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PUCCINI'S OPERAS: THE GLORIOUS DOZEN

by Burton D. Fisher

Principal lecturer: *Opera Journeys Lecture Series*

Opera Journeys™ Publishing / Miami, Florida

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*“Almighty God touched me with his little finger and said,
‘Write for the theater — mind, only for the theater.’
And I have obeyed the supreme command.”*

GIACOMO PUCCINI

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author's foreword

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY's

Puccini's Operas: The Glorious Dozen

Puccini's Opera: The Glorious Dozen is a paean to each of Puccini's operas. The text was developed from my extensive lecturing experiences, and it is intended to be a valuable resource for students, teachers, and the general opera public in their quest for more insight and understanding of Puccini's oeuvre.

Although much biographical material is included in the *Commentary and Analysis* sections of each opera, this is not a new biography of Puccini: that scholarship has been magnificently accomplished, most recently in works by Julian Budden and Mary Phillips-Matz. On the contrary, *Puccini's Operas: The Glorious Dozen* is intended to provide an insightful and in depth exploration of each of Puccini's 12 operas: an easily understandable roadmap for the uninitiated as well as the enthusiast, for the newly afflicted as well as the addicted.

Puccini's music is easily accessible. His musical signature is unique, and his musical language possesses a magical and sublime appeal to the emotions, more often than not causing the tear ducts to flow endlessly. It would be safe to conclude that without Puccini's operas, particularly *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Turandot*, opera companies would have difficulty surviving; or without those Puccini operas, the entire art form would have difficulty surviving. Nevertheless, Puccini indeed composed 12 operas, and the discovery and appreciation of his entire oeuvre is an exciting and sublime adventure: that is the purpose of this book.

More than three-quarters of a century after Puccini's death, some of his operas remain obscure. They are rarely produced or recorded, and therefore fail to benefit from the necessary test of familiarity that would seed appreciation and cause the operas to flower: *Le villi*, Puccini's first opera, contains some beautiful and powerful music, particularly Roberto's romanza, the reason Puccini always claimed that he was the first Italian composer of the verismo genre, six years before its official introduction to the opera stage; *Edgar* is also rarely produced or performed, but likewise contains worthy music that seems to cry out for a decent libretto; *La fanciulla del West* has been acclaimed a masterpiece by musical academia, yet it fails to captivate the opera public, particularly in the United States; *La rondine* is a treasure of mature melodic invention and brilliant harmonic development, but likewise receives occasional attention; and the three one-act operas of *Il trittico* (*Il tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*) remain somewhat of an enigma to ambivalent audiences.

Each Puccini opera is presented with the *Principal Characters*, *Story Synopsis*, *Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples*, an in depth and insightful *Commentary and Analysis*, and a newly translated *Libretto* by the Opera Journeys Publishing staff, the Italian/English of the *Libretto* side-by-side (excluding *Turandot*). Like supertitles or translations at opera houses, the English translations are literal, and no attempt was made to duplicate the original Italian verse, meter, or rhyme, a course that would only sacrifice the exactness of the translated text to the demands of poetic requirements.

My sincerest thanks to the many devoted Florida International University students who

have enthusiastically supported the *Opera Journeys Lecture Series* during these past 10 years, as well as the Florida International University School of Music, which has honored the Lecture Series with university accreditation. And my appreciation to the many teachers, students, and opera enthusiasts who have adopted Opera Journeys publications as a springboard to develop their knowledge and understanding of opera. My special gratitude to Prof. Dennis M. Ross, an inspiration as well as rescuer of a project that was deceptively arduous.

In opera, the composer is both narrator and dramatist of the underlying story, the words realized through the power and impact of his music. A greater understanding of Puccini's entire oeuvre can be a sublime experience, a moment when the grandeur of the opera art form reaches into the very depths of the soul.

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PUCCINI'S OPERAS: THE GLORIOUS DOZEN

A prelude

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was the last superstar of the great Italian opera tradition, a genre whose soul was a magnificent blend of intense lyricism, melodiousness, and excellence of the vocal arts. Modern opera is a definitive element of Italian culture. It began with the Florentine Camerata in the early seventeenth century, and matured, developed, and continually rejuvenated itself over the next 400 years, its cast of ingenious musical architects becoming the foundation of the artform: Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Metastasio, Paisiello, Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, and Puccini.

No Italian opera composer since Puccini has been able to sustain Italian opera's glorious heritage, although twentieth century attempts by Italian composers such as Busoni and Menotti were valiant. Puccini composed 12 operas, most of them so beloved by contemporary audiences that they define opera's endurance and survival.

Puccini's operatic epiphany occurred in 1876 when the eighteen year-old attended a performance of Verdi's *Aida* in Pisa; he was immediately inspired to become an opera composer. Nevertheless, he was fortunate to have inherited the genes of a musically talented family: five generations of prominent musicians, accomplished church organists, and composers from his native Lucca, Italy, a part of the Tuscany region.

The young Puccini, the first son in a family of seven, followed the family traditions: he was adept at the piano, excelled as an organist, and composed liturgical music. In 1880, at the age of twenty-two, he enrolled in the Milan Conservatory, at the time, Italy's foremost training ground for composers, singers, and instrumentalists: financial support was secured from Queen Margherita of Italy, and supplementary funds from Dr. Nicolao Cerù, first cousin of his mother Albina.

During Puccini's first 2 years at the Milan Conservatory, he studied under Antonio Bazzini, a virtuoso violinist, composer, and teacher, with avid predilections towards Richard Wagner's recent innovations in music and opera. Afterwards, Puccini studied with Amilcare Ponchielli, triumphant with the opera, *La gioconda* (1876), and an eminent professor of composition. Ponchielli became Puccini's mentor, astutely recognizing his young student's extraordinarily rich orchestral and symphonic imagination, and his harmonic and melodic inventiveness, resources that would become the musical trademarks and prime characteristics of Puccini's mature compositional style.

In July 1883, the twenty-five year-old Puccini received his diploma in composition from the Milan Conservatory; he was awarded a bronze medal for his thesis composition, *Capriccio sinfonico*, an instrumental work that was performed by a student orchestra led by Franco Faccio, a composer, but also the most prominent conductor in Italy. *Capriccio sinfonico* was a genuine success, receiving praise from Filippo Filippi, the severe, respected, and authoritative music critic of *La Perseveranza*, who praised the young Puccini's unity of style, rare musical temperament, and symphonic capabilities. *La Gazzetta Musicale*, published by Casa Ricordi, Italy's powerful music publishing company, similarly praised the *Capriccio sinfonico*, recommending it to the attention of discriminate musicologists. Portions of the *Capriccio*, like so much of Puccini's early music, was recycled into his early operas. With the success of *Capriccio sinfonico*, Puccini's music composing career was launched.

Most of the nineteenth century was dominated by the Romantic movement in art, an emphasis on the imagination, emotions, and sensibilities. As the century neared its fin de siècle, a period associated with Romantic decadence, Italian audiences tired of Romanticism's sentiment, artificiality, and idealization: if art was to express profound truths, Romanticism portrayed an unreal world.

Italy was experiencing political upheavals, as well as social and economic turmoil. The Risorgimento (1860-61) liberated Italy from foreign rule, but by the end of the century, chaos and anarchy loomed on the horizon: democracy and political stability had become unattainable dreams.

There was a great economic disparity between north and south, the north thriving and developing industrially, the south lacking the resources for economic development. The south, from Naples to Sicily, was virtually a medieval society; an illiterate peasantry living in grinding poverty with primitive feudal institutions that lacked the infrastructure to execute law and order. There was internal discontent, such as peasant revolts, and disorders provoked by anarchists and the disenchanting. In 1900, King Umberto was assassinated by anarchists; regicide and nihilism had become virtually everyday topics. The seeds of fascism were about to flower.

It was against this chaotic political, social, and economic background that many European artists, poets, composers, and librettists sought new genres for artistic expression: an antidote to Romanticism. Writers such as Émile Zola, Prosper Mérimée, and Giovanni Verga, ignited the sparks of "naturalism," or realism, a genre that embraced a fidelity to nature and real-life situations: a world without idealization, in which credible, earthy people, expressed powerful emotions and vigorous passions in swift, dramatic action.

In naturalist literature and drama, no subject was too mundane; no subject was too harsh; and no subject was too ugly. Primal passions became its underlying subject: it portrayed man's latent and uncivilized barbarian propensities that confirmed Darwin's theory that man evolved from primal beast.

Naturalist plots dealt with intense passions involving sex, seduction, revenge, betrayal, jealousy, murder, and death; like its successors, modernity and film noir, naturalist man was portrayed as irrational, immoral, crazed, brutal, crude, cruel, and demonic: sinister and fatal passions that were irreconcilable.

Naturalism wed the sordid with the sensational: death became the consummation of desire; and good did not necessarily triumph over evil. Enlightenment's reason and Romanticism's freedom and sentimentality were overturned, and man was portrayed as a creature of pure instinct.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Italian opera was poised for rejuvenation and transformation. Groups of intellectuals and artists emerged in an aesthetic movement known as the *scapigliati*, literally "the disheveled ones," who condemned the romantic melodramas and grand opera spectacles of Verdi and Meyerbeer as old-fashioned, stale, obsolete, and approaching sterility. They found inspiration in Richard Wagner.

In 1871, Wagner's *Lohengrin* was first performed in Bologna, Italy, a bel canto masterpiece composed by the arch-critic of the bel canto style: when sung in Italian, its roots were indistinguishable; Italians embraced the opera and virtually adopted it as their own.

Afterwards, the Wagnerian tide swept across the Italian peninsula, fascinating and influencing the next generation of Italian opera composers. Wagner's hypotheses of music drama seemed a welcome antidote to Italian opera's antiquated traditions and conventions of set-pieces and recitatives. Wagner had provided an alternative to Italian opera's degeneration in his seemingly radical theories: *Art and Revolution* (1849), *The Art-Work of the Future* (1849), and *Opera and Drama* (1851). And in *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), Wagner innovated the existing harmonic structure, opening new avenues for harmonic and lyrical expansion; and his use of leitmotifs provided the wherewithal for musico-dramatic continuity as well as symphonic expansion.

Avant-garde Italian opera composers, the *giovane scuola*, or "young school," would apply many of Wagner's musico-dramatic innovations and transformations to a new opera genre based on naturalism: verismo, or realism.

The fountainheads of Italian verismo opera were Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), and Ruggero Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* (1892), opera's Siamese twins, affectionately called "Cav" and "Pag": it is said that Cav is the flesh and bones of verismo; Pag is its soul. Among the verists who followed were Alfredo Catalani, Francesco Cilèa, Alberto Franchetti, Umberto Giordano, Alberto Zandonai, and Giacomo Puccini. These composers were intent to portray naturalist subjects in through-composed, seamless music dramas.

Puccini found his inspiration in naturalism, a world of real people in real-life situations without idealization. He peopled his stage with very human characters, not stereotypical cardboard characters of history, myth, or legend. Even the characters of *Turandot*, based on fable, were humanized by adding warmth and personality to the characterization of the commedia dell'arte "masks," and the invention of the slave-girl Liù provided a character of emotional complexity.

Two of Puccini's operas are pure examples of the verismo style: *Tosca* (1900) and *Il tabarro* (1918), the latter perhaps the last of the genre; both dramas contain verismo's ceaseless violence and explosions of unbridled human passions. *La fanciulla del West*'s love triangle, and its crude and fiercely violent characters have verismo overtones, but the opera's redemption-through-love conclusion echoes the idealizations of German Romanticism, far removed from the verismo genre.

Puccini's operas provide an entire spectrum of diverse yet realistic humanity: the courtesans Manon Lescaut and Magda, the student des Grieux, the painter Cavaradossi, the poet Rodolfo, the flower-embroiderer Mimì, the singers Musetta and Tosca, the geisha Cio-Cio-San, the bar proprietress Minnie, the nun Suor Angelica, and, of course, those carefree bohemians of *La bohème*, and the miners of *La fanciulla del West*.

Venues in Puccini's operas are likewise realistic and identifiable: Paris of *La bohème* and *Il tabarro*, the Orient of *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*, Rome of *Tosca*, the American West of *La fanciulla*, Paris and the French Riviera of *La rondine*, and a convent in *Suor Angelica*.

Puccini maintained a fidelity to real life situations by presenting the problems and conflicts of identifiable humanity, a naturalism that he called “piccole cose,” the little things of life. The *Turandot* story is both fable and legend, but Puccini transformed it by injecting many naturalist elements; plots involving romantic heroism in myth and history were the terrain of Verdi, Meyerbeer, and Wagner, not Puccini, the realist.

Wagner said: “Art brings the unconscious to consciousness.” Freud noted: “Where psychology leaves off, aesthetics and art begin.” The artist’s unconscious filters into his creation. Puccini’s music, so often kindled by agony and despair, is a faithful mirror of his unconscious self. In *Manon Lescaut*, des Grieux agonizes “Ansia eterna crudel” (“Eternal cruel anxiety.”); in *Tosca*, Cavaradossi laments “E muoio disperato” (“I die in desperation.”); both men despair because of the imminent death of love.

Biographer-musicologists- (and lecturers) turned-psychologists have speculated copiously about the underlying causes of Puccini’s personal despair, a melancholy that became the muse that inspired some of his most poignant musical inventions. With the success of *La bohème*, the thirty-eight year-old composer had achieved worldwide acclaim. The acknowledged heir to Verdi was en route to riches that would eventually include numerous homes, yachts, and automobiles. Like most artists, he possessed insecurities and self-doubts about his works, fearing failure, or the public’s fickleness. As his years advanced, he experienced the typical psychological and physical changes associated with mid-life crisis. And as he aged, he witnessed the deaths of beloved relatives and friends, fearing his own mortality. But success, insecurity, and fears associated with mortality cannot explain the intense sense of hopelessness so prevalent and recurring in Puccini’s music.

One theory poses that Puccini unconsciously despaired because he failed to find true love in his lifetime. Biographies of Puccini tend to present a man with numerous conquests, seemingly a Don Giovanni-type character whose romantic and amorous adventures are a manifestation of his pursuit of true or ideal love.

Puccini was a handsome and virile man, but also a sensitive and at times emotionally fragile artist. He of course yearned for love, its fulfillment humanity’s greatest aspiration and desire. And some of his greatest musical inspirations involve love: the love duets of *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La fanciulla del West*, and *La rondine*. Despair and an acute sense of hopelessness would be the natural response to failed love.

In *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (1958), Dr. Mosco Carner aptly commented: “While the basis of Verdi’s operas is a battle cry; of Puccini it is a mating call”: that illusive grail of love is the primary subject of Puccini’s entire oeuvre: the sum of many faces of love.

Some Puccini operas deal with the tragic death of love, despair its consequence: Fidelia dies and Edgar despairs (*Edgar*); Manon Lescaut dies, and des Grieux despairs (*Manon Lescaut*); Mimi dies, and Rodolfo despairs (*La bohème*). The Song-Peddler of *Il tabarro* provides the sum and substance of Puccini’s first 6 operas: “Chi ha vissuto per amore, per amore si morì” (“He who lives for love, dies for love.”) In those first 6 operas, the heroines die — and love dies with them: Anna (*Le villi*), Fidelia (*Edgar*), Manon Lescaut (*Manon Lescaut*), Mimì (*La bohème*), Tosca (*Tosca*), and Cio-Cio-San

(*Madama Butterfly*). And the tragedy of failed love reappears in Puccini's last opera: the sacrificing slave-girl Liù (*Turandot*). The death of love could very well have been the mirror of Puccini's own failure to find everlasting love: his personal despair. In his art, Puccini may have been unconsciously lamenting that failure in terms of an overpowering sense of hopelessness and despair; in that sense, art and life merged, with no dividing line between them.

Dr. Mosco Carner advanced the hypothesis that Puccini suffered from an unresolved, raging mother complex that unconsciously confounded his understanding of love: subconsciously no woman could attain the exalted image of his mother; he searched for that ideal but failed, his consequent despair. Carner further theorized that Puccini's heroines were guilty of mundane love, not saintly or exalted love. As such, those heroines were sinners who the composer subconsciously punished in agonizing and cruel deaths: Manon, Mimì, Tosca, and Butterfly. In that sense, Puccini's supposed raging mother complex was a conflict of the sacred versus the profane. Nevertheless, it is a hypothesis that cannot be applied to Puccini's entire oeuvre.

Puccini indeed possessed a strong bond with Albina, his mother, a mother-son relationship that seems classic. Puccini was her first son, following five older sisters, and he was the family's scion designated to continue its musical traditions. Albina was Puccini's guiding light and mentor, and they were remarkably close and affectionate. In July 1884, she died of cancer at the age of 54, just after the triumph of Puccini's first opera, *Le villi*. The twenty-six-year-old Puccini became deeply affected by her death: it was a love that failed, a death that was attributable to God's will, or uncontrollable, deterministic forces. After her death, Puccini grieved and despaired, a response that seems quite natural when one copes with the loss of a beloved mother.

Shortly after his mother's death, Puccini fell madly in love with his piano student, Elvira Gemignani, the wife of Narciso Gemignani, a grocer and traveling wine-salesman.

Elvira was an impressive and strikingly attractive young woman: tall, a fine figure, dark eyes, and swept back dark-blond hair. Puccini was tall and handsome, his eyes bearing that melancholy aura so often associated with Tuscans.

Puccini's relationship with the married Elvira became scandalous. Gossip quickly spread, and the provincial townspeople of Lucca erupted into a frenzy of outrage. Likewise, Puccini's family and relatives became duly offended, accusing him of bringing shame and disgrace to the honorable Puccini name.

Puccini had difficulty coping with his family's animosity and criticism. He was reproached and admonished harshly by his married sisters and their husbands, and his sister Iginia, a nun. His sensitivity to their attacks transformed into despondency, a depression that impeded his progress on his second opera, *Edgar*.

He also feared the cuckolded Gemignani: Would he confront him publicly? Would he challenge him to a physical confrontation, or even a duel? Would he be arrested or sued for alienating Gemignani's wife's affections?

In 1885, Elvira became pregnant with Puccini's child, Antonio. The next year Elvira left her husband and eloped to Milan with Puccini, bringing along one of her young

daughters, Fosca, the other remaining with her husband. Puccini was 27 years-old; Elvira was 25. In the eyes of Puccini's friends in Lucca, his sisters, and Ricordi, his publisher, Elvira was an immoral woman, an adulteress who abandoned her husband and children.

Gemignani died in 1903. Almost simultaneously, Puccini was nearly killed in a car crash, immobilized for ten months. Elvira and Puccini married on January 4, 1904, just before the premiere of *Madama Butterfly*.

As the years passed, the fires of their youthful love began to subside, and eventually the passions died completely, the marriage becoming loveless. Elvira had changed: her physical beauty faded. She also began to experience severe mood swings, most of them bordering on depression. Puccini claimed that she failed to provide him love and inspiration. And Elvira complained of her isolated life in Torre del Lago, yearning to return to city life in Milan. Life with Elvira became grim and depressing, and Puccini began to suffocate, the catalyst that led to his numerous love affairs. He was always actively involved with rehearsals and preparations for productions of his operas: a convenient excuse to escape from what he now considered his imprisoned life with Elvira. For Puccini, the fulfillment of their love had turned to personal despair.

When Puccini's eye was fixed on the sight of his hunting rifle, his other eye was seeking good librettos — and women. He desperately needed women in his life to fuel his passions of love, for intimacy, and for erotic needs. Many women found him irresistible: a handsome, gentle and charming world-famous man. As his wealth and success grew, he began to dress elegantly, his manner so dignified and aristocratic that his publisher Ricordi jokingly nicknamed him the "Doge."

Biographers have done well in accumulating Puccini's voluminous catalogue of affairs: there was Corinna, a young law student in her twenties; an apparent affair with Lina Cavalieri, one of his early Toscas; an intimate relationship with Blanke Lendvai, the sister of Ervin Lendvai, a young Hungarian composer and conductor whose career Puccini helped foster; the Hungarian writer, Margit Vészi, who became both friend and confidant; an intensive intimacy with the soprano Rose Ader; and a long and impassioned affair with Baroness Josephine von Stängel, a beautiful and wealthy German aristocrat.

In England, there was Sybil Seligman, the wife of a successful banker. She was a woman of elegance, beauty, and intelligence, as well as a singer, theatrical enthusiast, and opera lover. Sybil remained Puccini's most trusted friend and confidant throughout his entire life; no doubt the Seligman's were instrumental in fostering the large number of productions of Puccini's operas in England.

Puccini's notorious philandering and escapades provoked Elvira to become consumed with jealousy, at times valid, and at times imagined, but nevertheless a monomania of explosive potentiality. She was volatile, and any visit of an attractive woman to their home aroused her suspicions. Puccini called her his "policeman," the monitor of all of his incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Elvira's fierce jealousy climaxed in the catastrophic scandal of the Doria Manfredi affair. Doria was a twenty-one year-old servant with over five years of service to the Puccini's: a nurse, housemaid, and cook. Elvira swore that she caught Puccini and Doria in flagrante. She fired Doria immediately, but became vengeful, determined to

slander, defame, and even physically harm her. Doria's relatives, convinced of Puccini's reputation as a serial womanizer, believed Elvira's accusations.

Doria became humiliated and was unable to cope with the scandal; she took an overdose of pills and died five days later. An autopsy revealed that she was a virgin. Her outraged family launched a criminal prosecution against Elvira, alleging that Elvira was directly responsible for Doria's suicide. Elvira was found guilty, fined, and sentenced to five months and five days in prison. While attorneys prepared to appeal, Puccini made a substantial financial settlement with Doria's family, and the suit was withdrawn.

The scandal became a sensation in the press. Puccini was racked with guilt and shame. He became emotionally drained, bitter, and unhappy; and he even considered divorce. Years later art and life united: Elvira shares the persona of the brutal Princess-Aunt in *Suor Angelica*, and Doria's victimization parallels the tortured slave-girl Liù in *Turandot*.

Nevertheless, the Manfredi affair took a heavy toll on Puccini's creative processes, severely delaying the completion of *La fanciulla del West*. It was a scar that remained with him until his death. But at the time, it was the signal that the emotional curtain had decisively fallen on his marriage, the death of love, and no doubt a sense of intense despair and hopelessness.

Puccini's hometown of Lucca was renowned for presenting an endless succession of important dramatic plays by distinguished playwrights. In his youth, Puccini was fortunate to have been exposed to works by the Italian dramatists Vittorio Alfieri and Carlo Goldoni, the French writers Alexandre Dumas, father and son, and plays of the extremely popular late nineteenth-century realist, Victorien Sardou.

Those early theatrical experiences instilled and nurtured what eventually became his acute sense of drama, a theatrical talent that he expressed with brilliance in his operatic works. He ultimately became a master stage-craftsman who combined a consummate knowledge of the demands of the stage with extraordinary dramatic instincts.

Often, Puccini's demands for dramatic perfection caused friction with his librettists, at times, driving them to despair: they claimed that he vacillated excessively; that he was vague about his requirements and unable to explain himself clearly; that he demanded countless unnecessary revisions; that at times he would write the music first, and then seek words to fit the music; that he composed too slowly; and that he wasted too much time indulging his hobbies of hunting, cycles, autos, boats — and women. He was often accused of laziness, but that could be excused by his diabetic condition, at the time, awaiting the discovery of scientific advances such as insulin.

