quick tempo to create a musical climax.

Strophe - Strophe is a rhythmic system of repeating lines. A musical setting of a strophic text is characterized by the repetition of the same music for all strophes.

Syncopation - A shifting of the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat.

Supernumerary - A “super”; a performer with a non-singing and non-speaking role: “Spear-carrier.”

Symphonic poem - A large orchestral work in one continuous movement, usually narrative or descriptive in character: Franz Liszt’s *Les Preludes*; Richard Strauss’s *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and *Ein Heldenleben*.

Tempo - The speed at which music is performed.

Tenor - The highest natural male voice.

Tessitura - The usual range of a voice part.

Tonality - The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale).

Tone poem - An orchestral piece with a program.

Tonic - The principal tone of the key in which a piece is written. C is the tonic of C major.

Trill - Two adjacent notes rapidly and repeatedly alternated.

Tutti - All together.

Twelve-tone - The twelve chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting, with some permitted permutations and derivations, the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note is repeated.

Verismo - Literally “truth”; the artistic use of contemporary everyday material in preference to the heroic or legendary in opera. A movement particularly in Italian opera during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*.

Vibrato - A “vibration”; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone to enrich and intensify sound, and add warmth and expressiveness through slight and rapid variations in pitch.