With the exception of *Turandot* and *La fanciulla*, Puccini did not compose ambitious works or grand opera stage spectacles in the manner of Meyerbeer or Verdi. He commented that he was inspired by *cosettine*, little things, an acknowledgement that his talent and temperament were not suited to works of large design, spectacle, or portrayals of romantic heroism. In effect, Puccini was a naturalist, his inspiration emerging from real-life, ordinary people and their conflicts and tensions.

Puccini expanded his harmonic horizons with each succeeding opera. In his early operas, his harmonic language was diatonic, but beginning with *Madama Butterfly*, whole-

tone scale harmonies began to appear, no doubt influenced by Debussy's harmonic adventurism. Those harmonic advancements became more complex in *La fanciulla*, and flowered in his final *Turandot*. Dissonance and suspensions are more often than not exceptions rather than the rule, most often applied for specific dramatic effects: the bi-tonal chord structure at the opening of *Turandot* that suggests the executioner's axe falling.

Puccini integrated his music, words, and gestures into a single conceptual and organic unity, seamless music dramas that were remote from the old-fashioned "numbers-operas" with recitative that typified the operas of his predecessors; but all of Puccini's operas are distinctly Italian in character, emphasizing the supremacy of melody and voice.

Puccini often repeats melodic blocks or passages: like leitmotifs they are employed to provide reminiscence of an idea, person, object, situation, or identify a character's thoughts to the audience: the music identified with the well in *Tosca*, or the music associated with his heroines that is usually heard before they appear. Puccini was a master symphonist, and his scores are saturated with rich and sumptuous orchestral coloration, but he never developed and integrated his leitmotifs or melodic passages into the symphonic complexity, grandeur, or systematic manner of Wagner.

Puccini was a quintessential melodist who possessed a unique musical signature and personal style that the noted critic Harold Schonberg called "an inimitable style that stands out among the Italian operas of his time like the song of a nightingale in a flock of starlings." He possessed a supreme talent — if not magic — to invent lush and sumptuous melodies, a writing for both voice and orchestra that is rich, tender, and elegant, and at times possesses a suppleness and gentleness, as well as a profound poignancy. Puccini's personal lyricism has had few rivals; it is a musical signature that is so individual that it is recognized immediately. And to some, his music is endlessly haunting: music that seems to resound in one's mind even after leaving a Puccini opera performance.

It is a rare Puccini opera that does not have its special assortment of hit tunes: *La bohème*'s "Che gelida manina", "Sì! Mi chiamano Mimì," and the showstopper, Musetta's Waltz; *Tosca*'s "Vissi d'arte"; *Madama Butterfly*'s "Un bel di vedremo"; *La fanciulla del West*'s "Ch'ella mi creda"; *La rondine*'s "Il sogno di Doretta"; *Gianni Schicchi*'s "O mio babbino caro"; and *Turandot*'s "Nessun dorma."

But Puccini's muse was tragic: when his musical inventions exploited pain, suffering, and despair, they kindled his fundamentally tragic imagination, and he translated that heightened emotion and passion into quintessential moments of music drama: the Torture Scene of *Tosca*; or the suicides of *Madama Butterfly*, Liù, or Suor Angelica.

Puccini endowed his love duets with a sensual lyricism, an almost erotic mysticism that has been called pornophony: *Manon Lescaut*'s second act, "Tu, tu, Amore tu!"; *La bohème*'s "O soave fanciulla"; *Tosca*'s "Qual occhio mondo"; *Madama Butterfly*'s "Viene la sera"; and *La fanciulla*'s love duet ending Act I.

Puccini's ensembles reflect his ingenious craftsmanship, "concertatos" or ensembles that are knitted together with exceptional brilliance: the "Roll Call of the Prostitutes" in *Manon Lescaut*; the Café Momus scene of *La bohème*; *Tosca*'s "Te Deum"; the miner's ensembles in *La fanciulla del West*; the second act at Bullier's in *La rondine*; and virtually all of the choral scenes of *Turandot*.

Puccini was a skilful musical impressionist, and he was meticulous in using his music to evoke ambience: in *La bohème*, the music dutifully conveys the fire crackling as Rodolfo's manuscript burns in the stove, or Colline falls down the stairs, or the snow falls in Act III; in *Tosca* the exact pitch of St. Peter's bells awakens Rome in Act III; and in *Il tabarro*, there are boat and automobile horns that realistically capture ambience.

In sum, Puccini was a quintessential musico-dramatist, his music and words unified coherently, the dramatic whole of each opera equal to the sum of its many meticulously constructed elements.

Puccini has many detractors, a host of critics who delight in condemning his operas and his compositional style. He has been denounced as the "Bohemian epicure," a composer whose entire oeuvre recycles the music of his masterpiece, *La bohème*; a plagiarist of other composers; a composer of banal café music; and a composer of inauthentic exoticism in operas such as *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*.

That said, it is necessary to invoke Mark Twain's opinion of critics: "Damn the critics, it's the public that counts."

To many, Puccini's name is synonymous with opera: the catalyst for their love of opera, and to some, the beginning of an adventure into a sublime world of music of unrivalled beauty and unbridled dramatic power.

Words performed through music can express what language alone has exhausted; opera is an art form in which words are realized through music.

Puccini's musical language has many facets. At times his music speaks powerfully of suffering, despair, grief, tragedy, and death, the inspiration for some of his finest music that is plaintive, heartrending, and extremely poignant. But Puccini's music also speaks of love, his music possessing an unabashed sensuality, or erotic mysticism that is incomprehensible to reason, but fully understood by the subconscious; it is music that speaks of love's glorious fulfillment, and warns of its dreadful failure, a tension between Eros and Thanatos.

Each of Puccini's 12 operas is a masterpiece of artistic invention, each unique, and each exploring a different facet of love: its success or failure. But Puccini's operas are the sum total of the expression of a musical genius who bared his soul in his art: music that more often than not has the power to reach into the very depths of the human soul.

Le villi

(“The Witches” or “The Willis”)

Opera in Italian in two acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana

Premiere:

Teatro dal Verme, Milan

May 31, 1884 (*Le willis*-one-act version)

Teatro Regio, Turin, December 26, 1884

(*Le villi*-two-act version)

Principal Characters in Le villi

Guglielmo Wulf	Baritone
Anna, Guglielmo's daughter	Soprano
Roberto	Tenor
A Narrator	Spoken

Mountaneers and Villagers, the Willis Ghosts or (Spirits)

TIME: the 1800s

PLACE: A village in the Black Forest, Germany.

Story Synopsis

It is spring in a village in the Black Forest. Mountaineers and villagers celebrate the betrothal of Roberto to Anna, daughter of Guglielmo. But before the marriage, Roberto must leave for Mainz to collect an inheritance bequeathed him by an old woman who recently died. Before departing, Roberto assures Anna of his love; however, Anna reveals that she has become haunted by premonitions that she would die while awaiting his return. Guglielmo blesses Roberto's trip, and then he departs.

In Mainz, Roberto falls in love with a femme fatale and forgets about Anna. Anna has been awaiting his return for months; in despair, she dies of a broken heart. Anna's spirit is transformed into a Willi, a ghost or spirit of a woman who died of lovesickness after being abandoned.

It is the following winter. Roberto has been deserted by his new love. Broken in spirit and fortune, he returns to his village in the Black Forest, eagerly expecting that Anna awaits his return.

Anna and other Willis appear before Roberto as apparitions. Anna appears. Roberto tries to kiss her, but she spurns him, denouncing his desertion and faithlessness: she is now seeking vengeance, not love.

Anna drags Roberto into the Willis' frenzied dance. Roberto becomes exhausted and falls dead.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Prelude:

A short prelude recalls Roberto's Prayer in Act II, his plea for forgiveness for having betrayed Anna: "O sommo Iddio!" ("Oh mighty Lord")

Act I: Outside Guglielmo's humble house in the Black Forest. It is spring.

The trees and flowers are in full bloom. A celebration with dancing is in progress. A table is set with plates of food, glasses, and bottles. Guglielmo, Anna, and Roberto are seated at the head of the table.

Mountaineers and villagers celebrate the forthcoming marriage of Guglielmo's daughter Anna and Roberto, wishing the betrothed a long life. They also praise Roberto's good fortune; he is now a rich man because of an inheritance from an old woman in Mainz who recently died.

All dance in celebration. Guglielmo is initially reluctant to join the dancing, but at the urging of the villagers, he invites a young girl to dance. After the dancing, all depart.

Anna appears carrying a bunch of forget-me-not flowers. She addresses the flowers as if they were her beloved Roberto: "Do not forget me!"

"Se come voi piccina io fossi, o vaghi fior"

Andante Lento
ANNA



Se co - me vo - i pic - ci - na io fossi, o va - ghi fior,
If I were small like you, pretty flowers,

Anna places the forget-me-not flowers in Roberto's suitcase, a reminder to Roberto to remember her while he is away.

All the while, Roberto has been observing Anna. He approaches her, takes the flowers from the suitcase, kisses them, and places them back in the suitcase.

Anna reveals her sadness, because Roberto is leaving for Mainz. She has dark premonitions that he will not return, and that she will die while waiting for him. Roberto assures her that profound love is their destiny: a love that they have shared since childhood.

Anna repeats Roberto's assurance of his love: "Doubt God, but do not doubt my love! I love you!"

The mountaineers return and offer to accompany Roberto to the edge of the forest before darkness approaches. Guglielmo prays for the success of Roberto's trip.

"Angiol di Dio"

Lento
GUGLIELMO



Angiol di Dio, che i vanni ri - volgi al ciel sta-se - ra,
Angel of God, spread your wings to heaven tonight,

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part. It is in bass clef, 3/4 time, and marked 'Lento'. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are in Italian and English. The Italian lyrics are 'Angiol di Dio, che i vanni ri - volgi al ciel sta-se - ra,' and the English translation is 'Angel of God, spread your wings to heaven tonight,'. The music features a long, sweeping melodic line with a fermata over the final note.

After the prayer, all embrace Roberto and say farewell to him.

Intermezzo:

Part I: The Abandonment

A Narrator explains that when Roberto visited Mainz, a temptress lured him, and he forgot about his affection and love for Anna. Anna waited for him to return in vain. During her vigil she was afflicted with indescribable anguish and pain. At the end of the winter, Anna realized that she had been betrayed. She closed her eyes and died.

Part II: The Witches' Sabbath

A Narrator recounts the legend of the Willis: women who died of a broken heart because their lovers were faithless. After death, the women transform into ghosts or spirits: Willis.

The Willis come to the forest every night of the Witches' Sabbath to await the betrayer. If he is found, they lure him into a frenzied dance, forcing him to dance until he dies.

After Roberto was abandoned by the temptress in Mainz, he returned to the Black Forest. The Willis pursued him; he trembled from cold and fear as they whirled around him in the icy air.

The Ballet:

The Willis dance energetically in the forest.

Act II:

Guglielmo has despaired since Anna's death, unable to accept that Roberto's guilt remains unavenged. He prays to God that if the legend of the Willis is true, Roberto's betrayal shall be punished by them unmercifully.

"Anima santa della figlia mia"**Andante Lento
GUGLIELMO**

The musical score for Guglielmo's aria is written in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Andante Lento'. The melody is characterized by long, flowing lines with many ties. The lyrics are in Italian and English.

A - ni - ma san - ta della figlia mi - a se la leg-
Holy spirit of my daughter

gen - da del - le Vil - li è ve - ra,
if the legend of the Willis is true,

It is winter. Roberto has returned to the Black Forest seeking Anna. Before Guglielmo's house, he turns to fear when he hears the screams of Willis who have been pursuing him.

His thoughts turn to Anna: those happy moments when they shared their love.

"Torna ai felici di dolente il mio pensier"**Andante Mesto
ROBERTO**

The musical score for Roberto's aria is written in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Andante Mesto'. The melody features triplet rhythms and a somber, reflective mood. The lyrics are in Italian and English.

Torna ai fe - li - ci di do - len - te il mio pen-sier.
My anguished thoughts return to those happy days.

Ridean del maggio i fior, floria l'amor, floria per me l'amore!
The flowers of May laughed; love bloomed, and love bloomed for me!

Roberto begins to knock on the door of Anna's house, but he retreats, as if restrained by a mysterious force. He shudders in fear, and then prays.

“O sommo Iddio!”

Andante Religioso
ROBERTO



O sommo Iddio! del mio cam - mino, o sommo Iddio, del mio destin quest'è la
Oh mighty Lord this is the end of my life and the fulfilment of my destiny.

me - ta. Fa che il perdono, fa che il perdono la renda lieta, un solo i - stan - te.
I would give my life for one moment of her forgiveness, and then I would die happy!

Suddenly, Roberto leaps to his feet, unable to continue his prayer. He becomes remorseful and penitent, cursing the day he left the forest and the vile courtesan who seduced him.

From the distance, Roberto hears Anna's voice calling him. She appears on the bridge, and then approaches him. He tries to embrace her but she spurns him.

She reminds him of his vow: "Doubt God, but do not doubt my love!"

“Tu dell’infanzia mia”

Andante Lento
ANNA



Tu del - l'infan-zia mi - a le gio - ie di-vi-desti e le ca - rez - ze;
From the time of my childhood we shared joys and kisses;

da te so - a - ve e pi - ù, da te so - a - ve e pi - a im - pa -
I learned about the sweetness of life from you,

ra - i del - la vi - ta le dol-cez - ze!
so gentle and virtuous!

Anna condemns Roberto's perfidy: "I loved you: you betrayed me. I waited for you: and you did not come. But it is so painful to suffer in silence! Without hope in my heart, you made me die!"

Roberto rushes to Anna, as if impelled by an unknown force. Anna opens her arms, drawing him nearer to her.

The Willis appear and also condemn Roberto for his betrayal of Anna: “We await you here, betrayer! Do not expect pity from us! He who in life was deaf to love, does not deserve forgiveness in death! Betrayer, we await you!”

Terrified, Roberto rushes to Guglielmo’s house. The Willis pursue him. He tries to escape, but he is barred by Anna, who grasps him and drags him into the wild, frenzied dance of the Willis.

Roberto becomes exhausted from the dance. He falls at Anna’s feet and dies.

Commentary and Analysis

During the first half of the nineteenth century, German Romanticism evolved, incorporating many elements of the fantastic: in 1821, the genre was sparked with Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* ("The Free-Shooter"); the torch quickly passing to E. T. A. Hoffmann, Marschner, Lortzing, Spohr, and later, Richard Wagner.

German folk-legends thrived on medieval superstition, fantastic elements, and magic and mysticism: legends of Lorelei, the siren whose singing lured Rhine River boatmen to their deaths, and those of Undine, the water-fairy who achieved immortality by stealing men's souls.

Although legends about Willis were Slavic or Central European in origin, their underlying phantasmagoria appealed strongly to German Romantics. A French writer, Alphonse Karr, had written *Les willis*, a short story based on an essay by the acclaimed German lyric poet, Heinrich Heine (1797-1856): *Elementargeister und Dämonen* (1834) ("Elements of Ghosts and Demons"), a phantasmagoric story about spectral spirits, or Willis, which also became the scenario for Théophile Gautier's celebrated ballet *Giselle, ou Les Willis* (1846), scored by the French composer Adolphe Adam.

In 1883, the Sonzogno publishing firm, rival to Casa Ricordi, organized a one-act opera competition; its committee of judges were renowned teachers and composers, among them, Puccini's teacher and mentor, Amilcare Ponchielli. Ponchielli had faith in his talented pupil and urged him to compose a one-act opera and enter the contest. He introduced Puccini to the young and talented poet-librettist, Ferdinando Fontana, who had just completed a libretto titled *Le willis* ("The Witches"), a phantasmagoric romantic tale about women who died of lovesickness after they were abandoned: a story of love, betrayal — and horror.

Librettist Ferdinando Fontana was one of the *scapigliati*, literally "the disheveled ones," late nineteenth-century Italian aesthetes who sought to modernize and rejuvenate Italian opera by looking to German Romanticism for inspiration. Heine's essay became the underlying source for Fontana's libretto for *Le willis*.

Fontana faced the challenge of severely compressing and transforming Heine's underlying plot into the framework of a one-act opera, while simultaneously maintaining the story's dramatic integrity and continuity. Of necessity, certain dramatic episodes of the Heine story required excision.

Puccini had demonstrated his symphonic talents in his thesis composition for the Milan Conservatory, *Capriccio sinfonico* (1883); as the composer of the opera, he was the dramatist of the *Le willis* story, and he would use his symphonic imagination to realize certain plot elements in musical terms, in part supplemented with a "Narration": an Intermezzo in Part I titled *L'Abbandono* ("The Abandonment" or "The Desertion") relates the courtesan's seduction of Roberto in Mainz, Roberto's subsequent betrayal of Anna, Anna's vigil awaiting Roberto's return, and Anna's death from lovesickness; and in Part II of the Intermezzo, *La Tregenda* ("The Witches' Sabbath" or "The Specter"), the music explains the legend of the Willis of the Black Forest, how they seek unfaithful lovers and punish them by luring them into a frenzied dance of doom.

Puccini presented *Le willis* to the Sonzogno contest committee: it was not performed, and it failed to achieve even honorable mention. Shortly thereafter, Fontana arranged for Puccini to play *Le willis* at a private concert at the fashionable Milanese home of Marco Sala, a wealthy journalist-poet-composer: also present were the powerful music publisher, Giulio Ricordi, Arrigo Boito, the influential musician and composer (*Mefistofele*-1868), who would later achieve virtual immortality as Verdi's librettist for *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893), as well as the composer Alfredo Catalani, and the head of Ricordi's rival publishing firm, Giovannina Lucca.

Puccini sat at the piano and played the music from his opera score: it made a profound impression on Ricordi, Boito, and the guests; they were all *scapigliati* who were searching for a new talent to rejuvenate Italian opera. Puccini's opera seemed the panacea to their aesthetic dilemma: a new young composer on the opera horizon who possessed profound symphonic and lyric talents. In their enthusiasm, they decided to champion Puccini's *Le willis*; they raised funds among themselves to finance its production, and decided to independently stage the opera at the Teatro dal Verme theater in Milan.

Puccini's original one-act *Le willis*, an opera-ballo, or opera-ballet, which failed to attract Sonzogno's interest at the earlier one-act competition, premiered on May 31, 1884. It received enthusiastic acclaim from both press and public, some considering it a small but precious masterpiece, and that its young composer possessed elegant and refined craftsmanship, and a fresh musical imagination that emphasized melody and a profound orchestral imagination. Verdi, at the time seventy-one years-old and working with Boito on the completion of *Otello*, heard about Puccini's success, particularly the praise for his symphonic inventiveness: he cautioned, commenting that opera is opera, and symphony is symphony, perhaps his reproach of the *scapigliati* and their inclination toward Wagner's symphonic transformations in opera.

Nevertheless, Puccini's *Le willis* had achieved success, and he had become Italy's most promising young opera composer.

Ricordi's instincts with respect to Puccini's potential and talent did not fail him: he recognized Puccini's melodic inventiveness in *Le willis* and was determined to lure him to Casa Ricordi. Soon after the premiere of *Le willis*, Ricordi bought the rights to the opera, with the specific condition that Puccini make the opera more stageworthy by lengthening it to two acts. To further lure Puccini, he commissioned a new opera, and gave him an allowance.

In July 1884, Puccini's mother died from stomach cancer, and he was devastated by her death; she had been the guiding influence in his young music career, always supportive, encouraging, and inspiring. He visited her grave and placed on her coffin the laurel wreath that he had received on the night of *Le willis'* triumph. Then, although shattered and grief-stricken by his loss, he proceeded to revise *Le willis* into two acts for his new publisher, Ricordi.

The two-act version was renamed *Le villi*, and was produced at the Teatro Reggio in Turin on December 26, 1884, and one month later, at La Scala, less than one year after the opera's virtual denunciation by the judges of the Sonzogno contest.

In the new two-act version of *Le villi*, Puccini retained the Intermezzo and its Narration: the “Abandonment” and the “Witches’ Sabbath,” but he added a ballet that was underscored with a conventionally vibrant tarantella.

Le villi received much praise, ran for thirteen performances, and subsequent productions were mounted in European and international opera houses.

The driving theme of *Le villi* is the betrayal of love, and ultimately, the death of love: a theme that essentially became the composer’s tragic muse; it is the emotional core that inspired the poignant lyricism that would dominate Puccini’s next five operas: *Edgar*, *La bohème*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*.

The three principal characters in *Le villi* are seemingly old-fashioned, stereotypical operatic characters: stock, uncomplicated, and one dimensional; the betrayed Anna (soprano), the unwitting betrayer Roberto (tenor), and Anna’s vindictive father, Guglielmo (bass). Nevertheless, Puccini endowed each character with explicit musical identities, providing each with lengthy musical pieces to express his or her emotions and passions.

Anna became the first in Puccini’s pantheon of tragic and doomed heroines: a victim of betrayed love. Anna would be followed by Fidelia in *Edgar*, Manon in *Manon Lescaut*, Mimi in *La bohème*, Floria Tosca in *Tosca*, and Cio Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, and in his final *Turandot*, the slave-girl Liù. Puccini punished these women for indulging in sinful, mundane love, subjecting them to cruel, unmerciful and agonizing deaths: his subconscious resolution of a raging mother complex. But they fired his musical imagination and became the inspiration for some of his greatest musical inventions.

Anna has a sumptuous aria in Act I: “Se come voi piccina io fosse” (“If I were small like you, pretty flowers, I could always, always be near my love”); the aria a magical blend of weeping and plaintive melancholy underscored with ardent passion, Puccini’s musical signature that would become his indelible trademark. Anna rises to the stature of dramatic heroine in her final duet with Roberto: “Tu dell’infanzia mia le gioie dividesti e la carezze” (“From the time of my childhood we shared joys and kisses.”).

Roberto seemed to have kindled Puccini’s imagination, the first of many Puccini tenor heroes who suffer from anguish and despair. In the “Scena Drammatica-Romanza” of Act II, Puccini provided Roberto with a lengthy monologue that includes the melancholy romanza, “Torna ai felici dì dolente il mio pensier” (“My anguished thoughts return to those happy days.”), that leads to the prayer, “In sommo Iddio” (“Oh mighty Lord”), the latter a poignant and melancholy melody that again foreshadows Puccini’s unique ability to express anguish and desperation: it would become a prominent subtext of his later operas, the agonizing outcry from Des Grieux, “Ansia eterna crudel” in *Manon Lescaut*, and Cavaradossi’s “E muoio disperato” in Act III of *Tosca*, what has been called the composer’s *mestizia toscana*, his pervasive melancholy.

In the character of Guglielmo, Puccini’s dramatic style clearly echoes some of the great father-roles of Verdi: “No, possibil non è” (“No, it isn’t possible”), the dramatic second act monologue in which the father grieves over the death of his beloved daughter Anna.

Le villi is essentially structured as a numbers opera in the style and convention of much early and mid-nineteenth century Italian opera: the action is carried by recitative and introspection by action and time-stopping arias.

Many critics considered Puccini's music style eclectic; he had not as yet established his unique musical signature, although many subtle inklings of the future abound in the score. Nevertheless, many musical elements of the score suggest the styles of other composers: the Prayer echoes passages from Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*, a canon added to lend it solidity of texture as well as an authentic religious stamp; the opening chorus and the rustic dance celebrating Anna's betrothal to Roberto demonstrates Puccini's abilities in writing ensemble, although it is reminiscent of Thomas or Gounod; the powerfully impassioned monologue and romanza of Roberto in his Act II monologue suggest Verdi's *Il trovatore*; there are orchestral climaxes echoing Wagner; and instrumental textures and agitated tremolos that recall Bizet's *Carmen*.

In *Le villi*, Puccini demonstrated his exceptional talent to invent poignant melody, and combine that lyricism with outstanding instrumental texture; there is much tuneful music in *Le villi* that is enchanting to the ear, carefully polished, and delicately harmonized. Puccini significantly demonstrated his ability to express emotional intensity and provide characterization in musico-dramatic terms; at times, his dramatic style, particularly in Roberto's Act II monologue, is caustic; it erupts into violent emotional outbursts, influences of the verismo genre that was poised to explode on the Italian opera horizon, although in later life, Puccini claimed that his *Le villi* was the first Italian verismo opera.

Le villi was the first opera from a young and budding melodist and musico-dramatist; the opera conveys impressions and expressions from a nascent talent that would blossom with brilliance in his later operatic works. It is a youthful work, its music far removed from the poignant and lush sentimentalism that would later become Puccini's trademark. Nevertheless, the *Le villi* score — although saturated with much immature inventiveness and eclecticism — represented a blueprint for the future; if anything, a statement that a promising musico-dramatist and the longed-for heir to Giuseppe Verdi was about to emerge on the Italian opera horizon.

With *Le villi*, Puccini's opera career was launched.

LIBRETTO

Le Villi

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Act I

*It is spring. The trees are in bloom and there are flowers everywhere.
A path over rocky ground disappears into the forest. A small bridge spans the hollow.*

*There is a celebration before Guglielmo's humble house: the villagers dance,
and there is a table set with food and beverages.*

Guglielmo, Anna, and Roberto are seated at the head of the table.

Montanari:

Evviva i fidanzati!

Mountaineers:

Long life to the betrothed!

Roberto and Anna come forward, arm in arm.

Dalla vecchia di Magonza
Roberto ereditier!
I tesori accumulati son molti davver!
Dunque povero stasera Roberto partirà
ei ricco tornerà a sposar la fidanzata.
Evviva i fidanzati!

The old woman of Mainz died and made
Roberto her heir!
There are so many truly different treasures!
Tonight, Roberto will leave a poor man,
and return a rich man to marry his betrothed.
Long life to the betrothed!

Gira! Gira! Gira!
Balza! Gira! Gira! Balza!

Turn! Turn! Turn!
Jump! Turn! Turn! Jump!

La musica freme e delira,
la danza sospinge ed incalza.
Gira! Balza! Balza! Gira!

The maddening music throbs,
the dance drives and presses us.
Turn! Jump! Jump! Turn!

Oh, volano rapide l'ore se il piede alla
danza è leggier!
Il ballo è il rival dell' amore.
Il cuore fa batter davver!

Oh, the hours fly by when the dancing steps
are nimble!
Dancing is the rival of love.
It truly makes the heart beat!

Alcuni Montanari:

Ohè! Babbo Guglielmo!
Venite voi pure a danzar!

Some Mountaineers: (to Guglielmo)

Hey there! Father Guglielmo!
Come and join the dance!

Guglielmo:

Ebben, perchè no? Poffar mio!
Son vecchio, ma in gambe so star!

Guglielmo:

All right, why not? By Jove!
I'm old, but I can still move my legs!

*Guglielmo invites a young girl to dance. Friends respond with laughter and applause.
Afterwards, Guglielmo exits with the dancer, and all follow him.*

Anna carries a bunch of forget-me-not flowers.



Anna:

Se come voi piccina io fossi, o vaghi fior,
sempre sempre vicina potrei stare al mio amor.
Allor dirgli vorrei:
“Io penso sempre a te!”
Ripeter gli potrei:
“Non ti scordar di me!”

Voi, di me più felici, io seguirete, o fior;
per valli e per pendici seguirete il mio amor.
Ah, se il nome che avete menzognero non
è, deh, al mio amor ripetete:
“Non ti scordar di me!”

Anna:*(addressing the flowers)*

If I were small like you, pretty flowers,
I could always, always be near my beloved.
Then I would tell him:
“I think of you always!”
I’d repeat it to him:
“Do not forget me!”

You flowers, who are more fortunate than I,
will follow my beloved over hills and dales.
Ah, if your name forget-me-not is not a
deception, then repeat this to my love:
“Do not forget me!”

*Anna places the bunch of flowers in Roberto's suitcase.
Roberto observes Anna, and smiles as he approaches her.*

Roberto:

Ah!Ah! T'ho colta!

Roberto:

Ah! I've caught you!

Anna:

Tu!

Anna:

You!

Roberto takes the flowers from the suitcase, kisses them, and then puts them back.

Roberto:

Grazie, Anna mia.
Ma un più gentil ricordo io chiederti vorrei.

Roberto:

Thanks, dear Anna.
But I would like to ask you for a more tender
token of remembrance.

Anna:

Quale?

Anna:

What?

Roberto:

Un sorriso.
Non esser, Anna mia, mesta sì tanto;
passeran pochi giorni e tornerò.

Roberto:

A smile.
Don't be so sad, my dear Anna;
I'll return in a few days.

Anna:

Io tento invan di trattenere il pianto,
ho una tristezza che vincer non so.

Foschi presagi mi turban la mente.

Mi par ch'io non ti debba più veder!

Roberto:

Anna!

Anna:

Stanotte sognai che morente t'attendevo.

Roberto:

Suvvia! Quali pensier!
Pensa invece ai dì lieti che il destino ci
promette, benigno al nostro amor!

Anna:

Ma m'ami tu davver?

Roberto:

Mio cherubino, perchè dell'amor mio dubiti
ancor?
Tu dell'infanzia mia le gioie dividesti e le
carezze;
da te soave e pia imparai della vita le dolcezze;
ero povero, e tu l'affetto mio più d'ogni
ricco volesti pregiar.

Ah! Dubita di Dio, ma no, dell'amor mio
non dubitar! Io t'amo! Io t'amo!

Anna:

Dolci e soavi accenti, deh, vi scolpite nel
mio mesto cuor,
e nei foschi momenti dell'attesa alleviate il
mio dolore!

Dolci e soavi accenti, oh, quante volte il
labbro mio vi dee mormorar:
"Ah, dubita di Dio, ma no, dell'amor mio
non dubitar! Io t'amo! Io t'amo!"

Anna:

I try in vain not to cry,
I don't know how to overcome this sadness I
feel.

My mind is preoccupied with dark
premonitions.

I feel that I shall never see you again!

Roberto:

Anna!

Anna:

Last night I dreamed that I was dying while I
was awaiting your return.

Roberto:

Come now! What terrible thoughts!
Think instead of our gracious destiny;
its promise of love and happiness!

Anna:

But do you truly love me?

Roberto:

My angel, why do you still doubt my love?
From the time of my childhood we shared
joys and kisses;
I learned about the sweetness of life from
you, so gentle and virtuous;
I was poor, but you cherished my affection
more than that of a rich man.

Ah! Doubt God, but do not doubt my love!
I love you!

Anna:

Sweet and gentle words, engrave yourself in
my sad heart,
and soothe my grief in the dark moments of
my waiting vigil!

Sweet and gentle words, oh, my lips will
murmur them so many times:
"Ah! Doubt God, but do not doubt my love!
I love you! I love you!"

The mountaineers and Guglielmo return.

Montanari:

Presto! Presto in viaggio!
È l'ora di partir!
Pria che il giocondo raggio del sole abbia a
svanir si parta!

Roberto:

Anna, coraggio!

Anna:

Io mi sento morir!

Montanari:

Della fosca al limite noi verrem con te.

Roberto:

Padre mio, benediteci!

Guglielmo:

Tutti qui intorno a me!

Mountaineers: (to Roberto)

Quickly! Get on your way!
It's time to leave!
Be on your way before the last joyful rays of
sunshine have disappeared!

Roberto: (to Anna)

Anna, courage!

Anna:

I feel like I'm dying!

Mountaineers: (to Roberto)

We'll accompany you to the edge of the forest.

Roberto: (to Guglielmo)

My father, bless us!

Guglielmo:

All come around me!

Anna and Roberto kneel before Guglielmo.

Lento**GUGLIELMO**

Angiol di Dio, che i vanni rivolgi al ciel
stasera, reca questa preghiera al trono
del Signor!

Angel of God, spread your wings to heaven
tonight, and bear this prayer to the throne of
the Lord!

Anna, Roberto, Guglielmo:

Sia propizio il cammino ad ogni pellegrino,
non serbi disinganni ogni sogno d'amor.

Anna, Roberto, Guglielmo:

May the trip be favorable for every pilgrim;
let every dream of love not become deceived.

After the prayer, Guglielmo embraces Roberto.

Roberto embraces Anna, and then shakes hands with the mountaineers.

Roberto:

Padre, Anna, addio!

Roberto:

Father, Anna, farewell!

Guglielmo, Anna, Montanari:

Addio, Roberto, addio!

Guglielmo, Anna, Mountaineers:

Farewell, Roberto, farewell!

Roberto departs.

END OF ACT I

Intermezzo

Part I: The Abandonment**Il Narratore:**

Di quei giorni a Magonza una sirena
i vecchi e i giovinetti affascinava.
Ella trasse Roberto all'orgia oscena
e l'affetto per Anna ei vi obliava.
Intanto, afflitta da ineffabil pena,
la fanciulla tradita lo aspettava.
Ma invan l'attese. Ed al cader del verno
ella chiudeva gli occhi al sonno eterno.

The Narrator:

In those days, in Mainz, a temptress
bewitched men, young and old.
She lured Roberto to her revelry and he
forgot about his affection for Anna.
Meanwhile, afflicted with indescribable
anguish, the betrayed girl waited for him.
But she waited in vain. And at the end of
winter she closed her eyes and died.

*Anna's funeral cortege is seen in the distance.***Coro di Donne:**

Come un giglio reciso
dentro la bara giace.
Raggio di luna
è il pallor del suo viso.
O pura virgo, requiesce in pace!

Chorus of Women:

She lies inside the coffin
like a slashed lily.
Her face is as pale
as a ray of moonlight.
Oh pure virgin, rest in peace!

Part II: The Witches' Sabbath**Il Narratore:**

V'è nella selva Nera una leggenda
che delle Villi la leggenda è detta
e ai spergiuri d'amor suona tremenda.

Se muor d'amore qualche giovinetta
nella selva ogni notte la tregenda
viene a danzare, e il traditor vi aspetta.

Poi, se l'incontra, con lui danza e ride
e colla foga del danzar, l'uccide.
Or per Roberto venne un triste giorno.
dalla sirena in cenci abbandonato
egli alla selva pensò far ritorno,
e questa notte appunto ei v'è tornato.

Già nel bosco s'avanza: intorno, intorno
riddan le Villi nell'aer gelato.
Ei, tremando di freddo e di paura,
è già nel mezzo della selva oscura.

The Narrator:

There is a legend in the Black Forest about
the Willis; when the legend is told it terrifies
faithless lovers.

If a young girl dies of love, she comes to
dance in the forest every night of the
witches' sabbath to await the betrayer.

Then, if he is found, she dances and laughs,
killing him with the energy of the dancing.
Now a sad day arrived for Roberto: after the
siren abandoned him and left him raging, he
thought about returning to the forest, and he
returned that night.

He entered the woods and the Willis whirled
around him in the icy air.
He was in the middle of the dark forest,
trembling from cold and from fear.

Act II

*It is a cold winter night in the Black Forest.
The bare trees are heavily laden with snow.
The sky is calm and starlit, the moon illuminating the forest.
The Willis come to dance, preceded by will-o-the wisps,
imp-like demons that appear in droves.*

Guglielmo:

No, possibil non è che invendicata
resti la colpa sua!
Vivea beata e tranquilla al mio fianco
la mia dolce figliola, ed egli venne e colla
sua parola d'amor le smanie in lei destò.

Chi dunque o scellerato, chi l'amor tuo ti
chiese?
Quali orribili offese t'abbiam mai fatto noi
per uccider quell'angelo,
e agli estremi miei giorni serbar cotanta
angoscia?
No, possibil non è che invendicata
resti colpa sì grande!

Guglielmo:

No, it isn't possible that his guilt should
remain unavenged!
My sweet daughter was living happily and
peacefully by my side, and he came along
with words of love and awakened her
crazed yearning.

Who then, oh villain, asked you for your
love?
What horrible offenses have we ever
inflicted on you that you have caused the
death of that angel, and brought so much
anguish to my remaining days?
No, it isn't conceivable that a guilt so grave
should remain unavenged!

Andante Lento
GUGLIELMO



Anima santa della figlia mia,
se la leggenda delle Villi è vera,
deh non esser con lui, qual fosti, pia,
ma qui l'attendi al cader della sera.
S'io sapessi saperti vendicata
lieto saluterei l'ultimo dì.
Ah, perdona Signor, l'idea spietata
che dal mio cor che sanguina fuggì.

Holy spirit of my daughter,
if the legend of the Willis is true,
then do not be merciful with him,
but await him as evening falls.
If I could but know that you were avenged,
I would happily salute my last day.
Ah, forgive me, Lord for the inhumane
thoughts emerging from my bleeding heart.

Guglielmo enters the house.

Le villi:

Ei giunge! Anna! Anna! Anna!
 Di morte alla condanna, alla vendetta che
 qui l'aspetta.
 Ei viene il traditor!
 Eccolo s'avvicina.
 Su dannato, cammina!

The willis: (*from the distance*)

He is coming! Anna! Anna! Anna!
 We await vengeance; he is condemned to
 death.
 The traitor is coming!
 Here he is, he is approaching.
 Come damned one, walk!

Roberto appears before Guglielmo's house.

Roberto:

Ecco la casa.
 Dio, che orrenda notte!
 Strane voci m'inseguono.
 Le Villi, evvia!
 Son fole!

Roberto: (*to himself*)

Here's the house.
 God, what a horrendous night!
 Strange voices follow me.
 Willis, get away from here!
 They must be illusions!

No, delle Villi me non perseguita la
 vendetta fatal!
 Tu sol m'inseguì, rimorso vipera
 infernal!
 Vipera dal veleno infernal!

No, I am not being pursued by the Willis'
 fatal vengeance!
 I am pursued by my remorse; it is like an
 infernal viper!
 A viper with infernal poison!

Andante Mesto**ROBERTO**

Torna ai fe - li - ci dì do - len - te il mio pen-sier.

Ridean del maggio i fior, floria l'amor, floria per me l'amore!

Torna ai felici dì dolente il mio pensier.
 Ridean del maggio i fior, floria l'amor,
 fioria per me l'amor!
 Or tutto si coprì di lugubre mister.
 Ed io non ho nel cuor che tristezza e terror!

My anguished thoughts return to those
 happy days.
 The flowers of May laughed; love bloomed,
 and love bloomed for me!
 Now all is covered with doleful mystery.
 And I don't feel anything in my heart but
 sadness and terror!

Roberto advances to the door of the house.

Forse ella vive!

Perhaps she lives!

Bussiam!

Let's knock!

Roberto retreats. He is unable to knock on the door, as if restrained by a mysterious force.

Qual brivido mi colse!
Invan di quella soglia tentai sul limite levar
la man!

What a shudder overcomes me!
I tried in vain to raise my hand to her
threshold!

Le villi:

Su. Dannato, cammina!

The willis:

Up, damned one, walk!

Roberto:

Pur d'intendere parmi davvero un canto
funebre!

Roberto:

Yet it seems to me that I indeed hear a
doleful chant!

Roberto kneels and prays.

Andante Religioso

ROBERTO



O sommo Iddio del mio cammino,
del mio destin questa è la meta.
Fa che il perdono la renda lieta,
un solo istante e poi morirò!

Oh mighty Lord this is the end of my life
and the fulfillment of my destiny.
I would give my life for one moment of her
forgiveness, and then I would die happy!

Le villi:

Su! Cammina! Cammina!

The willis:

Up, damned one, walk!

Roberto leaps to his feet.

Roberto:

Pregar non posso!
Ah, maledetto il dì che andai lontan di qui!
Maledetta sia la tua bellezza o cortigiana vil!
Maledetta in etern, maladetta!

Roberto:

I cannot pray!
Ah, cursed be the day that I went far away
from here! Cursed be your beauty, oh vile
courtesan! Cursed in eternity, cursed!

Le villi:

Cammina, cammina!

The willis:

Come on, walk!

Anna:

Roberto!

Anna: (*Calling from the distance*)

Roberto!

Roberto:

Ciel, la sua voce, dunque morta non è!

Roberto:

Heavens, her voice, then she isn't dead!

*Anna appears on the bridge.***Anna:**

Non son più l'amor.

Son la vendetta!

Anna:

I am no longer love.

I am revenge!

Roberto:

Gran Dio! Gran Dio!

Roberto: (*falling to the ground*)

Great God!

Anna:

Ricordi quel che dicevi nel mese dei fiori?

Anna:

Do you remember what you said during that springtime?

Andante Lento**ANNA**

The musical score for Anna's aria is written on three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is marked 'Andante Lento'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second and third staves continue the melody and lyrics. The lyrics are: 'Tu dell'infanzia mia le gioie dividesti e le carezze da te soave e pia imparai della vita le dolcezze!'.

Tu del - l'infan-zia mi - a le gio - ie di-vi-desti e le ca - rez - ze;
 da te so - a - ve e pi - a, da te so - a - ve e pi - a im - pa -
 ra - i del - la vi - ta le dol-cez - ze!

“Tu dell’infanzia mia le gioie dividesti e le carezze da te soave e pia imparai della vita le dolcezze!

Ah, dubita di Dio ma no, dell’amor mio, non dubitar.”
 T’amai: mi tradisti. T’attesi: e non venisti.
 Ma è tremendo dolore in silenzio soffrir!
 Senza speranza in cuore mi facesti morir!

“From the time of my childhood we shared joys and kisses, and I learned about the sweetness of life from you, so gentle and virtuous!

Ah! Doubt God, but do not doubt my love!”
 I loved you: you betrayed me.
 I waited for you: and you didn’t come.
 But it is so painful to suffer in silence!
 Without had hope in my heart; you made me die!

Roberto:

La scordai, l’ho tradita e per me perde la vita.

Roberto:

I forgot her. I betrayed her, and she died because of me.

Ah, è tremendo il dolore che mi tocca
soffrir.
Col rimorso nel cuore io mi sento morir!

Ah, the pain that I must suffer is horrible.
With remorse in my heart, I feel myself
dying!

Roberto advances toward Anna, as if impelled by an unknown force.

Anna opens her arms, drawing him nearer to her.

The Willis gather around him and dance in a frenzy.

Le villi:

Qui noi t'aspettiamo traditor!
Da noi non attender pietà!
Chi in vita fu sordo all'amor,
in morte perdono non ha!
Traditor, t'aspettiam!
Gira! Balza! Gira!

The willis:

We await you here, betrayer!
Do not expect pity from us!
He who in life was deaf to love,
does not deserve forgiveness in death!
Betrayer, we await you!
Turn! Jump! Turn!

Terrified, Roberto rushes toward the house.

*The Willis pursue him. He tries to escape, but his way is barred by Anna,
who drags him into the frenzied dance of the Willis.*

Roberto:

Anna, pietà!

Roberto:

Anna, mercy!

Roberto becomes exhausted and falls at Anna's feet.

Anna:

Sei mio!

Anna: *(as she departs)*

You are mine!

Le villi:

Osanna!

The willis: *(following Anna)*

Hosannah!

END OF OPERA

Edgar

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana,

based on Alfred de Musset's verse drama,

“La Coupe et les Lèvres” (“Between Cup and Lips” - 1832)

Premiere:

Teatro alla Scala, Milan, April 21, 1889

(Original four act version)

Ferrara, February 28, 1892

(Revised three act version)

Principal Characters in Edgar

Edgar, a young adventurer, later disguised as a friar	Tenor
Fidelia, a young Flemish girl in love with Edgar	Soprano
Tigrana, a courtesan and seductress, in love with Edgar	Mezzo-soprano
Frank, Fidelia's brother, in love with Tigrana	Baritone
Gualtiero, father of Frank and Fidelia	Bass

Villagers, soldiers, monks, children, and courtesans.

TIME: 1302, during the war between Flanders and France

PLACE: a village near Coutray, Flanders

Story Synopsis

Edgar is torn between his love for the chaste Fidelia and the beguiling courtesan Tigrana, a woman born of Moors, who was abandoned as a child and reared by Fidelia's father, Gualtiero. Tigrana attempts to lure Edgar away from Fidelia, but he overcomes temptation. Frank, Fidelia's brother, is passionately in love with Tigrana, but she spurns him; her passion is Edgar.

While villagers pray before the church, Tigrana angers them with a blasphemous song. They threaten Tigrana; she escapes their wrath by retreating towards Edgar's house. Edgar protects Tigrana and send her inside, threatening anyone who would harm her. His home defiled and repulsed by the villagers, he sets his home afire. As Edgar and Tigrana prepare to leave the village, Frank challenges his rival to a duel. Frank falls wounded, and the villagers curse the fleeing lovers, Edgar and Tigrana.

Edgar and Tigrana have escaped to a life of debauchery, but he has tired of revelry and yearns to return to the pure Fidelia. Soldiers pass nearby, led by Frank, their captain. Edgar begs forgiveness for his rashness, and their friendship is reconciled. Frank invites Edgar to join the regiment and fight for Flanders: it is Edgar's opportunity to escape from Tigrana and his depraved life. As Edgar leaves with the soliders, Tigrana curses him, swearing to avenge his abandonment of her.

Edgar presumably fell in battle. In a funeral procession, soldiers and townspeople praise his valor. But a disguised Friar refutes them, claiming that he heard Edgar's confession, a revelation that he was not a man of honor, but a dissolute sinner and adventurer. The Friar condemns Edgar, but Fidelia proclaims his innocence.

Tigrana appears at the funeral. After Frank and the Friar bribe her with jewels, she reveals that Edgar betrayed his country, not fighting for honor but gold and wealth. The outraged soldiers rush to Edgar's bier, but only find a suit of armor in the casket.

The Friar reveals himself as Edgar. He curses the vile Tigrana: his redemption. As he embraces Fidelia, Tigrana fatally stabs Fidelia. Broken hearted, Edgar falls on Fidelia's corpse, as soldiers apprehend Tigrana.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I:

It is bright dawn in a square in the Flemish village of Coutray. In the background stands Edgar's house, an almond tree, a tavern, and a church, from which an angelus is heard. Villagers and shepherds greet each other as they go off to perform their various chores.

Edgar sleeps in front of the tavern.

Fidelia appears.

"O fior del giorno"

Andante mosso
FIDELIA



O fior del gior - no, sal-ve al - ba se - re - na! Sper-
Hail morning flower, serene dawn!

an - za ed e - sul - tan - za! In - no gen - til, del gior - no fior.
Hope and joy! Gentle hymn of the unfolding day.

Fidelia calls to Edgar to awaken him. She cuts a twig from the fully-blossomed almond tree, kisses the flower, and tosses it to Edgar. Suddenly Fidelia becomes fearful when she sees someone approaching from the distance; she quickly disappears.

Tigrana appears, a dembal across her shoulders. Tigrana is treacherous and vicious, determined to use her beauty and charms to seduce Edgar.

Tigrana notices that Edgar holds an almond twig with much tenderness, knowing that it represents Fidelia's love for him. She teases him about Fidelia: she is sorry that her arrival made his "little dove" fly away, and that she is surprised that he has bestowed his affections on a shepherdess.

The organ from the church plays morning prayers. Gualtiero and villagers appear in the square, and then enter the church.

Edgar seats himself at the threshold of his house. Tigrana approaches him, her demeanor both scornful and alluring. She reminds him that in the past he was inflamed with lust for her, yearning for her impassioned kisses and the joys of carnal pleasures, but that now he resists her.

“Tu voluttà di fuoco”

Andante Religioso sostenuto
TIGRANA



Tu vo-lut- tà di fuoco, ardenti baci, sognavi un dì, non pastorali amor!
You were inflamed with lust, and one day dreamed of impassioned kisses,
not the love of a shepherdess!

Edgar fears that he will surrender to Tigrana’s seductive power. He escapes and rushes to his house. Tigrana curses him for cruelly rejecting her.

Frank, Fidelia’s brother, is overcome by a passion for Tigrana that he can neither control or understand. But Tigrana has rejected him. He seethes with anger, because Tigrana failed to keep their appointment of the night before. Tigrana scornfully denounces him, blatantly informing him that she has no interest in him, and that he bores her. Frank places his head in his hands and sobs, remorseful and despairing, because he realizes that he has become enslaved by his irrational passion for the wicked courtesan, and he is unable to escape from her allure.

Tigrana shrugs her shoulders, laughs scornfully, and then enters the tavern.

“Questo amor, vergogna mia”

Andante lento
FRANK



Que - sto a - mor, vergogna mi - a, io spez-zar, scordar vor - rei;
This love has become my shame. I wish I could break it and forget,

While villagers kneel outside the church in prayer, Tigrana emerges from the tavern and sits upon a table, her demeanor insolent, rude, and flaunting. Accompanying herself on her dembal, she sings a provocative song that asks God to cease his merciful punishment of her: “Pity the little lamb!”

“Tu il cuor mi strazi”

Allegro satanico
TIGRANA



Tu il cuor mi stra- zi. Io muo - io! Che fe-ci a te, cru - del?
You tear out my heart. I am dying! What did I do to you, cruel one?

Villagers curse Tigrana, an immoral woman who has been excommunicated from the church. They chase her away, but she is fearless of the villagers — and of God — and she refuses to leave, telling the villagers that if they find her song profane, they should return to church to pray.

As villagers rush menacingly towards her, she retreats towards Edgar's house. The villagers inform Edgar that Tigrana mocked their prayers with her profane song. Edgar suddenly becomes bewitched by Tigrana and defends her. He ushers her into his house, and then urges the villagers to return to their prayers.

Edgar suddenly realizes that with Tigrana in his forefather's home, he has defiled it; he curses the house and the villagers, and then takes a lighted firebrand and sets the house ablaze. Some villagers try to extinguish the fire, but Edgar restrains them.

Edgar addresses Tigrana rapturously, inviting her to share a new life of lust and pleasure together. As Edgar and Tigrana start to leave, Frank blocks their way. Edgar grabs the hilt of his sword defiantly and threateningly.

Gualtiero emerges from the church. He sees Edgar and Frank about to duel, and urges both to put down their weapons and restrain their anger. Each character becomes introspective as each reveals his inner thoughts: Edgar admits that he fears staining his life with a crime; Fidelia is gratified that their rage has been extinguished; Gualtiero reproaches them for allowing blind delirium to destroy their reason; Frank admits that even his father's voice cannot restrain his anger and rage; and Tigrana is in disbelief that the voice of an old man was sufficient to quell the anger of Frank and Edgar.

“La voce d'un vecchio”

Moderato con agitazione
CHORUS



La vo - ce d'un vec - chio ascol - ta - te,
Listen to the voice of an old man,

Suddenly, Frank draws his sword to prevent Edgar and Tigrana from departing. Edgar draws his sword and both duel. Frank falls wounded. Tigrana urges Edgar to flee, but Frank insists that they fight until death. Gualtiero intercedes and wrenches Frank's sword from him.

Edgar and Tigrana quickly depart. The wounded Frank makes a supreme effort to follow them, but the villagers restrain him. Frank curses them. Fidelia rushes to Frank as he falls into Gualtiero's arms.

The fire destroying Edgar's house continues to rage.

Act II:

The terrace of a luxurious palace overlooking gardens. In the background there is a vast expanse of countryside that is crossed by silvery streams.

It is a bright moonlit evening. The palace is sumptuously lit; the sounds of laughter and merriment can be heard from inside.

Edgar appears on the terrace; he is tired and disgusted with the perverse life he has been leading with Tigrana; nostalgically, he yearns for home and the chaste Fidelia.

“O soave vision di quell'alba d'aprìl”

Andante espressivo
EDGAR



O so - a - ve vi - sion di quell'al - ba d'aprìl,
Oh gentle vision of April's dawn,

Tigrana tries to extinguish Edgar's doubts that her love and its carnal pleasures fulfill the essence of life.

“Quel che sognavi un dì d'orgie e di baci”

Lento
TIGRANA



Quel che sognavi un dì d'orgie e di baci sogno, febril, donar io seppi a te. Per sempre il fato ci unì,
One day you had feverish dreams of orgies and kisses, and I knew how to give them to you.
Do you realize that fate has us united forever?

But Tigrana's pleas are in vain. Edgar despairs, realizing that he has shamefully descended into an abyss of immorality.

Frank, leading a platoon of soldiers, passes near the palace. Edgar decides that to escape from Tigrana he will join the soldiers in their fight against the French. He asks forgiveness from Frank, who admits that the wound from Edgar's sword cured him of Tigrana, a cursed and unworthy love. Edgar pleads with Frank; he can be redeemed if he is allowed to fight for the glory of his country. Frank agrees, and Edgar joins the soldiers.

Tigrana explodes in defiance, cursing Edgar and swearing vengeance.

Act III:

The bastion of a fortress near the city of Courtray, where a catalfalque stands prominently. From afar, trumpets announce the approach of a funeral procession; it is the funeral of Edgar, a hero who fell in battle for his country.

In a Requiem, friars and soldiers recite prayers in Latin honoring Edgar. Fidelia intones her farewell to Edgar, and vows her eternal love for him.

“Addio, mio dolce amore!”

Lento
FIDELIA

Ad-di-o, ad-di-o, mio dolce amor! mio dolce amor!
(Farewell my sweet love!)

Frank delivers the eulogy for Edgar, praising him as a hero who lived for country and honor.

A friar, his face concealed by his habit, claims that before Edgar died, he confessed his sins to him: that he burned his forefather's house; that he indulged in debauchery; that he wounded Frank in a duel over the courtesan Tigrana; and that he only sought adventure and fortune. The friar concludes that Edgar was not a hero but a villain.

The crowd becomes outraged and condemns Edgar, a man whose memory will invoke shame. Fidelia defends Edgar's memory; he erred like all men, but he was pious and a man of valor who possessed the most noble thoughts.

“Nel villaggio d’Edgar”

Andante calmo
FIDELIA



Nel vil-lagio d'Ed-gar son nata an-ch'io e lo con-nob - bi.
I was born in Edgar's village and I knew him.

Fidelia requests that Edgar be buried in their village, until the time when they can share eternal peace together. She approaches the coffin and sprinkles it with flowers.

Tigrana appears, forcing her way past a sentinel. She begs the friar that she be allowed to pray and keep a vigil next to Captain Edgar's body. As she approaches the coffin to pray, the friar condemns her false tears. The friar seeks truths from Tigrana. Both Frank and the friar bribe Tigrana with a precious necklace and a ring, assuring her

that they are worth more than her tears. Tigrana contemplates the jewels, and then takes them. She reveals that Edgar was no hero, but a man who betrayed his country; he only sought wealth.

The soldiers rush to Edgar's coffin; they find no corpse, but only armor: The friar removes his vestment and reveals himself: it is Edgar. Fidelia embraces him.

Edgar reveals that he has finally broken Tigrana's spell, and that he is redeemed. As Edgar begins to leave with Fidelia. Tigrana, crawling and unseen, approaches them and stabs fatally Fidelia with a dagger.

The horrified crowd becomes hysterical. Tigrana is seized by soldiers. Edgar falls on Fidelia's corpse, while Franks embraces and consoles Gualtiero. All grieve as they encircle Fidelia's corpse and kneel in prayer.

Commentary and Analysis

Le villi's success established Puccini as a promising young composer on the Italian opera horizon; with Ricordi's commission in hand, he immediately embarked on a search for a new subject to dramatize musically. Ferdinando Fontana, the librettist of *Le villi*, proposed Alfred de Musset's 1832 play, "La Coupe et les lèvres" ("Between Cup and Lips").

Musset (1810-1857) was a French Romantic poet and playwright whose oeuvre was strongly influenced by Shakespeare and Schiller. He wrote the first modern dramas in the French language.

However, much of Musset's acclaim stems from his intense love affair with George Sand between the years 1833 and 1835, the inspiration for "La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle" (1835), a fictionalized account of the affair that reflects the *mal du siècle*, the moral disillusionment during the nineteenth century period of political strife between republicans and monarchists: the essential underlying story of Sardou's *La Tosca*, which later became the basis for Puccini's *Tosca* (1900).

Musset's "La Coupe et les lèvres" was a literary drama, a vehicle for the writer to vent his gloomy meditations on life and love. The hero of the drama, Frank (Edgar in Puccini's opera), like Goethe's Faust, expresses his conflicts, tensions, and agonies in seeking the meaning of life as a confounded and self-questioning man seeking the essence of his soul and spiritual fulfillment.

In his quest for truth, Frank embarks on an adventurous military career. He very quickly becomes involved with a mysterious courtesan, Monna Belcolore. But he soon tires of her charms, and at the same time becomes disgusted with his wasteful life. He seeks redemption and purification of his soul, and decides to return to his native village in the Tyrol, where he falls in love with the innocent Déidamia, a sweetheart from his early youth. But just before their wedding, the bride is stabbed to death by the avenging courtesan, Monna Belcolore: thus the play's title, "Between Cup and Lips."

Librettist Fontana performed extensive surgery in transforming Musset's original five-act verse drama into a libretto that would be adaptable for musico-dramatic purposes. The original play contained an extensive blend of introspection and melodrama; there were interminable monologues with exalted lyrical poetry and rhetorical bombast, as well as a haphazard succession of scenes.

Primarily, Fontana concentrated on retaining the melodramatic elements of Musset's play: the spectacle scenes in which Edgar (Frank) sets fire to his home, the mock funeral and its subsequent coup de théâtre, and Tigrana's stabbing of Fidelia (Déidamia). Ultimately, the libretto became pure melodrama and spectacle, a work in the tradition of Meyerbeer that Wagner delighted in condemning as effects without causes.

Fontana's ultimate dramatic concoction was far more dramatic and larger in scope than his previous *Le villi*. The venue was moved from the Tyrol to Coutray, the brutal war between Flanders and France during the fourteenth century perhaps a more credible military and patriotic ambience for the underlying story. The two heroines, Déidamia and Monna Belcolore, were re-christened with names indicating their character and temperaments: Fidelia and Tigrana. But, Fontana excised Musset's introspective scenes,

and the opera's characters became basic and uncomplicated, deprived of the aura of mysticism and complexity of Musset's original play. Nevertheless, the plot contained a sufficient amount of action together with some violent confrontations: appropriate material for an opera score, for which Puccini had the challenge of extending the range of his creative capabilities.

Five years would elapse between the premieres of *Le villi* (1884) and *Edgar* (1889); it was a period of severe tribulation in both Puccini's private and professional lives. He was grieving the death of his mother, and had difficulty coping with his family's animosity and criticism of his relationship with Elvira Gemignani. Emotions overpowered him and he became despondent, impeding his progress on *Edgar*, an endeavor that began in the summer of 1884 and lasted until the autumn of 1888: a snail's pace by any standard. And Puccini also had difficulties with his egotistical librettist Fontana, who was convinced of the excellence of his libretto and obstinately refused to accept Puccini's various suggestions for improvement.

Elvira was insensitive to Puccini's difficulties in completing *Edgar*: on the contrary, she constantly nagged him by reminding him that Verdi had composed *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *La traviata* in just a few years. The atmosphere was also far from conducive to creative invention, as his studio at home was surrounded by young children: Elvira's daughter Fosca and Antonio, a son born to them.

Puccini, indeed, had the full libretto of *Edgar* in his hands in 1884; it can be speculated whether the extensive delay in its completion was caused by his emotional reaction to criticism of his scandalous personal life, or perhaps that the libretto failed to kindle his imagination and inspire musical ideas.

Edgar finally premiered at La Scala on April 21, 1889; it received but 2 more performances. The critics recognized Puccini's technical advances since *Le villi*, praised some of its individual numbers, but essentially declared the opera a failure. Compliments were confined to Puccini's effective orchestration, Edgar's impassioned aria, "O soave vision," the Requiem music, and Fidelia's arias.

Edgar is the only Puccini opera containing a major role for the mezzo-soprano voice (Tigrana), a voice-type that Verdi found to possess inherent dramatic qualities, and whose characteristics he exploited in his later operas, particularly *Don Carlo* (Eboli) and *Aida* (Amneris).

Tigrana is the demon of the drama, and Puccini not only composed extremely powerful music for her, but in his original version endowed her with the major portion of the score's music; no later Puccini opera has a substantial role for the mezzo-soprano voice, other than the Princess/Aunt in *Suor Angelica*. Nevertheless, after *Edgar*'s failure, it could be conjectured that Puccini subconsciously attributed some part of that failure to his focus on the mezzo-soprano voice.

When Puccini revised *Edgar* for an 1892 production, he curtailed Tigrana's music. Nevertheless, Tigrana's remaining music contains impressive dramatic power, melodic sweep, and dutifully conveys her savage nature: Tigrana's Act I confrontation with Edgar, "Tu voluttà di fuoco" ("You were inflamed with lust"); her Act I confrontation with the villagers outside the church, "Tu il cuor mi strazi" ("You tear out my heart"), which

leads to a broad and expressive Andante mosso, “Sia per voi l’orazion, e per me la canzon!” (“Let prayer be for you, and the song for me!”), the contrast of Tigrana’s seductive song combined with Kyrie music that Puccini plagiarized from his earlier composed Mass, a forecast of the collision of the spirit and the flesh that Puccini would brilliantly express in *Tosca*’s “Te Deum” concluding Act I; Tigrana’s Act II confrontation with Edgar, “Quel che sognavi un dì d’orgie e di baci” (“One day you had feverish dreams of orgies and kisses”), and her poignant dramatic outpourings with Edgar in the powerful conclusion of the opera.

Fidelia’s music is tender and passionate: she is introduced with a charming pastoral, “Oh fior del giorno” (“Hail morning flower”); but in the third act she is the beneficiary of Puccini’s exceptional lyricism, “Addio mio dolce amor!” (“Farewell my sweet love!”), and “Nell’villaggio d’Edgar” (“I was also born in Edgar’s village”), the latter extremely effective when it joins the chorus. These arias can rank with some of the best of Puccini’s later arias; they resonate with soaring vocal lines that express Puccini’s signature music of grief, melancholy and despair.

Puccini failed to endow the hero Edgar musically: much of the tenor’s music, like that of Roberto in his earlier *Le villi*, possesses a declamatory rather than poignant lyricism, causing comparisons to Puccini’s later *Manon Lescaut* (Des Grieux) and *Il tabarro* (Luigi). Edgar’s music is at times broad and expansive, yet very much invigorated with the declamatory style of verismo: Edgar’s curse as he torches his forefather’s house; his call to Tigrana to escape to a new life of lust, “Tigrana, vieni!” (“Tigrana, come!”); and his solemn curse of Tigrana in Act II: “O lebbra, sozurra del mondo” (“Oh leper, filth of the world”)

Edgar’s Act II monologue, “Orgia, chimera dall’occhio vitreo” (“The orgy is a glossy illusion”), that is followed by a duet with Tigrana marked Andante espressivo, “Labbro mio,” is a musical blueprint for the forthcoming explosive passions that Puccini would compose for *Manon Lescaut*’s Act II.

Although the baritone role of Frank is limited musically, Puccini endowed him with a magnificent aria in Act I after his confrontation with Tigrana: “Questo amor, vergogna mia” (“This love has become my shame”).

If anything, Puccini demonstrated in *Edgar* his ability to compose for chorus, an extremely active element in the drama: the Act I Andante religioso, “Dio non benedice che gli umili quaggiù” (“God bless the humble here on earth”) that collides with Tigrana’s blasphemous song; the choral participation in the Act I fight scene and the concluding ensemble, “La voce d’un vecchio ascoltate” (“Listen to an old man’s voice.”); the martial music that concludes Act II; and the choral interchange with the Friar concluding the opera.

And certainly, the Act III Requiem, recycled from Puccini’s own *Capriccio sinfonico*, stands out in relief as a masterful treatment of concerted voices with magnificently crafted harmonies, orchestral coloring, and the effectiveness of Fidelia’s voice singing above the chorus.

In *Edgar*, Puccini certainly transcended *Le villi* in terms of harmonic advancement and the treatment of orchestra and chorus. *Edgar*'s failure can be attributable to its defective libretto and its lack of dramatic focus — not Puccini's music: it is a melodrama involving a man in conflict between two loves, one good, the other evil, but the underlying story lacks substance and character development.

After the premiere failure in 1889, librettist Fontana refused to consider changes; he was abandoned, but not *Edgar*. Ricordi, the architect of Puccini's career, was determined to rescue the opera and persuaded Puccini to revise it, its most profound change the compressions of its four acts into three acts.

The revised *Edgar* was first performed at Ferrara on February 28, 1892, and despite excellent artists, it failed to make an impression on critics and public.

Critics have condemned the plot as eclectic, much of its story echoing Bizet's *Carmen* as well as Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. In the *Carmen* analogy, the Moorish enchantress Tigrana corresponds to the gypsy Carmen; Fidelia to Micaëla; Edgar to Don José; and Frank loosely associated with the Toreador. But Tigrana's character does not possess the allure and cunning of Carmen, and the love triangle in *Edgar* possesses far less of the explosive passion between Don José and Escamillo.

There are perhaps more resemblances in *Edgar* to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*: Edgar, like Tannhäuser, is incapable of resisting the pleasures of carnal love offered by Tigrana (Venus in *Tannhäuser*), but like Wagner's hero, he eventually tires of his lustful life. Nevertheless, Tigrana does not exude the sensual allure of *Tannhäuser*'s Venus, nor does Edgar confront the intense inner struggles of the hero Tannhäuser. Although Edgar ultimately finds redemption, Fidelia's love and eventual sacrifice does not possess the spiritual power of *Tannhäuser*'s Elisabeth.

Puccini was certainly not at a loss for musical ideas in *Edgar*, even though much of the score is reminiscent of the styles of other composers. In the music of *Edgar* one can hear Verdi's Manrico (*Il trovatore*), Don Alvaro (*La forza del destino*), and Puccini's own tenor heroes about to adorn the opera stage: Des Grieux (*Manon Lescaut*) and Luigi (*Il tabarro*). And in many of the choral episodes, echoes of Verdi and Ponchielli (Puccini's teacher) can be heard: the concluding ensemble of Act I, "La voce d'un vecchio," the martial music concluding Act II, and the Friar's revelation of Edgar's crimes, which is more reminiscent of the Verdi of *La forza del destino* than vintage Puccini.

Years later, Puccini presented his friend Sybil Seligman with a vocal score of *Edgar* that he inscribed: "*E Dio ti GuARdi da quest'opera!*" ("And may God protect you from this opera!") Nevertheless, Puccini made a third version of *Edgar* in 1905, but it still could not be saved: *Edgar* had become an unredeemable blunder.

Although *Edgar* failed, its composer proved not to be failure. The opera has interest as a study of the growth and evolution of Puccini's dramatic style; it is not a testimony to his inventive powers that would later grace the opera stage, but it is indeed a work that represented a hope for the future.

LIBRETTO

Edgar

Act I

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Act I

*A square in a Flemish village. Edgar's house is the background,
bordered by an almond tree, a church, and a tavern.
It is a bright dawn. Edgar sleeps in front of the tavern.
The angelus is heard from inside the church. Villagers and shepherds fill the square,
greet each other, and then go off to perform their chores.*

Coro:

Qual voce lontana squillò la campana
e l'ultima stella fulgor più non ha!

Chorus: (from afar)

The bell sounded like a distant voice
and the brilliance of the last star faded!

Andante mosso
FIDELIA

**Fidelia:**

O fior del giorno, salve alba serena!
Speranza ed esultanza!
Inno gentil, del giono fior.
Di celestial profumo è l'aura piena.
O fior dell'anno,
salve alba d'april, o fior!

Fidelia:

Hail morning flower, serene dawn!
Hope and joy!
Gentle hymn of the unfolding day.
Dawn is filled with heavenly perfume.
Oh first flower of the year,
hail the dawn of April!

Fidelia sees Edgar asleep and calls to him.

Edgar...

Edgar...

Edgar:

Chi mi chiamò?
Sei tu, fanciulla?

Edgar: (awakening and startled)

Who called me?
Girl, is it you?

Fidelia:

Buon dì!

Fidelia:

Good day!

Edgar:

Buon dì.

Edgar:

Good day!

Fidelia:

Dunque non ha riposo per te la notte,
se qui il sol ti ha còlto ancor vinto dal
sonno.

Fidelia:

Then you didn't rest during the night,
since it is dawn and you're still overcome by
sleep.

Edgar:

Io non son lieto come sempre sei tu.

Fidelia:

Lieta non sono se ti veggo così.

Edgar:

Va! Ti saluto, o Fidelia gentil.

Fidelia:

Senti lo strano pensier
ch'io feci quando mi svegliai:
Già il mandorlo vicino
dei primi fior si ornò.

Se sovra il mio cammino
Edgar incontrerò,
troncar ne voglio un ramo
e a lui lo vo' gettar.
Il mattinal saluto così
gli voglio dar!

Edgar:

I'm not as blessed as you.

Fidelia:

I'm not pleased to see you like this.

Edgar:

See! Gentle Fidelia, I greet you.

Fidelia:

Listen to the strange thought
I had when I awakened:
that the nearby almond tree
suddenly began to bloom.

If I should meet Edgar
on my way,
I want to break a twig of the almond tree
and toss it to him.
That is how I want to greet him in the
morning!

*Fidelia cuts a twig from the almond tree, kisses the flower,
and then tosses it to Edgar.*

Eccolo!

Here it is!

Edgar:

Grazie!

Edgar:

Thanks!

Fidelia sees someone approaching, becomes fearful, and quickly disappears.

Edgar:

Fermati!

Edgar: *(running after Fidelia)*

Stop!

Coro:

O fior dei giorno, salve, alba serena!
O fior dell'anno,
salve alba d'april!

Chorus:

Hail morning flower, serene dawn!
Oh first flower of the year,
hail the dawn of April!

*Tigrana appears, a stringed instrument (dembal) across her shoulder.
She approaches Edgar from behind and surprises him.
She scoffs when she notices that Edgar holds an almond twig tenderly.*

Tigrana:

Ah! Ah! Ah!

Tigrana:

Ah! Ah! Ah!

Edgar:

Tu qui?

Edgar: *(turning in surprise)*

You here?

Tigrana:

Tenera scena dunque venni a turbar.
Fuggir di balzo la colombella io feci!
Io non credea che a te piacesse
il miele di pastorali amor!

Edgar:

Evvia! Mi lascia!

Tigrana: *(with irony)*

What a tender scene I've disturbed.
I made the little dove fly away!
I didn't think you wanted
to love a shepherdess's honey!

Edgar:

Go away! Leave me!

*An organ is heard from inside the church.
Gualtiero and villagers appear in the square and then enter the church.
Tigrana approaches Edgar, her demeanor both scornful and alluring.*

Andante Religioso sostenuto

TIGRANA



Tigrana:

Tu volontà di fuoco,
ardenti baci, sognavi un dì,
non pastorali amor!
Era un desio febril d'orgia e di gioco,
Era un desio febril di vizio e d'ôr.

Edgar:

Taci, demonio! Taci!

Tigrana:

You were inflamed with lust,
and one day dreamed of impassioned kisses,
not the love of a shepherdess!
It was a feverish desire for revelry and play.
It was a feverish desire for vice and gold.

Edgar: *(resisting her)*

Quiet, demon!

Tigrana:

Fur vani sogni, Edgar!
Sogni fugaci di chi nacque per gemere e
tacer.
Nella chiesa tu pur dovresti entrar,
non ha d'aquila i voli il tuo pensier!

Tigrana: *(with increasing irony)*

Edgar, what vain dreams!
Fleeting dreams of someone born to suffer
and keep silent.
You should also go into the church,
so your thoughts don't disappear like the
flight of an eagle!

Edgar:

Taci, demonio. Taci!

Edgar: *(agitated, Edgar runs into the house)*

Be quiet, demon!

Tigrana:

Tu il cuor mi strazii. Io muoio!
Che feci a te, crudel?
Belava all'avoltoio nell'agonia l'agnel.

Tigrana:

You torture my heart. I am dying!
What did I do to you, you cruel man?
The lamb in its agony bleated at the vulture.

*Tigrana watches Edgar and laughs scornfully. As she begins to leave,
Frank emerges from the tavern and bars her way.*

Frank:
Ove fosti stanotte?

Frank:
Where were you last night?

Tigrana:
A te che importa ?

Tigrana: (*trying to avoid him*)
What does it matter to you?

Frank:
T'attesi iersera.

Frank: (*impassioned*)
I waited for you last night.

Tigrana:
Ed io non venni!

Tigrana: (*scornfully*)
And I didn't come!

Frank:
Tigrana!

Frank: (*angrily*)
Tigrana!

Tigrana:
Evvia! Non ho di te paura!
Il tuo amor mi dà noia.

Tigrana: (*arrogantly*)
Be off! I'm not afraid of you!
Your love bores me.

Frank:
Chi detto a me l'avrebbe mai
che della vita mia l'angoscia più crudel
saresti stata!

Frank: (*with profound emotion*)
Who would have ever believed that you
would become the cruelest heartache of my
life!

Tigrana:
Chiuder dovea l'oroscopo tua madre
all'errabonda schiera di Morischi che,
or fanno quindici anni, bambina qui
m'abbandonò!

Tigrana: (*sarcastically*)
Your mother should have consulted the
horoscope of those roving Moors,
who abandoned me here fifteen years ago!

Frank:
Figlia di tutti, in mezzo a noi crescesti.
Aimè! Nel nostro seno la vipera scaldammo!

Frank:
You were raised as everyone's daughter.
Alas! We nurtured a viper in our bosom!

Tigrana:
Se della virtù cara hai la fama fa che con me
non t'abbiamo a veder!

Tigrana:
If you care about your dear reputation make
sure no one sees you with me!

*Frank sits with his head in his hands, and sobs in a fit of passion.
Tigrana shrugs her shoulders, laughs scornfully, and then enters the tavern.*

Andante lento
FRANK



Que - sto a - mor, vergogna mi - a, io spez-zar, scordar vor - rei;

Frank:

Questo amor, vergogna mia,
io spezzar, scordar vorrei;
ma d'un' orrida malìa
sono schiavi i sensi miei.

Mille volte al ciel giurai
di fuggirla e a lei tornai!
Ella ride del mio pianto
ed io, vil, col cuore infranto,
ai suoi piedi mi prosterno.

E lei sola io sogno, bramo!
Ah sventura! Io l'amo!

Frank:

This love has become my shame.
I wish I could break it and forget,
but my emotions are enslaved
by this ghastly enchantment.

I swore to heaven a thousand times
that I would escape from her!
She laughs at my tears,
and I prostrate myself at her feet,
a coward with a broken heart.

It is only she whom I desire and dream of!
Ah, the misfortune that I love her!

*Frank leaves in despair. A group of villagers, finding no seats in the church,
kneel outside and pray.*

*Tigrana emerges from the tavern and sits upon a table,
her demeanor insolent and rude.*

Contadini:

Dio non benedice che gli umili quaggiù.
Viver può sol felice chi segue la virtù.
Ave, Signor!
Non gloria ed'ôr noi ti chiediam,
ma pace e amor!
Ave, Signor!

Villagers:

God bless the humble here on earth.
Only one who follows the faith can live in
happiness. Hail to the Lord!
We offer you not glory or gold,
but peace and love!
Hail, Lord!

Tigrana nears the door of the church, accompanying herself on her dembal.

Allegro satanico
TIGRANA

**Tigrana:**

Tu il cuor mi strazi.
Io muoio!
Che feci a te, crudel?
Belava all'avoltoio nell'agonia l'agnel.
Agnellin, pietà!

Tigrana:

You tear out my heart.
I am dying!
What did I do to you, cruel one?
The lamb in its agony bleated at the vulture.
Pity the little lamb!

Villagers emerge from the church.

Contadini:

Dal bieco canto cessa!

Villagers: (*indignantly to Tigrana*)

Cease your blasphemous song!

Tigrana:

Evvia! Perché?

Contadini:

Di qui ten va!

Lontana di qui ten va!

Tigrana:

Sia per voi l'orazion,

è per me la canzon!

Vo' cantar, vo' trillar!

Chi non vuole ascoltar
torni in chiesa a pregar!

Contadini:

Vanne, sciagurata!

Serpe, t'allontana!

Va, scomunicata! Vile cortigiana!

T'allontana!

Non vogliam la canzon
che lo scherno ha nel suon!

Non trillar, non cantar!

Dove, chini all'altar,

noi veniamo a pregar!

Vattene, va! va!

Tigrana:

L'ira vostra o il perdon

io del par sprezerò!

L'abborrita canzon, ah, canterò!

Vo' cantar! Vo' trillar!

Chi non vuole ascoltar
torni in chiesa a pregar!

Contadini:

Cortigiana! Via di qui, va!

Vattene!

Vil cortigiana! T'allontana!

D'ogni sozzura simbolo,

fra noi perchè torva la sorte bella e fatal così
giunger ti fè?

Dei tuoi sorrisi il fascino

sol può recar sciagura e morte!

Pietà perdon non puoi sperar!

Tigrana: (*arrogantly*)

Go away! Why?

Villagers:

Go away from here!

Go far away from here!

Tigrana:

Let prayer be for you,

and the song for me!

I want to sing, I want to trill!

Whoever doesn't want to listen,
return to church to pray!

Villagers:

Wretch, get out of here!

Viper, go far from here!

Go, excommunicated one! Vile courtesan!

Go far away from us!

We don't want your song
that has scorn in its sound!

Don't trill, and don't sing

where we come to pray

and kneel at the altar!

Leave here, go! Go!

Tigrana:

I will equally despise

your anger or your forgiveness!

I will sing the abhorred song!

I want to sing! I want to trill!

Whoever doesn't want to listen,
return to church and pray!

Villagers:

Courtesan! Go away from here!

Go away from here!

Vile courtesan! Go far away!

You are a symbol of all filth.

Why does dark fate bring someone as
beautiful and deadly as you?

Misfortune and death can only come from
the fascination of your smiles!

Don't hope for mercy or forgiveness from us!

As the villagers rush menacingly towards Tigrana, she retreats towards Edgar's house.

Edgar:

Che fu ?

Edgar: (*appearing at the door*)

What happened?

Contadini:

Col canti suoi le nostre preci
 ella osava schernir.
 Vattene!

Villagers: (*indicating Tigrana*)

She dared to mock our prayers with her
 songs.
 Get her away from here!

Edgar:

Indietro, turba idiota!

Edgar: (*intervening*)

Step back, you mob of idiots!

Contadini:

Tu la difendi?

Villagers: (*in amazement*)

Are you defending her?

Edgar:

Se alla devota nenia non torni di questo
 acciar, a te la lama farò provar!
 Ed or da voi men vo stolido gregge,
 per non tornar mai più!
 Maledetto paterno tetto su te fra poco
 ruggendo il fuoco per mano mia divamperà!

Edgar: (*touching his sword with intent*)

If you don't return to the solemn hymns,
 I'll make you taste the blade of my sword!
 And now, stupid flock, I'm leaving you,
 never to return again!
 Curse this house of my forefathers, that I
 will soon set ablaze with my own hand!

Contadini:

Orror!

Villagers:

Horror!

Edgar enters the house. Suddenly sparks and smoke emerge from the house.

Scentura! Al fuoco!

What misfortune! To the fire!

*Some of the villagers enter the house to try to extinguish the fire,
 but they are soon pushed out by Edgar, who now appears at the door
 with a lighted firebrand in his hand.*

Edgar:

Fuori di qui! Nessuno queste soglie
 osi varcar!
 Nessuno d'imporsi a me pretenda!
 È mia la casa ed ardere dovrà!

Edgar:

Get out of here! No one dare cross this
 threshold!
 No one try to force me to stop!
 This is my house, and I must burn it!

Edgar throws the firebrand into the house. Then he addresses Tigrana rapturously.

Tigrana, vieni!

Noi pure accenda di nuova vita la voluttà!

Tigrana, come!

May our lust also be ignited with new life!

*Edgar takes Tigrana's hand and starts to leave.
 The villagers are horrified. Frank appears and block their way.*

Frank:
T'arresta!

Frank: *(to Edgar)*
Stop!

Contadini:
Frank!

Villagers:
Frank!

Edgar:
Sgombrami il passo!

Edgar: *(to Frank)*
Get out of my way!

Frank:
Teco non dee partir!

Frank: *(indicating Tigrana)*
She must not leave with you!

Edgar:
Di riso è degna la tua parola!

Edgar:
Your words make me laugh!

Frank:
Questa lama a te l'apprenderà!

Frank: *(touching the hilt of his sword)*
This blade will teach you!

Edgar:
Sta ben!

Edgar:
Very well!

Gualtiero emerges from the church and rushes to Frank.

Gualtiero:
Mio figlio!

Gualtiero:
My son!

Fidelia:
Edgar!

Fidelia: *(running to Edgar)*
Edgar!

Gualtiero:
Giù l'armi!
La voce d' un vecchio ascoltate!
Del sangue lo sdegno frenate!

Gualtiero:
Put down the weapons!
Listen to the voice of an old man!
Restrain the anger in your blood!

Contadini:
Giù l'armi!

Villagers:
Put down the weapons!

Edgar:
D'un vecchio che prega la voce tremante
quai tristi memorie nel cuor mi destò.
O della mia vita terribile istante,
di colpe novelle macchiarmi non vo'.

Edgar:
The old man's trembling voice has
awakened sad memories in my heart.
Oh what a terrible moment in my life.
I don't want to stain it with new crimes.

Fidelia:
D'entrambi nel sangue qual nembo veloce
il cieco delirio dell'ira scoppiò!
Ma a un tratto l'insania dell'impeto atroce
d'un vecchio la voce a vincer bastò.
Lo sdegno frenate, olà!

Fidelia:
Like a dark cloud, the blind frenzy in their
blood has burst quickly.
But all of a sudden, an old man's voice was
sufficient to quench the madness of their
outrageous impulses! May the anger cease!

Gualtiero:

Del giovane sangue lo sdegno frenate!
 D'un vecchio la voce ascoltate!
 La mano vi pose sull'elsa soltanto il torvo
 consiglio d'un cieco delir.
 Ah, un padre, un vegliardo nell'onta e nel
 pianto, o figli, o fratelli, non fate morir!

Frank:

D'un padre la voce mi supplica invano,
 placar del mio sdegno la fiamma non può!

 Qual fascino arcano, qual turbido incanto
 nel cor mi gettò!
 Tigrana, il tuo sguardo nel cor mi gettò!

Tigrana:

D'un vecchio alla voce a spegner bastò!
 Al suolo si chinan gli sguardi,
 ah, la man già l'elsa lasciò!

Ah, al suolo d'entrambi si chinan gli
 sguardi.
 La mano delle spade già l'elsa lasciò!
 A spegner dell'ira la fiamma, o codardi,
 la voce d'un vecchio bastò!

Gualtiero:

Restrain the anger of your young blood!
 Listen to the voice of an old man.
 An old man counsels you to remove your
 hands from the hilts of your swords.
 Oh sons and brothers, don't let an old man
 die in shame and in tears.

Frank:

My father's voice begs me to extinguish the
 flames of my anger, but it is in vain, because
 I cannot!
 What a mysterious charm, and what troubled
 enchantment Tigrana has thrown into my
 heart!

Tigrana:

An old man's voice was sufficient to
 extinguish their anger! Heads are lowered,
 and hands are removed from their swords!

Both of them have lowered their heads.

Their hands let go of their sword hilts!
 You cowards! An old man's voice was sufficient
 to extinguish your inflamed anger!

Moderato con agitazione
CHORUS

**Contadini:**

La voce d'un vecchio ascoltate,
 del giovane sangue lo sdegno frenate!
 Il ciglio bagnato è di pianto.
 Il cuore con te palpitò!
 Il cielo un soave mestissimo incanto d'un
 padre alla voce che implora donò.
 O vecchio, ogni ciglio bagnato è di pianto!
 Lo sdegno frenate, olà!

Villagers:

Listen to an old man's voice and stem your
 anger!
 We are all bathed in tears.
 Our hearts beat for you!
 Heaven gave a soft, but very sad magic to
 the voice of a pleading father.
 Oh old man, every eye is bathed in tears!
 Let the anger cease!

Edgar:

Or dunque, addio!

Edgar:

Now then, good-bye!

Frank draws his sword to bar the departure of Edgar and Tigrana.

Frank:

No. Tu non passerai!

Frank:

No! You will not pass!

Edgar draws his sword.

Edgar:

Egli lo vuole!

Edgar:

It is his wish!

Gualtiero, Fidelia:

Frank! Edgar!

Gualtiero, Fidelia: (*trying to stop them*)

Frank! Edgar!

Edgar e Frank:

Parli il pugnale!

Edgar and Frank:

May the sword speak!

Edgar and Frank duel.

Fidelia:

Edgar!

Fidelia:

Edgar!

Gualtiero:

Olà!

Gualtiero:

Stop!

Contadini:

Terror, olà!

Villagers:

Terror, stop!

Fidelia:

Fratello! Ferma, Edgar!

Fidelia: (*to Frank and Edgar*)

Brother! Stop, Edgar!

Gualtiero:

Figlio! Cessate! Olà!

Gualtiero:

You boys! Cease! Stop!

Tigrana:

Su! Ferisci!

Terror! Incalza! Su!

Tigrana:

Come on! Wound him!

Terror! Drive on! Come on!

Contadini:

Per pietà! Fermi olà! No!

Oh terror! Qual furor!

Qual demonio li spinge!

Giù il pugnale!

Villagers:

For pity's sake! Stop there! No!

Oh terror! What furor!

What demon drives them!

Put the sword down!

to Tigrana

Ah, cruel one! Be quiet!

Let's take away their weapons!

Ah, no more, what are we waiting for?

Edgar:

Sei ferito!

Edgar: (*to Frank, stepping back*)

You are wounded!

Frank:
No! No!

Frank:
No!

Tigrana:
Vieni! Fuggiam! Ferito egli è.
Perchè restar?

Tigrana: (to Edgar)
Come! Let's flee! He's wounded.
Why stay here?

Frank:
Deve un di noi lasciar la vita qui!

Frank: (with anger)
One of us must die here!

Gualtiero throws himself on Frank and wrenches the sword from him.

Gualtiero:
Per Dio, quell'arme a me!

Gualtiero:
By God, give me those weapons!

Edgar:
Partiamo!

Edgar: (to Tigrana)
Let's go!

*Edgar and Tigrana quickly depart.
Frank makes a supreme effort to follow her, but the villagers hold him back.*

Frank:
Abbietta creatura!
Maledizione a te!

Frank:
Despicable creature!
Curses on you!

Fidelia rushes to Frank as he falls into Gualtiero's arms. The fire continues to rage.

Tutti:
Maledizione!

All:
Curses!

END OF ACT I

Act II

*A bright moonlit evening. A terrace of a palace that overlooks several gardens;
in the background there is a vast expanse of countryside, crossed by silvery streams.
From the sumptuously lit palace, there are sounds of laughter and merriment.*

Coro:

Splendida notte! Notte gioconda!
E dolci olezzi mandano i fior!
Godiam la vita!
D'argentea luce la luna inonda la terra e il
ciel!
Godiam la vita, doman si muor!

Chorus: (*inside the palace*)

Splendid night! Joyful night!
The flowers send sweet scents!
Let us enjoy life!
The moon floods the earth and the sky with
silvery light!
Let us enjoy life; tomorrow one dies!

Edgar appears on the terrace, looking tired and bored.

Edgar:

Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo
dal soffio ardente che i sensi incendia,
tu a me, dell'alta notte nel glauco
mister silente, invan ritorni.

Non più dai tuoi sguardi ammalciato sarà il
mio cor!
Ne più m'avvince a te la voluttà.

Ma ho terror del doman;
un vigliacco terror che l'onor mio
combattere non sa!

Edgar:

The revelry is a glossy illusion of burning
breath that ignites the senses.
In vain you return to me in the middle of the
night in silent greenish mystery.

My heart will no longer be bewitched by
your glances!
I am no longer bound by lust.

But I have fear of tomorrow;
there is a cowardly terror that my honor is
unable to fight!

Andante espressivo**EDGAR**

O soave vision di quell'alba d'april,
o vision gentil d'amore e di splendor!
Nell'abisso fatal, dove caduto io son,
rimpianta vision, Ah!
Te il mio pensiero evoca sempre ancor!
Sovra un sereno cielo si disegna il profil
dolcissimo dell'angiol che mi amò!

Oh gentle vision of April's dawn,
oh gentle vision of splendor and love!
I can see the vision I yearn for from the fatal
abyss into which I have fallen!
You still evoke my thoughts!
The sweet profile of that angel who loved
me is outlined in the serene sky!

Tigrana appears on the terrace and approaches Edgar with determination.

Tigrana:

Edgar, sulla tua fronte erran tetri pensieri.

Tigrana:

Edgar, dark thoughts are wandering through your mind.

Edgar:

Essi son neri come l'abisso immondo ove scesi con te!

Edgar:

They are black like the filthy abyss into which I have descended with you!

Tigrana:

Tu più non m'ami!

Tigrana:

You don't love me anymore!

Edgar:

La parola d'amor non profanar!

Edgar:

Do not profane the word love!

**Tigrana:**

Quel che sognavi un dì d'orgie e di baci, sogno febril, donar io seppi a te.

Per sempre il fato ci unì, intendi?
Un mendico sarai lungi da me!

Tigrana:

One day you had feverish dreams of revelries and kisses, and I knew how to provide them for you.
Do you realize that fate has united us forever?
You will become a beggar if you leave me!

Edgar:

Taci, demonio!

Edgar:

Be quiet, you demon!

Tigrana:

Dalla valle natia perchè fuggir,
e la casa paterna, perchè incendiar?

Or la tua sorte è mia, tutto perdesti!

Tigrana:

Why did you flee from your homeland, and why did you set the house of your forefathers ablaze?
You have lost everything, and now your fate is mine!

Edgar:

Taci, demonio!

Edgar:

Be quiet, you demon!

Tigrana:

In me soltanto, Edgar, tu puoi sperar!

Tigrana:

Edgar, your only hope rests with me!

Dal labbro mio suggi l'oblio
e a te il doman sorriderà.
Nuovi deliri di voluttà a te darà di voluttà la
mia beltà.

Edgar:

Ogni velen, demon, tu chiudi in sen.
Nè mai da te fuggir potrò?
Nè un raggio a me brillar vedrò,
un raggio sol di speme ancor?
Nè mai da te fuggir potrò
da quest'abisso d'onta e d'orror.

Tigrana:

Vano è lottar, il fato ci unì!
Ora il fato ci unì!

Draw forgetfulness from my lips,
and tomorrow you will smile.
My beauty will give you new passions of
lust.

Edgar:

Demon, you hide every poison in your breast.
Will I ever be able to flee from you?
I will never see a ray of shining hope,
or even a ray of hope?
I will never be able to flee
from this abyss of shame and horror.

Tigrana:

It's useless to fight, fate has us united!
Fate has us united now!

The sounds of drums and trumpets are heard from the distance.

Soldati:

Urrò!

Soldiers:

Hurrah!

Edgar:

Uno squillo marzial!
Passa una schiera di soldati alla porta del
castel.

Edgar:

A martial blast!
There's a platoon of soldiers filing past the
castle gate.

Tigrana:

Come sfavillan l'armi al raggio della luna!

Tigrana:

How their arms shine from the rays of the
moon!

Edgar:

(Ah! Qual pensiero, a me lo manda Iddio!)

Edgar: (to himself)

(Ah! What a great idea God has sent me!)

Olà, soldati, sostate!
Una coppa di vino d'accettare vi piaccia?
Stringer voglio la mano al capitan!

Hey, soldiers, stop!
Would you like to have a glass of wine?
I'd like to shake hands with the captain!

Tigrana:

Or ben, che intendi far?

Tigrana:

Now then, what do you intend to do?

Edgar:

Mi lascia!

Edgar:

Leave me alone!

Frank, leading the soldiers, recognizes Edgar and Tigrana.

Frank:

(Tigrana! Edgar!)

Frank: (to himself)

(Tigrana! Edgar!)

Edgar, Tigrana:

Frank!

Edgar, Tigrana:

Frank!

Frank:

Perchè voi ancor sul mio cammin?

Frank:

Why are you two still in my way?

*Frank begins to depart.***Edgar:**

Ah no! Fermati! M'ascolta!

S'io t'offesi, mi perdona!

Edgar: (*stopping him*)

No! Stop! Listen to me!

If I offended you, forgive me!

Frank:D'un amore abbietto, indegno,
il tuo ferro mi guarì!**Frank:**Your sword cured me of a cursed and
unworthy love!**Tigrana:**

(Perchè in lor non più lo sdegno?

Perchè prega Edgar così?)

Tigrana: (*to herself*)

(Why aren't they angry anymore?

Why does Edgar plead like that?)

Edgar:

Fui colpevol, ma atroce fu la pena!

Edgar:

I was guilty but the punishment was painful!

Tigrana:

(Egli mi sfugge!)

Tigrana: (*to herself*)

(He's escaping from me!)

Edgar:

Oggi salvarmi tu puoi!

Puoi spezzar la mia catena!

Edgar:

You can save me today!

You can break the chain that binds me!

Tigrana:

(Mi sfugge!)

Tigrana: (*to herself*)

(He's getting away from me!)

Frank:

Io, salvarti? Parla!

Aprimi il tuo cuore!

Palesa il tuo pensiero!

Frank:

I, save you? Speak!

Open your heart to me!

Reveal your thoughts!

Edgar:Per redimerme e combattere al tuo fianco io
con te voglio partir!**Edgar:**I want to fight at your side and redeem
myself. I want to go with you!**Tigrana:**Se è ver che un di m'amasti,
deh, non toglierlo a me!**Tigrana:** (*grabbing Frank and pleading*)If it is true that one day you loved me, then
don't take him away from me!**Frank:**

Lasciami, ti disprezzo

Frank:

Leave me, I despise you!

Tigrana:

Ah, non abbandonarmi!
D'amarti io non credea come t'amo in
quest'ora!
Viver senza di te più non potrei!

Edgar:

Com'io saprò dimenticarti, tu pur mi
scorderai!

Tigrana: *(to Edgar)*

Ah, don't abandon me!
I didn't believe I could love you as much as
I love you at this moment!
I could never live without you !

Edgar: *(haughtily)*

You will also forget me, just as I will learn to
forget you!

Edgar pushes Tigrana away.

A te soltanto mi voto, o Gloria!!

Oh Glory, I consecrate myself only to you !

Edgar, Frank, Soldati:

Or la Patria sacra in cuor ci sta!

Chi dà la vita a lei giammai morrà!

Edgar, Frank, Soldiers:

Only sacred thoughts of my country dwell in
my heart!
Whoever gives his life for his country will
achieve immortality!

Tigrana:

O della morte, o mio tu sarai!

Tigrana:

You will be mine, or you will die!

Tigrana tries to stop Edgar from leaving, but he repels her.

Tigrana makes a menacing gesture, swearing vengeance.

END OF ACT II

Act III

*The bastion of a fortress near the city of Courtray.
A catafalque is covered by veils that hang from a tree.*

*The sun is setting and black clouds mingle with the falling sky.
Faraway trumpets announce the approach of a funeral procession.
An officer places sentinels near the catafalque;
four pages place lighted candles all around.*

*The funeral procession files past, the coffin bearing a dead knight in armor.
Laurel leaves are strewn over the coffin.
Frank appears with a friar, his face concealed by his habit.
Fidelia, Gualtiero, and soldiers watch as the coffin is lowered onto the catafalque.*

Fanciulli:

*Requiem aeternam!
In pace factus est locus ejus!
Et in Sion habitatio ejus!*

Del Signor la pupilla veglia nell'ombre eterne.

Coro:

*Ora pro eo!
Il bene e il mal discerne.
Ei vede il giusto e il reo.
Entra nel cielo il buon che cade
sotto le inique spade!*

Fidelia:

(Non basta il pianto al mio dolor,
o Edgar, mio solo amor!)

Tutti:

Riposa in pace, o pio guerriero,
salva hai la patria tua diletta!
In noi non vive che un pensiero;
quel di compir la tua vendetta!

I Monaci:

*Deus, in virtute tua judica me!
Deus, exaudi orationem meam!
Noi, nel tuo nome, pel patrio suol
il sangue nostro saprem versar.
Iddio la Fiandra schiava non vuol.
Per te e la Fiandra morremo, Edgar!*

Boys:

*Rest in eternity!
In peace he has taken his place!
And in Zion is his dwelling!*

The eye of the Lord watches in the eternal shadows.

Chorus:

*Pray for him!
He sees the good and the bad.
And he sees the just and the guilty.
The good one who fails enters into Heaven
under the evil swords!*

Fidelia: (to herself)

(Oh Edgar, my only love, tears are not enough to express my pain!)

All:

Rest in peace, oh pious warrior,
who has saved your beloved country!
Only one thought lives within us:
that of fulfilling your vengeance!

The Friars:

*Lord, in your goodness, judge me!
Lord, hear my prayers!
We will know how to shed our blood for our
native land in Your name.
God does not wish Flanders to be enslaved.
Edgar, we will die for you and our fatherland!*

Lento

FIDELIA

**Fidelia:**

Addio, mio dolce amore!
 Nell'ombra ove discendi,
 solenne, infinita anch'io verrò. M'attendi!
 Dove tu solo regni, dolor
 la gioventù non ha più fior!
 Addio ancor, o Edgar, la tua memoria
 sarà il mio sol pensiero!
 Lassù, nella tua gloria m'attendi, Edgar!

Tutti:

O Edgar, o pio guerriero,
 a te in eterno gloria!
 La sacra tua memoria
 non perirà mai più!

I Monaci:

*In pace factus est locus ejus
 et in Sion habitatio ejus.*

Fidelia:

Farewell, my sweet love!
 I will also enter the solemn, infinite shadows
 where you descend. Wait for me!
 Pain, where you alone reign, youth is
 despoiled of its flowers!
 Farewell again, oh Edgar, your memory will
 be my sole thought!
 Up there, in your glory, await me, Edgar!

All:

Oh Edgar, oh pious warrior,
 to you, glory forever!
 Your sacred memory
 will live eternally!

The Friars:

*He has taken his place in peace
 and his dwelling is Zion!*

Frank delivers the eulogy.

Frank:

Del prode Edgar, del nostro capitano
 glorioso il nome suoni!
 Fu brezza pei buoni,
 per gli empi fu uragano!
 Nel suo nobile cor, due nomi eran scolpiti:
 Patria e Onor!

Frank:

May the glorious name of our valiant captain
 Edgar resound!
 He was an inspiration for good men,
 and he was a tempest for the wicked!
 Two words were engraved in his noble heart:
 Country and Honor!

Edgar, disguised as a friar, advances with a few soldiers and townspeople.

Il Frate (Edgar):

D'Edgar l'onore io contestar non vo'.
 Ma la casa paterna egli incendiò
 e l'orgia amò.
 Voi forse l'ignorate, ma sincero è il mio dir.

Friar (Edgar):

I do not wish to question Edgar's honor.
 But he burned his forefather's house,
 and he loved debauchery.
 Perhaps you don't know it, but my words
 are sincere.

Tutti:

Silenzio, frate!

All:

Silence, friar!

Frank:

Alto l'acciar, dove batteva il cuore
della battaglia,
egli era per noi viva bandiera,
pei nemici terrore, il suo nome vivrà
perché suona: libertà!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Fu prode, è ver!
Ma d'un avventurier fu il suo valor.
Tutto ei perduto avea e tutto osar potea!
Non rammentate di tal genia l'ardir?

Frank:

Silenzio, Frate!

Coro:

No! Lascialo parlar!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Edgar mi impose di rivelar le colpe sue
morendo;
di penitenza e insiem d'esempio in segno,
ogni inganno a bandir!

Some the crowd come closer to the friar (Edgar) and signal others to do the same.

Coro:

Udite! Parla!

Il Frate (Edgar):

V'è alcun fra voi del suo villaggio?

Alcuni Uomini:

Noi!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Sta bene! Or dunque rispondete:
È ver ch'ei la sua casa un dì incendiò?

Alcuni Uomini:

Sì è ver!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Che a voi scherni ed insulti osò scagliar?
Or dunque rispondete!

Alcuni Uomini:

Sì, è ver!

Frank: (continuing the eulogy)

He was a living example for us,
with his sword held high
in the midst of the battle:
a terror to the enemy, and his name will live
because it resounds liberty!

Friar (Edgar):

It is true that he was valiant!
But it was an adventurer's valor.
He lost everything and could dare anything!
Do you remember the daring of a mob?

Frank:

Silence, friar!

Chorus:

No! Let him speak!

Friar (Edgar):

As he was dying, Edgar asked me to reveal
every one his sins;
as a sign of penitence and also as an
example!

Chorus:

Listen! Speak!

Friar (Edgar):

Is there someone here from his village?

Some Men:

We are!

Friar (Edgar):

All right! Now then answer:
Is it true that one day he set his house ablaze?

Some Men:

Yes, it's true!

Friar (Edgar):

That he dared to ridicule and insult you?
Now then, answer!

Some Men:

Yes, it's true!

Il Frate (Edgar):

È ver che Frank ferì ?
Che con Tigrana la cortigiana allor fuggìa?

Alcuni Uomini:

È ver, è ver!!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Or, se gioco non son le umane leggi,
un empio fu!

Coro:

Un empio, è ver!

Fidelia:

(Orror!)

Gualtiero:

O figlia mia, partiamo, il sol già tramontò!

Friar (Edgar):

Is it true that he wounded Frank?
That he fled with the courtesan Tigrana?

Some Men:

It's true, it's true!

Friar (Edgar):

Now, if human and divine laws are not a
game, he was a villain!

Chorus:

It's true, a villain!

Fidelia: (to herself)

(What a horror!)

Gualtiero: (to Fidelia)

My daughter, let's leave, the sun has already
set!

The friar urges everyone to come around him.

Il Frate (Edgar):

Ei tutto nell'orgia nel gioco perdea.
ma cari i suoi baci Tigrana vendea.
Ei visse dell'ôr che dà il disonor!

Friar (Edgar):

Tigrana sold her kisses at a dear price, and
he lost everything in revelries and gambling.
He lived for gold that he acquired dishonestly!

Tutti:

Vergogna!

All:

What shame!

Fidelia:

(Oh terror!)

Fidelia: (to herself)

(Oh terror!)

Il Frate (Edgar):

Al suo castello era un bosco vicino
e più d' un viandante ivi perì!

Friar (Edgar):

There was a forest near his castle, and more
than one traveller perished in there!

Tutti:

Assassino!

All: (horrificed)

Assassin!

The crowd rushes menacingly toward the coffin.

Onta su lui!

Ai corvi il suo cadavere!

Vergogna e orror la sua memoria

d'oggi fiammingo desterà nel cuor!

Shame on him!

Let his corpse be thrown to the crows!

His memory will awaken shame and horror

in the heart of every Fleming!

As they rush to grab the corpse, Fidelia intercedes, blocking them with her body.

Fidelia:

Non più ! Fermate!

Fidelia:

No more! Stop!

The crowd backs down. Edgar looks at Fidelia expressing great emotion.

Il Frate (Edgar):

(Angiolo santo!

Osò difenderlo ella soltanto!

Friar (Edgar)

(Saintly angel!

She alone dared to defend him!

Fidelia:

D'ogni dolor questo è il più gran dolor:

Insultato veder chi si adorò!

No, puro Edgar tu sei,

Edgar mio solo amor, io ti difenderò!

Fidelia:

To see the one you adore be insulted is the greatest of all sorrows!

No, Edgar, you are pure,

Edgar, my only love, I will defend you!

Andante calmo

FIDELIA



Nel villaggio d'Edgar son nata anch'io
e lo conobbi.

Errò che importa!

Pio era il suo cor,

se ardente il suo pensier.

E della giovinezza il breve error

scontò col sangue suo, col suo valor!

I was also born in Edgar's village and I
knew him.

He erred, but that doesn't matter!

His heart was righteous,
even if his thoughts were impassioned.

He paid for the small error of his youth with
his valor and his blood!

Coro:

Bella e gentil!

Chorus:

She's so beautiful and gentle!

Frank:

Gentil ell'è davver!

Frank:

She is indeed gentle!

Fidelia:

Or là attender io vo' che spunti il giorno.

Con me al villaggio ancor ei tornerà!

Riposerà nel nostro cimiter

finchè con lui nell'ideal soggiorno

a me la pace eterna il ciel darà!

Fidelia:

Now I want to wait until dawn.

He will return with me to our village!

He will rest in our cemetery until such time
when Heaven grants me the ideal of eternal
peace together with him!

Al vostro capitano v'inchinate, o soldati!

Soldiers, bow to your captain!

The soldiers kneel. Frank dismisses the people.

Frank:
Andate!

Frank:
Go!

*Fidelia signals her father to allow her one last moment at the coffin.
She picks up some flowers and laurel fronds, kisses them,
and strews them over the coffin. Everyone slowly leaves.*

*The friar (Edgar) kneels before the coffin.
Fidelia glances backward as Gualtiero accompanies her away.*

*Frank approaches the friar, both watch Fidelia and Gualtiero.
Suddenly, Tigrana appears.*

Tigrana:
Voglio passar!

Tigrana:
I want to pass!

Il Frate (Edgar):
La voce di Tigrana!
Nella mia coppa rimane la feccia!

Friar (Edgar):
Tigrana's voice!
The filth remains in my cup!

Tigrana forces her way past a sentinel.

Tigrana:
Il passo mi sgombrate!

Tigrana:
Let me through!

Tigrana addresses the Friar.

A me concesso, o frate, sia di vegliar
pregando del capitano Edgar presso la
salma.

Friar, I wish to be allowed to pray and keep a
vigil near Captain Edgar's body.

Il Frate (Edgar):
Eccola!

Friar (Edgar):
There it is!

Tigrana:
(Aimè, finite son le esequie.
Nessun vedrà il mio lutto!)

Tigrana: (to herself)
(Woe is me, the funeral rites are over.
No one will see me mourning!)

Tigrana approaches the coffin.

Il Frate (Edgar):
In lei tanta pietà?
Menzogna è questa al par dell'altre sue!
Ma sia l'estrema!

Friar (Edgar): (to himself)
Is there so much pity in her?
It is a lie, just like all of her others!
But let this be the last one!

No con me resta. Ascolta!

(to Frank)
No, stay with me. Listen!

Pregare, amar non seppe mai chi visse sol di voluttà.

Del suo dolor, tu lo vedrai, solo a far pompa ella qui sta.

Nel perfido suo cuor fra poco io leggerò.

Frank:

Sempre ignorerò preghiera e amore chi visse sol di voluttà.

Ma spesso il ciel redime un cuore con un istante di pietà.

Se mente il suo dolor interroga il suo cuor.

Io ti seconderò! Va!

Tigrana:

Edgar, quanto t'amai!

Questo mio labbro dir non può.

Edgar, om mio perduto ben!

A person who lived for lust never knew how to love or pray.

You will see that her sorrow here is but a pretence.

I will soon be able to read her wicked heart.

Frank:

A person who lived for lust never knew how to love or pray.

But often Heaven redeems a heart in a moment of compassion.

If her sorrow is false, question her heart.

I will support your actions! Go!

Tigrana:

Edgar, how much I loved you!

These lips cannot say how much.

Edgar, oh my lost love!

Tigrana kneels before the coffin. Frank indicates his understanding of the friar and is ready to follow his lead.

Frate (Edgar):

Bella signora, il pianto sciupa gli occhi; avvizzano i sospiri un bianco sen;

Io vi chieggo pietà per quei ginocchi che voi dannate ai morsi del terren!

Friar (Edgar): (approaching Tigrana)

Beautiful lady, weeping spoils the eyes; your white bosom wilts from sighing;

I ask you to pity your knees, which are being harmed by the rough ground!

Tigrana:

V'allontanate, lasciatemi pregar!

Tigrana:

Go away, leave me to pray!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Io vi chieggo pietà per quei ginocchi.

Friar (Edgar):

I ask you to pity your knees.

Tigrana:

Silenzio frate!

Lasciatemi pregar! V'allontanate!

Tigrana:

Silence, Friar!

Let me pray! Go away!

Frank:

Bella signora, il morto esser vorrei che il vostro lutto avrei, dama gentil!

Del vostro pianto una perla soltanto le mille perle val d'ogni monil!

Frank:

Beautiful lady, I wish that I was the deceased and was mourned by such a charming lady.

One of your pearly tears is worth the thousand pearls in this necklace!

Frank show Tigrana a necklace of pearls.

Tigrana:

Ah ! Va! Non tentarmi!

Tigrana: (excitedly)

Go! Don't tempt me!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Guarda!

Tigrana:

O meraviglia!

Frank:Come da fiamma maliarda osserva,
affascinata ell'è diggià!**Il Frate (Edgar):**Un detto della tua bocca vermiglia ed il
monile è tuo!**Tigrana:**

Un detto!

Il Frate (Edgar), Frank:

Prezzo non ha, bella Signora, questo vizzo!

Tigrana:

Qual baglior!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Capitan, la tenti invan! Guarda!

Tigrana:

Oh portentoso!

Il Frate (Edgar):Dal labbro tuo vermiglio un detto sol e tuo
sarà l'anel!**Frank:**

E tuo sarà il monil!

Tigrana:

(Perchè mi tenta così?)

Il Frate (Edgar):Queste gemme avrai se all'odio mio oggi
servir vorrai!**Tigrana:**

All'odio tuo?

Il Frate (Edgar):

Sì!

Friar (Edgar): (*showing another necklace*)

Look!

Tigrana:

Oh, what a marvel!

Frank:She is already fascinated, observing it as if
possessed by a bewitching flame.**Friar (Edgar):**One word from your red lips and the
necklace is yours!**Tigrana:**

A word!

Friar (Edgar), Frank:

Lovely lady, the necklace is priceless!

Tigrana: (*contemplating the jewels*)

What luster!

Friar (Edgar): (*to Frank*)

Captain, you tempt her in vain! Look!

Tigrana:

Oh, wonder!

Friar (Edgar):I want only one word from your red lips and
this ring is yours!**Frank:**

And the necklace will also be yours!

Tigrana: (*to herself*)

(Why does he tempt me like that?)

Friar (Edgar):Today, you will have these gems if you will
help serve my hatred.**Tigrana:**

To serve your hatred?

Friar (Edgar):

Yes!

Tigrana:
Strane parole!

Tigrana:
Strange words!

Il Frate (Edgar):
Guarda! Risplende al par del sol!
Or ben?

Friar (Edgar): (*tempting her*)
Look! It shines like the sun!
Well now?

Tigrana is still unresolved. Edgar and Frank continue to offer her the jewels with increasing insistence. After some hesitation, Tigrana stares at the necklace and exclaims resolutely.

Tigrana:
Vincesti!

Tigrana:
You've won!

Frank and Edgar take the jewels from Tigrana.

Frank, Il Frate (Edgar):
Squillin le trombe!

Frank, Friar (Edgar):
Let the trumpets blare!

Soldati:
All'armi!

Soldiers: (*from inside*)
To arms!

Tigrana:
Or quale mister?

Tigrana:
What is this mystery now?

Il Frate (Edgar):
Attendi!

Friar (Edgar): (*to Tigrana*)
Wait!

Soldati:
Che fu?

Soldiers: (*entering from all sides*)
What was it?

Il Frate (Edgar):
Venite! Soldati!
Io d'una tomba l'onore contesi a Edgar.

Friar (Edgar):
Come! Soldiers!
I questioned Edgar's honor at his grave.

Soldati:
È ver!

Soldiers:
It's true!

Il Frate (Edgar):
M'han detto: "tu i morti offendi!"
Alla mia voce fè non prestar!

Friar (Edgar):
You told me: "You offend the dead!"
Nobody heeded my voice!

Or dunque a voi risponda costei d'Edgar
l'amante!

Indicating Tigrana
Now then, may she, Edgar's mistress,
answer you!

Soldati:
Ella?

Soldiers: (*surprised*)
She?

Il Frate (Edgar):

Sì!

Parla: È ver che Edgar, avido d'or, volea
tradir la patria?

Frank, Tigrana, Soldati:

Ciel!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Lo afferma e tuo sarà il monil!

Friar (Edgar):

Yes!

to Tigrana

Speak: Is it true that Edgar, avid for gold,
wanted to betray his country?

Frank, Tigrana, Soldiers:

Heavens!

Friar (Edgar):

Admit it and the necklace will be yours!

Showing Tigrana the necklace.

Guarda!

Look!

Frank e Soldati:

Rispondi!

Frank and Soldiers:

Answer!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Avrai, se affermi, mille gemme al par di
questa.

Io t'amo! Edgar tu amasti. Io l'odio!

Friar (Edgar)

If you admit it, you will have a thousand
gems like this one.

I love you! You loved Edgar. I hate him!

Frank e Soldati:

Parla! Rispondi!

Frank, Soldiers: (to Tigrana)

Speak! Answer!

*Tigrana takes the necklace from the Friar.***Tigrana:**

È ver!

Tigrana:

It's true!

Soldati:

Maledizione a lui!

Ai corvi il suo cadavere!

Maledizion a lui!

Soldiers:

Curses!

Throw his corpse to the crows!

Curse him!

*The soldiers go to the coffin to grab the body, but only find pieces of armor.
They become terrified.*

Gran Dio!

Great God!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Che fu?

Friar (Edgar): (ironically)

What was it?

Soldati:

Non vedi? Vuota è l'armatura!

Soldiers:

Don't you see? The coffin is empty!

Il Frate (Edgar):

Sì! Poichè vive Edgar!

Friar (Edgar): (removing his vestment)

Yes! Because Edgar lives!

Fidelia:

Ah!

Soldati:

Onta su noi!

Edgar:

Sì, poichè Edgar vive!

Edgar releases himself from Fidelia's embrace and violently threatens Tigrana, who draws back in fear.

O lebbra, sozzura del mondo,
o fronte di bronzo e di fango.
tortura e gingillo giocondo,
va, fuggi, o t'infrango!

Edgar goes to grab Tigrana, who seeks refuge near the soldiers.

Tigrana:

Oh il vil! Mi difendete!

Soldati, Frank:

Va! T'allontana abietta cortigiana!

Edgar:

Maledizione a voi! Redento io son!

Io ritorno alla vita!
O gloria, o voluttà!
Bieche illusion,
addio per sempre. Addio!

Edgar begins to leave with Fidelia. Tigrana, crawling and unseen, approaches Fidelia and stabs her with a dagger. Fidelia falls, as if struck by lightning. The horrified crowd screams. Frank and Edgar seek Tigrana, who disappears into the crowd, but then soldiers seize her.

Coro, Soldati:

Orror!

Frank:

A morte!

Coro, Soldati:

A morte! Orror!

Sobbing, Edgar throws himself on Fidelia's corpse. Frank embraces and consoles Gualtierio. Some soldiers drag Tigrana's body away, while some grieving women encircle Fidelia's corpse. All kneel in prayer.

Fidelia:

Ah!

Soldiers:

Shame on us!

Edgar:

Yes, because Edgar lives!

Oh leper, filth of the world,
oh face of bronze and of mud,
you playful, torturing bit of filth,
go, run off, or I'll crush you!

Tigrana: (screaming to the soldiers)

Oh, the wretch! Defend me!

Soldiers, Frank: (repulsing Tigrana)

Go far from here, despicable courtesan!

Edgar: (to the humiliated soldiers)

Curses on you! I have been redeemed!

Embracing Fidelia.

I return to life!
Oh glory, oh lust!
Evil illusions,
farewell forever!

Chorus, Soldiers:

Horror!

Frank:

Kill her!

Chorus, Soldiers:

To death! Horror!

END OF OPERA

Manon Lescaut

Opera in Italian in four acts

**Music
by
Giacomo Puccini**

**Libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo, Domenico Oliva,
Marco Praga, Giuseppe Giacosa, Luigi Illica,
and Giulio Ricordi.**

**After the novel by Abbé Prévost,
*L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut (1731)***

Premiere: Teatro Regio, Turin, Italy

February 1, 1893

Principal Characters in Manon Lescaut

Manon Lescaut, a young woman eighteen years-old	Soprano
Renato des Grieux, a seminary student	Tenor
Lescaut, Manon's brother, Sergeant in the King's Guards	Baritone
Geronte di Ravoit, Treasurer General to the King	Bass
Edmondo, a student and friend of des Grieux	Tenor

Innkeeper, dancing master, lamplighter, Sergeant of the Royal Archers,
a naval captain and sailors, townsfolk, students, courtesans.

TIME: Second half of the 18th century

PLACE: France and America

Story Synopsis

Manon Lescaut is en route to a convent school, escorted by her brother, Lescaut. They arrive by coach at an Inn in Amiens for an overnight stopover. Manon meets the young student, Renato des Grieux, and they fall in love immediately. They learn that Geronte di Ravoit, a lecherous old government official, plans to kidnap the beautiful 18-year old Manon. The newfound lovers steal Geronte's coach and flee to Paris.

Lescaut leads Manon into temptation: the allure of a life of wealth and luxury. Manon quickly abandons des Grieux to become Geronte's mistress. Nevertheless, she is unable to suppress her profound love for des Grieux. Likewise, des Grieux yearns to win back Manon, learning the wiles of gambling to earn his fortune.

Des Grieux steals into Geronte's apartments to meet with Manon. The lovers reunite, vowing eternal love to each other. Geronte unexpectedly arrives and finds them embraced; outraged by Manon's betrayal, he swears vengeance against both Manon and des Grieux. Lescaut arrives to inform them that Geronte has called the police. In a frenzy of fear, Manon delays their escape in order to gather her jewels. Geronte and the police arrive. Manon's jewels, hidden in her cloak, accidentally fall to the floor. Manon is arrested as a thief; des Grieux and Lescaut escape.

Manon is convicted of thievery and sentenced to be deported to the French colony of Louisiana. At the port of Le Havre, Lescaut is unsuccessful in arranging her escape from prison. As Manon is about to board the ship to New Orleans, des Grieux pleads with the ship's captain to allow him to work on the ship; the captain grants des Grieux permission to board the ship.

On a deserted plain near New Orleans, the lovers struggle to survive, lacking food or water. Manon dies of exhaustion and starvation. Overwhelmed by grief, des Grieux collapses on Manon's corpse.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: A square in the city of Amiens.

Soldiers, students, and townsfolk, in a spirit of carefree abandon, pass away a summer evening in a square before an inn at Amiens.

Allegro Brillante



Edmondo, a student, recites a madrigal he has written: an anthem to youth and love.

“Giovanezza è il nostro nome”

Leziosamente
EDMONDO



Gio - va - nez - za è il nostro nome, la speran - za è nostra Iddi - a,
Youth is our name, hope is our goddess,

A fellow student, Renato des Grieux, appears. Des Grieux is pensive, prompting the students to tease him; they suggest that he is sad because he seeks an unattainable love. Des Grieux flirts with the young ladies, trying to learn which one might become his ideal love.

“Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde”

Con grazia
DES GRIEUX



Tra voi, bel - le, brune e bion - de si nasconde giovinetta vaga e vezzo - sa, dal labbro
Among you dark and fair beauties, is there a pretty and charming lady waiting for me?



ro - sa che m'asp-et - ta? Sei tu bionda stel - la? Dil - lo a me!
Is it you, fair star? Tell me!

There is excitement as the coach from Arras arrives. Elegantly dressed passengers disembark: Manon Lescaut, her brother Lescaut, and Geronte di Ravoir, the wealthy old Treasurer General to the King. Geronte has taken a lecherous interest in the beautiful, 18-year old Manon.

Des Grieux becomes enchanted by Manon's beauty: "Dio quanto è bella!" ("God, how beautiful she is!")

Des Grieux's Infatuation: the Love theme.



While Lescaut makes arrangements for quarters for the night, Manon waits outside. Des Grieux approaches her to ask her name, and she replies with bashful innocence.

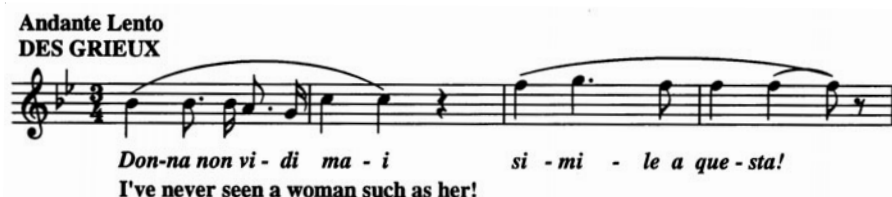
"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo"



Des Grieux reveals that at first sight he was conquered by a mysterious fascination for her. Manon informs him that she is en route to a convent school, an unhappy fate, but her father's wish in order to protect her from the evils of the world. Des Grieux becomes incredulous, suggesting that they must somehow find a way to avoid her horrible fate. After Lescaut calls for his sister, Des Grieux persuades Manon to return later, when it is dark. Manon agrees.

Manon hurries to Lescaut, who awaits her on the balcony of the inn. Des Grieux follows Manon's movements, becoming aroused and intoxicated with passion for the young woman he has just met. Rapturously, he praises the young woman who has just awakened new inspirations in his soul.

"Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!"



Lescaut becomes dazzled by Geronte's wealth. He reveals that his sister Manon is extremely unhappy, a victim of unfulfilled youthful hopes and dreams. He proposes that Manon become Geronte's mistress; in return Lescaut would receive substantial compensation. Both agree to dine together later that evening to discuss arrangements.

Lescaut, a master at gambling, joins a card game with some students, self-assured that they will be an easy conquest. Meanwhile, Geronte makes secret plans to abduct Manon; he orders a coach and horses from the innkeeper, and learns of another exit from the inn from which he can depart with his prey unnoticed. Geronte is unaware that Edmondo overheard his nefarious plan to kidnap Manon. He immediately informs his friend des Grieux of the imminent danger to Manon.

Manon keeps her promise and meets the awaiting des Grieux. She nostalgically recalls her youthful life of gaiety and happiness, while des Grieux urges her to surrender to the enchantments of love, the eternal bliss that now speaks in their souls. Manon and des Grieux fall in love, and both dream rapturously of a happy future together.

"Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto"

Andante Amoroso
DES GRIEUX



Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce labbro e il cor. V'amo! V'amo!
Surrender your sweet lips and heart to a new enchantment. I love you!

Lescaut, playing cards with students, raps on the table, seeking more refreshment. At the sound of his voice, Manon indicates that she must return to the inn. Des Grieux restrains her, advising her of imminent danger: that the old libertine Geronte plans to abduct her this very evening.

Edmondo arrives hurriedly to announce that a coach is ready (Geronte's coach). Manon is confounded and in fear, but agrees to flee with des Grieux, a young man she has just met and hardly knows. Edmondo gives des Grieux his cloak as a disguise, and all run behind the inn where Manon and des Grieux board the coach and escape to Paris.

Just as Geronte is about to initiate his plan to abduct Manon, Edmondo shocks him with the news that she has run away with a student. Lescaut becomes confounded when he learns of Manon's escape, but he assures Geronte that Manon's obsession with luxury will soon cause her to abandon her poor student lover; then, by the grace of Geronte's wealth, the three of them will complete a happy family, all living together in luxury.

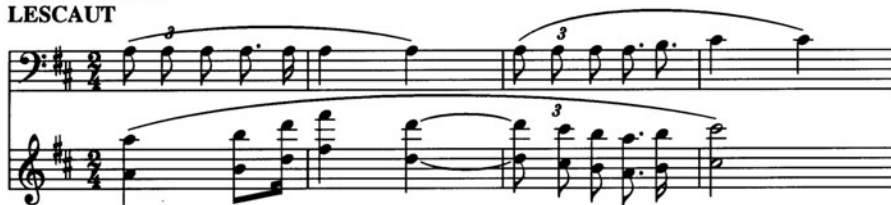
To celebrate their imminent success, Lescaut and Geronte go off arm-in-arm to dine together. Geronte, exulting in his forthcoming victory, is oblivious to the cynical taunting and laughter that the students direct at him.

Act II: Paris. A sumptuous room in the home of Geronte di Ravoir.

As Lescaut predicted to Geronte, Manon quickly tired of her humble life with des Grieux. She was easy prey for Lescaut, vulnerable to her brother's offer to become Geronte's mistress. Manon abandoned des Grieux and now lives in luxurious splendor in Geronte's apartments.

Manon is seated at a dressing table, attended by a hairdresser who pampers her and indulges her every whim to enhance her beauty. Lescaut arrives, dismayed to find his sister in an apparently gloomy mood. Intuitively, he senses that her thoughts have turned to des Grieux, the man she truly loves, but abandoned for the luxurious life he arranged for her with the wealthy Geronte. Lescaut boasts proudly that he rescued Manon, replacing a life of squalor with boundless wealth and luxury.

"Una casetta angusta era la tua dimora."

Andantino Mosso**LESCAUT**

U - na caset - ta angu - sta e - ra la tua dim - o - ra,
You lived in a modest little cottage,

Manon inquires about des Grieux, her guilt feelings quite evident; she just abandoned him without a goodbye, and without even a kiss. Manon has become bored with Geronte and the superficial world of luxuries and wealth that surround her. Manon's ambivalence has caused her inner conflict: she sighs nostalgically, longing for her past happiness and the true love she shared with des Grieux; but she also possesses equal passion for the wealth and luxury that Geronte has provided her.

"In quelle trine morbide nell'alcova dorata"

Moderato con moto**MANON**

In quelle trine morbide nell'al - co - va do - ra - ta
In those soft silken drapes, and gilded alcove,

Lescaut informs Manon that he has taught des Grieux gambling: the means to earn a fortune and win back her love. Manon cannot suppress her impassioned love for des Grieux; she expresses her hope that he will succeed at gambling and that they will soon be reunited.

Singers enter Manon's apartment; they bow before Manon and then sing a madrigal written by Geronte: it is the story of Chloris (Manon) and Philenius (Geronte), an allegory that expresses Geronte's yearning to conquer Manon's heart.

Manon is melancholy; she comments that madrigals, dancing, and music are seemingly lovely diversions, but they bore her. Lescaut senses that Manon's anxiety threatens his grandiose plans for their life of wealth and luxury: a young woman who is bored with pleasure flirts with danger. But Lescaut understands the stirrings of emotion in his sister's heart. To protect his interests, he rushes off to seek des Grieux and bring him to Manon.

Geronte arrives, followed by musicians, friends, Abbés, and the dancing master. All observe the dancing master instructing Manon in the Minuet. The guests shower her with flattery, praise, and admiration, particularly Geronte, who reveals that he cannot control his impassioned love for Manon. As Geronte and Manon dance the Minuet, she cynically taunts him: that she is like the mythological Tirsi, a shepherdess who sighs and yearns for his love.

Geronte announces that it is late and that they must depart for their stroll along the promenade with the fashionable people of Paris. Manon excuses herself, promising to join them shortly. Geronte arranges for his coach to await her, and urges her to join them as soon as possible.

Alone, Manon stands before a mirror, satisfied with her ravishing beauty. She hears noises, which she believes are those of a servant announcing that her coach is ready. But it is des Grieux. Manon rushes to him and greets him breathlessly with uneasy agitation.

"Tu, tu? amore? Tu"

Allegro Moderato con Agitazione

MANON



Tu, tu, a - mo - re? Tu? Ah! Mio immenso amo - re?
You, my love? You? You? My supreme love?

Des Grieux is enraged and Manon becomes fearful; he seethes with vengeance because she so callously abandoned him. Manon admits her failing, and that she deserves his punishment, but at the same time, she reminds him that their love is eternal: flames of love that can never be extinguished.

Des Grieux expresses the pain, torment, and despair he felt after she broke his heart by abandoning him.

"Taci, taci tu, il cor mi frangi!"

Con amarezza

DES GRIEUX

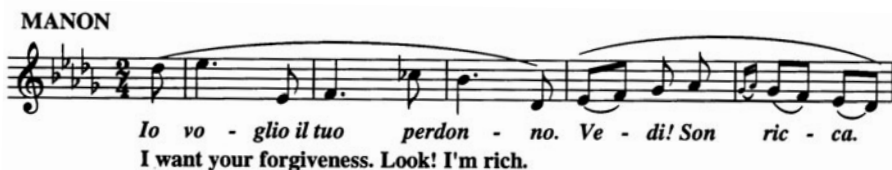


Ta - ci, ta-ci tu, il cor mi frangi, tu il cor mi fran - gi!
Be silent, you broke my heart!

Manon begs des Grieux's forgiveness. But she defends her betrayal as her act of love: after all, she now has wealth for both of them to share.

"Io voglio il tuo perdono"

MANON

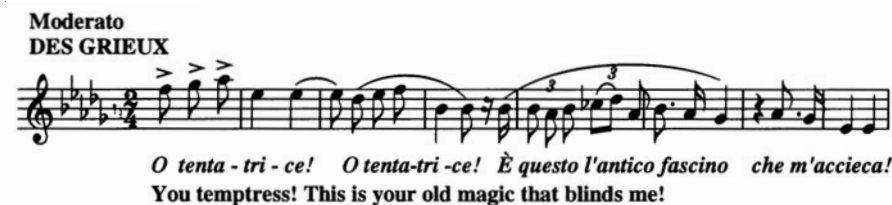


Io vo - glio il tuo perdon - no. Ve - di! Son ric - ca.
I want your forgiveness. Look! I'm rich.

Des Grieux surrenders to temptation, conquered by the seductive Manon who has again woven her magic spell, which he is powerless to resist.

"O tentatrice!"

Moderato
DES GRIEUX

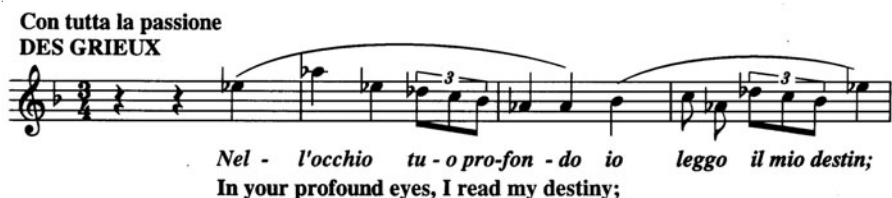


O tenta - tri - ce! O tenta - tri - ce! È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!
You temptress! This is your old magic that blinds me!

Manon and des Grieux embrace, both intoxicated by the ecstasy of their reunion and their love. Des Grieux expresses his total surrender to Manon: his destiny.

"Nell'occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio destin"

Con tutta la passione
DES GRIEUX



Nel - l'occhio tu - o pro - fon - do io leggo il mio destin;
In your profound eyes, I read my destiny;

Geronte suddenly appears at the door, outraged to find Manon in the arms of another man. Sarcastically, he tells them that he now understands why Manon had not arrived at the boulevard; he also reminds des Grieux that he is guilty of trespassing in his home.

Geronte reproaches Manon for betraying the true affections he so lavishly showered upon her. Manon responds by chiding and insulting him; she calls him an old fool, and then holds a mirror to his face to remind him of his age. Geronte leaves, pretending to conceal his anger with ironic indifference. But he then threatens Manon, his revenge for her outrageous perfidy.

After Geronte's departure, Manon expresses a false sense of freedom. But des Grieux senses that they are in jeopardy and tries to persuade Manon that they must escape immediately. Characteristically, Manon hesitates, unsure if she truly wants to relinquish so much wealth and splendor. Des Grieux reproaches her ambivalence; her betrayal of true love with her obsession for material possession.

"Ah! Manon, mi tradisce il tuo folle pensier"

Moderatamente
DES GRIEUX



Ah!Ma-non, mi tra-disce il tuo folle pensier: sempre la stessa, sempre la stessa!
Ah! Manon, you betray me with your foolish thoughts. It's always the same!

Des Grieux has degenerated into immorality, a victim of his uncontrollable passions for the seductive and perfidious Manon. He condemns himself for disgracing his life, but once again, Manon exploits his weakness, promising that if he forgives her she will be faithful and good.

Lescaut arrives, breathless and anxious. He has learned from a friend at the barracks that Geronte called for the police to arrest Manon and des Grieux. The police are en route and they must escape immediately. But Manon's obsession with material luxuries become her undoing; she causes a fatal delay in their escape by gathering up her jewels, which she hides in her cloak.

The door bursts open, and a sergeant appears with guards and soldiers. Geronte stands at the threshold, laughing sarcastically. Manon becomes panic stricken and inadvertently lets her cloak slip open, the jewels falling to the floor. Geronte accuses Manon of theft and orders her arrest. Des Grieux draws his sword, but Lescaut prudently disarms him.

Geronte laughs sarcastically as Manon is led away by the police. Des Grieux and Lescaut escape.

Intermezzo:

An Intermezzo suggests des Grieux's powerlessness in his efforts to save Manon from deportation to Louisiana.

Act III: Near dawn. A square at the harbor of Le Havre.

Manon was convicted of theft. She has been banished from France and waits in a prison in Le Havre with prostitutes and undesirables for deportation to the French colony of Louisiana.

Lescaut and des Grieux wait outside the prison, hoping that the guard Lescaut bribed will arrange Manon's escape. Manon appears behind the barred prison window, des Grieux below; he assures her that he will never forsake her, no matter what dangers confront him.

A lamplighter interrupts their vows of eternal love. He extinguishes the harbor lights, his song ironically a story of a beautiful young woman who sold her soul for wealth and luxury.

Des Grieux approaches the jail window, again vowing his resolve to rescue Manon. Suddenly, a gunshot is heard in the distance, accompanied by shouts of "To arms!" Lescaut arrives to inform des Grieux that their plan for Manon's escape failed.

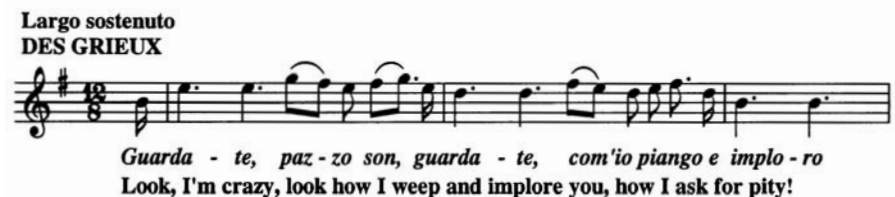
Citizens and villagers fill the square, curious about the gunfire they heard. Drums signal the arrival of a sergeant and soldiers. The sergeant orders the crowd to stand back so that the prisoners can exit the jail and board the ship.

One by one, the sergeant calls out the names of the deportees: each comes forward, becomes the victim of disparaging comments from the onlookers, stands before the ship captain, and then boards the ship.

Roll Call of the Prostitutes:

Manon's name is called, and she emerges from the jail. Des Grieux cautiously approaches her, trying to conceal himself from the guards. Manon urges des Grieux to forget her and build a new life after she is gone. But des Grieux is inconsolable; he cannot live without Manon.

The sergeant roughly seizes Manon, and des Grieux wrenches her from the sergeant's grip, threatening any one who nears them. Then des Grieux falls to the ground, a man in agonizing desperation; he addresses the captain, pleading insanity and begging for pity.

"Guardate, pazzo son"

Des Grieux succeeds in persuading the captain to employ him as a cabin boy, and the captain orders him to board the ship bound for Louisiana.

Act IV: A vast, desolate plain near New Orleans. Nightfall approaches.

Manon and des Grieux have fled New Orleans. As night falls, they are seen roaming the desolate plain, disheveled, fatigued, and wandering vainly in search of food and shelter. Manon is so weak that she must lean on des Grieux for support.

Manon is tormented by the futility of trying to survive in the desolation of the vast, uninhabited plain. Des Grieux reassures her of his love, his tears her inspiration to survive and live.

“Vedi, vedi, son io che piango”

Andante Espressivo con Moto

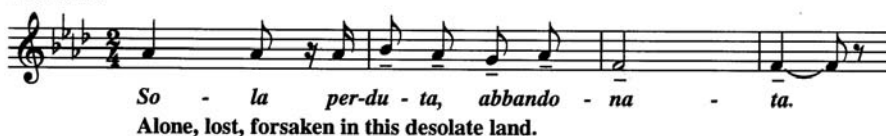


Des Grieux scans the horizon, agonizing that the land is barren and that there is no trace of water. Manon urges him to search the desert for food and water. Des Grieux hesitates to leave Manon, but then departs after he finds a place for Manon to rest.

As the sky darkens, Manon expresses the torment of her despair and her fear of dying.

“Sola, perduta, abbandonata”

**Con la massima espressione
e con angoscia
MANON**



Manon becomes delirious, haunted by vivid recollections of her past: a life stained with sin. But Manon also becomes contrite, expressing her desire to live so that she can love des Grieux.

As soon as des Grieux returns, Manon falls into his arms. She no longer has the will to live: weak and sensing imminent death. Des Grieux bursts into tears, unable to control his agony and anguish. Manon reproaches him; her approaching death is a moment for kisses, not tears.

Manon enobles their love in her final words: “Le mie colpe, travolgerà l’oblio, ma l’amor mio, non muore.” (“My faults will be forgotten, but my love will never die.”)

Manon dies in des Grieux’s arms. Tortured by grief and despair, des Grieux falls on Manon’s corpse.

Commentary and Analysis

After the failure of *Edgar*, Puccini became disconsolate and despairing: he was desperate to compose a successful opera, and his personal life was in turmoil; in 1890, he learned that his younger brother Michele, who had emigrated to South America, died of yellow fever, and he and Elvira were constantly being driven apart, because they feared Gemignani's retribution.

On the contemporary opera horizon, Verdi had recently achieved overwhelming acclaim with *Otello* (1887), Mascagni with *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), and Leoncavallo with *I pagliacci* (1892).

Ricordi's faith in his young protégé remained undaunted, and it would be triumphantly vindicated by the immediate success of Puccini's next and third opera: *Manon Lescaut*. The publisher exerted his powerful influence and assembled Italy's best poets and dramatists for his protégé's forthcoming operas. Nevertheless, the creation of the *Manon Lescaut* libretto became a melodrama of operatic proportions, a continuous struggle confounded by feuds and disagreements between Puccini and the considerable group of five librettists assembled: the poet and composer Ruggiero Leoncavallo, who Puccini eventually fired; Giuseppe Giacosa, the distinguished poet, scenarist, dramatist and man of letters; the critic and playwright Domenico Oliva, who eventually quit; the dramatist Marco Praga, who also resigned; the renowned poet, playwright and librettist, Luigi Illica, who was perhaps the major force in saving the opera; and even Giulio Ricordi and Puccini himself made contributions to the libretto.

But despite enormous conflicts among Puccini and his librettists, *Manon Lescaut* finally premiered at Turin, Italy, on February 1, 1893: at the time, Milan's La Scala was preparing for the premiere of Verdi's *Falstaff*. *Manon Lescaut* was a raging success, the critics and public unanimous in their praise of its youthful vitality and its inventive passion and ardor. In London, the eminent critic, George Bernard Shaw, noted that "Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals." With *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini was catapulted to recognition and respect in the opera world.

Manon Lescaut is based on the Abbé Prévost's (1697-1763) eighteenth-century novel, *L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* ("The Story of Cavalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut.") *Manon Lescaut* became the first of many amoral *femmes fatales*, women of easy virtue who destroy decent men, transforming them into criminals. Among her descendants are Mérimée's *Carmen*, Wedekind's *Lulu*, Hugo's *Marion Delorme*, and Dumas's *Marguerite*.

Prévost's novel had achieved classical status, and its underlying story held profound relevance for its audiences in the next century. During the fin de siècle, the end of the nineteenth century, the zeitgeist of the era had become a profound sense of spiritual disarray, the result of transforming social and economic upheavals emanating from dramatic ideological and scientific discoveries: those revelations of Marx, Darwin, and Freud. Contemporary European civilization began to become aware of its cultural and spiritual decadence, provoking an assault by intellectuals and thinkers that was intended to raise consciousness. Nietzsche, the quintessential cultural pessimist of the late nineteenth

century, identified the era as “the transvaluation of values,” in effect, his recognition that society had lost its moral and ethical foundations.

The French Revolution’s promise of democracy and economic and social progress had failed; and social, political, and ideological perplexities had evolved from colonialism, industrialization, and materialism. Society’s utopian dreams had failed; they became transformed into anxieties. Nietzsche condemned his contemporary civilization’s values and virtues, and then metaphorically proclaimed the death of God, a caution to his present-day society that its degeneration and loss of spiritual and human values required renewal and rebirth.

Abbé Prévost’s *Manon Lescaut* story addressed the crisis of human morality; it retained its popularity during the late nineteenth century, because it was profoundly relevant to the fundamental anxieties of its bourgeois audience: it served to provoke, tease, and raise its audience’s awareness of the era’s moral conflicts. The tragedy within the Prévost story focused on flawed human character: in a certain sense, it was a plea to contemporary society to raise its moral sensibilities and values: a symbolic mirror for its readers to peer into their inner souls, identify their foibles and frailties, and resurrect their spiritual values.

Prévost was a priest who had been excommunicated from the Benedictine order for blasphemy; he spent most of his picaresque life as a renegade in exile. In 1731, he wrote his singular masterpiece, the novel entitled *L’histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (“The Story of Cavalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut”), an entirely autobiographical recollection of the experiences of his turbulent youth that he presented in a series of episodes occurring around 1715, the time of the notoriously corrupt Paris of the Regency of Louis XIV.

Prévost’s primary theme portrayed the classic conflict of the sacred versus the profane, the tension between reason and passion, and virtue versus vice. The story’s focus was the fatal fascination of a young nobleman (des Grieux) for a seductive and perfidious woman (Manon Lescaut). In the end, it was a tragedy about human character flaws and frailties, but with the customary dignity and moral purpose usually inherent in French classical drama.

Prévost’s novel maintained strong popular appeal for upwards of two centuries, eventually becoming the underlying literary source for many operas: Auber’s *Manon Lescaut* with Scribe as the librettist (1856); Massenet’s *Manon* (1884); Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* (1893); and more recently, Henze’s *Boulevard Solitude* (1951).

The novel read almost like a play, its action swift, direct, simple, and with few superfluities. In style, it was a narration within a narration, a very similar structure to that of Prosper Mérimée’s *Carmen*, the literary basis for Bizet’s opera: like Don José of *Carmen*, des Grieux meets the narrator, and then recounts the story of his love and adventures with Manon Lescaut. In the Prévost novel, the central character is des Grieux, initially a fine, upright young man, who gradually becomes destroyed by his obsession for the seductive and tantalizingly beautiful, but thoroughly unscrupulous, Manon Lescaut.

Des Grieux is caught in a struggle between his sense of right and his overpowering instincts; his inability to act with reason leads to his psychological and moral degeneration. However, in the moralistic sense, Prévost describes the eventual downfall of both lovers

as the logical outcome of their inability to rectify — or control — their character flaws. Nevertheless, Prévost evokes a deep sympathy for des Grieux — the author himself — because his weakness is that of universal human nature. In that sense, man is capable of acting unwittingly when he is overcome by love: des Grieux's tragic flaw is that he is driven by pure emotion and passion to possess Manon; like Carmen's power over José, Manon becomes des Grieux's *femme fatale*.

The entire tragedy in the story — for both Manon and des Grieux — involves their surrender and capitulation to instinct. In the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment ennobled reason as the path to universal truth: Romanticism later rejected Enlightenment ideology and stressed freedom and feeling. But during the late nineteenth century, when society was reeling from the ideological shocks and transformations attributed to the revelations of Darwin and Freud, man was ultimately judged as a creature of pure instinct. So the Manon Lescaut story, although written in the eighteenth century, had profound appeal for its nineteenth century audiences: it cautioned against the moral excesses of Romanticism, and castigated — and even admonished — its audiences against the human consequences and potential fatal destruction that can occur when passions and emotions overcome reason.

Before meeting Manon Lescaut, the young des Grieux, the scion of a fine family, had enrolled in the order of the Knights of Malta, taking his vows of celibacy at the age of seventeen. Initially, the young man was naïve, seemingly giving little thought to the difference between the sexes. But after he met the seductive and perfidious Manon Lescaut, he was overcome by an obsessive fascination and fatal attraction to her, and the entire subsequent story revolves around des Grieux's surrender to temptation: his classic inability to control his compelling passion for Manon. As a result, des Grieux progresses — like Don José in *Carmen* — through a deep psychological and moral degeneration, experiencing a continuous inner struggle and conflict between his instincts and reason.

Des Grieux's weakness for Manon causes him to relinquish his promising ecclesiastical career, and ultimately, his life degenerates into corruption and criminality: he becomes a cheating gambler, a thief, a gigolo, and a scoundrel who survives on the money and jewelry the courtesan Manon extracts from her various lovers. And des Grieux plunges ever more deeply into moral corruption, ultimately crowning his newfound criminal career by murdering a prison guard while escaping from jail.

The pathos for des Grieux, a creature of instinct rather than of reason, springs from the fact that while he recognizes Manon's character flaws and faults, he is dominated by uncontrollable subconscious passions that compel him to become enslaved to Manon to the very last moment of her pathetic demise.

Manon is a fascinating illustration of feminine power, as well as frailty. In certain respects, she is like her coarser Spanish cousin, Carmen, a beautiful woman whose seductiveness exerts a terrifying exploitive and manipulative power over men. As such, Manon is an archetypal example of the wicked and evil conquering the weak, and in that sense she shares her personality with many other insidious females in opera: Mélisande, Lulu, and Salome. The renowned writer, Guy de Maupassant, commented that Manon was a woman of “instinctive perfidy.....sincere in her deception and frank in her

infamy,” certainly the classical and archetypal example of womanhood plunged into the most reprehensible depths of evil: a woman beyond redemption.

In Puccini’s opera, Manon is eighteen years old. In her first appearance at the inn at Amiens, she projects naiveté, an innocence that the composer captures in her simple, musically chromatic introduction to des Grieux: “Manon Lescaut mi chamo” (“My name is Manon Lescaut.”).

After meeting des Grieux, Manon becomes confused by stirrings of emotion. She is an unhappy young woman, a victim of her father’s will to protect her from the world’s evils by sending her to a convent school. The beginning of her tragic destiny occurs when she becomes overcome by fear after learning that the libertine Geronte intends to abduct her: that fear becomes her motivation to escape with the impassioned young des Grieux, a man she has just met and hardly knows.

Manon’s brother Lescaut is insidious, despicable, and unconscionable. In Act I, Lescaut betrays his sister’s true character when he consoles Geronte after her escape from the inn with des Grieux: “Manon già non si perde. Ma borsa di studente presto rimane al verde. Manon non vuol miserie!” (“Manon is not yet lost. A student’s purse will soon be empty, and Manon does not want poverty!”) And then Lescaut blatantly manipulates the old Geronte for self-aggrandizement, relishing the benefits he will acquire if he succeeds as his sister’s solicitor; he promises Geronte that he will deliver Manon to him as his new mistress; at the same time he congratulates himself for the financial rewards Geronte will pay him for arranging this new relationship.

Similarly, in Act II, Lescaut expresses unabashed pride in having succeeded in arranging a life of splendor for Manon. Nevertheless, des Grieux has now become Lescaut’s friend. He has admitted his obsession to win back Manon, and Lescaut has convinced him that he can succeed with wealth; Lescaut has introduced des Grieux to the means to acquire that wealth: gambling — and cheating at cards.

In Act II, Manon expresses the soul of her conflicted character, the underlying theme and tragedy driving the entire story: her ambivalent desire for love as well as material possessions: “In quelle trine morbide” (“In these soft silken drapes and gilded alcove”) which expresses her boredom and discontent as old Geronte’s mistress that she translates into a yearning for the impassioned love she formerly shared with the young student des Grieux. But just before Manon’s dancing lesson, Lescaut astutely recognizes Manon’s inner angst — as well as a potential loss to his own financial interests. He philosophically comments, “Una donnina che s’annoa è cosa da far paura!” (“A young woman bored with pleasure flirts with danger!”). It is a prophetic announcement that an unhappy woman is a danger to herself as well as to others. Lescaut, thinking only about protecting his financial interests in his sister’s new courtesan life, immediately rushes off to find des Grieux; he must pacify his sister’s anxiety as well as protect his financial interests.

The second part of Act II brings the opera to its peak of conflict and tension; it is here that the young Puccini’s musico-dramatic talents explode with music that is saturated with resilient and ardent passions. Prompted by Lescaut, des Grieux suddenly intrudes into Geronte’s apartments; he unites with Manon and immediately condemns her for

heartlessly abandoning him: much of Puccini's music for des Grieux is declamatory, again echoing the Italian verismo school.

Des Grieux quickly surrenders to the temptation of Manon's charms, thoroughly intoxicated again by the woman who exercises a fatal power over him. It is at this moment that Puccini introduces the "destiny" music, the principal theme of the opera that underscores des Grieux's words "Nell'occhio il tuo profondo io leggo mio destin" ("In your profound eyes I read my destiny."), a musical leitmotif that represents des Grieux's capitulation and the lover's reconciliation; but it is also the music that forecasts the lovers' doom. The theme reappears often: it concludes the Intermezzo played between Acts II and III, underscoring des Grieux's tragic inability to escape from Manon's power and his futile attempts to rescue and save Manon from exportation; and it explodes in the full orchestra at the conclusion of Act III after des Grieux persuades the captain to allow him to board the ship and work as a cabin boy, a moment when the "destiny" theme resonates boldly and triumphantly, seemingly conveying the triumph of love. But it is a moment of tragic irony: Puccini, both the narrator and dramatist of the story, is realizing the powerful underlying text of this story through his equally potent music; he is preparing his audience for the lovers' doom.

In Act III, Puccini brilliantly proved his skills and craftsmanship in ensemble, or concerted scenes: the "Roll-Call of the Prostitutes" is underscored with poignant music that captures the anguish and agony of women whose immoral behavior was condemned; they were unacceptable to French society, but were nevertheless deemed worthy to populate the French colony of Louisiana.

In Act IV, Manon and des Grieux roam a desolate plain outside of New Orleans. Prévost relates that after Manon and des Grieux arrived in New Orleans, the Governor of Louisiana sought the beautiful Manon as a wife for his son. Des Grieux fought a duel with the Governor's son and thought that he had killed him. Fearful, both Manon and des Grieux escaped from New Orleans, which explains their final act appearance as fugitives seeking food and water on a desolate plain.

Manon was trapped by her ambivalent conflicts: love versus her obsession for material possessions, a character flaw that is brilliantly portrayed at the conclusion of Act II when Manon flaunts danger to collect her jewels before escaping from the police. In the end, Manon became a victim of her own desires, a pathetic prisoner of fate; she was ultimately condemned as a thief. Des Grieux degenerated as he followed the perfidious Manon down the road of immorality and amorality: both became victims of instincts and uncontrollable passions.

But Abbé Prévost was a man trained in the morality of religion, and quite logically, his novel dealt with cautionary morality: his characters were surrounded by an aura of sin, and in the religious context, the wages of sin must result in death and damnation.

The material attractions of Paris destroyed Manon, as well as des Grieux. For a while, Manon succeeded in her hedonistic ambitions, but in the end, Prévost condemned her as a sinner who must seek absolution for her transgressions; just before Manon's pathetic demise in the final scene, she repents for her sins and prays for forgiveness. But *Manon*

Lescaut is an opera composed by a young and impassioned Italian; quite appropriately, Manon's repentance is secondary to immortalizing her profound love for des Grieux:

"Le mie colpe, travolgerà l'oblio, ma l'amor mio, non muore."
("My faults will be forgotten, but my love will never die.")

Manon's ambivalence — her yearning for love that conflicted with her desire for material possessions — represents a human conflict that is timeless and universal. Those underlying conflicts of the *Manon Lescaut* story bore a particular fascination for nineteenth-century courtesans and the Parisian demimonde, women who sacrificed love for material possessions; to some of those courtesans, Prévost's novel became sacred scripture.

Verdi's *La traviata* was based on Alexandre Dumas fil's autobiographical story of his brief affair with Marie Duplessis, one of the most notorious courtesans of nineteenth-century Paris. In his novel, Dumas poured out his spurned soul, but at the same time, he idealized Marie, the woman who had caused him so much suffering. Ultimately, Dumas ennobled himself: a victim of his own sentimentality.

In Act III of Verdi's opera, Alfredo (Dumas's Armand) returns to discover a letter from Violetta (Dumas's Marie); it informs him that she is abandoning him and returning to her former life as a courtesan. If Verdi's stage directions are followed, an open book rests on the table next to Violetta's farewell letter: the book is the Abbé Prévost's *L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, and the page of the Abbé's novel that is open, summarizes the essence of the entire *Manon Lescaut* story: a story about a beautiful, amoral young courtesan, who is genuinely in love with a man who is unable to provide her the luxury she cannot live without; she selfishly abandons her lover, surrendering to her obsession for material possessions.

"...but can you not see, poor dear soul, that in the condition to which we are reduced, fidelity would be a foolish virtue? Do you think it possible to be loving on an empty stomach? Hunger would cause me some fatal mishap, and one day I would utter my last breath thinking it was a sigh of love..."

Puccini and the French composer, Jules Massenet, were contemporaries, and both attacked the powerful message in Abbé Prévost's novel. Massenet's *Manon* (1884) was composed nine years before Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893). The Puccini and Massenet operas are warhorses in the standard opera repertory, and both tell an almost identical story, yet both are inherently different in their musico-dramatic style.

French and Italian opera derive from similar Latin roots and origins, and both usually deal with those same great primal conflicts of the spirit and the flesh: love, lust, greed, betrayal, jealousy, hate, revenge, and murder. But French and Italian opera each possesses its own unique style to express those same basic emotions and passions.

In opera, words become realized through the underlying music; the composer, through his music, is THE dramatist of the story. Italian opera can be extremely direct, and at times excessively declamatory: it tends to be naked in its passions, and most of the time, intensely torrid as it absorbs its audience into its conflicts and tensions. But French opera

can generally be more oblique, more subtle, and even at times, excessively refined and sophisticated. Nevertheless, notwithstanding styles and traditions, both musico-dramatic styles express profound emotions and passions, an intensity of expression that enables the audience to think and feel simultaneously: the magnificence of the opera art form.

Massenet has often been called the “French Puccini.” Both composers were champions of the Romantic tradition, but each composer expressed his feeling for the Manon Lescaut story with his own unique musical signature. Massenet’s music contains a deep poetic feeling, together with graceful, tender, and flowery melodies, an elegance of harmony and orchestration that has at times been described as a “discreet and semi-religious eroticism.” And like Puccini, Massenet was an indisputable theatrical craftsman as well as a master of musical characterization.

When Puccini was confronted with the fact that Massenet had already composed an opera based on the Manon Lescaut story, he commented: “Why shouldn’t there be two operas about Manon? After all, a woman like Manon could certainly have more than one lover.” But musically, the operas are very different: Puccini was a young and hot-blooded Italian of thirty-five years, determined to musically dramatize the story with extroverted passion. Puccini said himself: “Massenet feels the story as a Frenchman, with the powder and the minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion.”

So in the end, Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*, unlike the perhaps more sophisticated and refined French version of Massenet, is the antithesis of abstract emotion. Puccini’s opera rages with lustful Italian ardor, and he made no attempt to present anything other than an Italian opera in which powerful emotions and passions explode unabashedly.

In Massenet’s *Manon*, it is Manon herself who dominates the drama, and her characterization remains true to French traditions and style: her confrontations are subtle and delicate, and any associations with sexuality are discreet and reserved, if not innocent. Puccini’s Manon is openly brazen and determined: in her Act II reunion with des Grieux, she uses every weapon in her arsenal of enchantments to seduce and conquer the vengeful des Grieux, and in the finale of Act II, the danger to her life is secondary to her resolve and obsession to collect her jewels.

Puccini portrays des Grieux as an impulsive youth, unrestrained and even hysterical in the expression of his passions, the reason perhaps that much of his music is declamatory rather than lyrical. Massenet’s music makes no attempt to overwhelm its audience with extroverted passions: he left that to Puccini.

In *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini discovered his tragic muse: despair in the the search for love. In *Manon Lescaut*, overpowering emotions conquer reason, and love becomes doomed by deterministic powers. Like its two predecessors, *Le villi* and *Edgar*, as well as the succeeding three operas of *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut* is an opera about the death of love: that is why these Puccini operas resonate with a profound sense of melancholy and despair; des Grieux laments, “Ansia eterna crudel” (“Eternal, cruel anxiety.”) and Cavaradossi similarly laments in *Tosca*, “Muio disperato” (“I die in despair”).

And in *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini found the true inspiration for his magical lyricism: it was the beginning of Puccini’s love affair with his tragic heroines, but it was also the

moment when a new star became affixed to the opera landscape: a composer who brilliantly portrayed the soul of humanity through incredibly poignant musical inventions of unrivalled beauty.

LIBRETTO

Manon Lescaut

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Act I

An inn near the Paris gate at Amiens. Students, citizens, villagers, women, girls and soldiers fill the square; some are standing and talking, while others are seated at tables, drinking and playing cards.

Allegro Brillante**Edmondo:**

Ave, sera gentile, che discendi
col tuo corteo di zefferi e di stelle.
Ave, cara ai poeti ed agli amanti.

Edmondo: *(singing his madrigal)*

Praise the gentle evening that falls
with its procession of breezes and stars.
Hail to you, beloved of poets and lovers.

Studenti:

E ai ladri ed ai briachi!
Noi t'abbiamo spezzato il madrigale!

Students: *(poking fun at Edmondo)*

And also to thieves and drunkards!
We've interrupted your madrigal!

Edmondo:

E vi ringrazio.
Pel vial giulive vengono a frotte a frotte,
fresche, ridenti e belle, le nostre artigianelle.

Edmondo:

And I thank you for it.
Our fair young working girls are swarming
down the avenue towards us; they are fresh,
laughing, and beautiful.

Studenti:

Or s'anima il viale.

Students:

The avenue has sprung to life.

Edmondo:

Preparo un madrigale furbesco, ardito e gaio.
E sia la musa mia tutta galanteria.

Edmondo:

I'll prepare a gay and daring madrigal for
them. And may my muse be chivalrous.

Leziosamente**EDMONDO**

Gio - va - nez - za è il nostro nome, la speran - za è nostra Iddi - a,

Edmondo e Studenti:

Giovanezza è il nostro nome,
la speranza è nostra Iddia,
ci trascina per le chiome indomabile virtù.
Santa ebbrezza!
Or voi, ridenti, amorose adolescenti, date i
cor.

Edmondo and Students:

Our name is youth,
hope is our goddess.
Invincible courage propels us to you.
A holy intoxication!
And you, loving and smiling youth,
give us your hearts.

Fanciulle:

Vaga per l'aura un'onda di profumi,
van le rondini a vol e muore il sol.
È questa l'ora delle fantasie
che fra le spemi lottano e le malinconie.

Studenti:

Date il labbro, date il core alla balda gioventù!
Ecco des Grioux!

Edmondo:

A noi t'unisci, amico, e ridi
e ti vinca la cura di balzana avventura.
Non rispondi? Perché?
Forse di dama inaccessibile acuto amor ti
morse?

Des Grioux:

L'amor! Questa tragedia, ovver commedia,
io non conosco!

Alcuni studenti:

Baie! Misteriose vittorie cauto celi e felice!

Des Grioux:

Amici, troppo onor mi fate.

Edmondo e Studenti:

Per bacco, indoviniam, amico.
Ti crucci d'uno scacco!

Des Grioux:

No, non ancora. Ma se vi talenta,
vo' compiacervi, e tosto!

Girls:

A wave of perfume drifts through the air:
swallows fly away, and the sun is setting.
It is the hour of fantasy, when hope
struggles against melancholy.

Students:

Give your lips and hearts to bold youth!
Here comes des Grioux!

Edmondo: (greeting des Grioux)

Join us, laugh and surrender to the excitement of carefree adventure.
Why don't you answer? Why?
Perhaps you've been smitten by a powerful
love for an inaccessible lady?

Des Grioux:

Love! I know nothing of that farce, or
rather, that sad tragedy!

Some students:

Nonsense! You're concealing your conquests!

Des Grioux:

My friends, you flatter me.

Edmondo and Students:

So friend, we guessed it.
You've been betrayed by love!

Des Grioux:

No, not yet. But if it pleases you,
I'll satisfy your curiosity!

Con grazia
DES GRIEUX



Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde,
si nasconde giovinetta vaga e vezzosa,
dal labbro rosa che m'aspetta?

Among you fair beauties, blondes and
brunettes, is there a pretty and charming
lady with rosy lips waiting for me?

Sei tu, bionda stella? Dillo a me!
Palesatemi il destino e il divino viso ardente
che m'innamori, ch'io vegga e odori
eternamente.

Sei tu, bruna stella? Dillo a me!

Studenti:

Ma bravo!

Edmondo:

Guardate, compagni, di lui più nessuno si
laggi.

Tutti:

Festeggiam la serata, com'è nostro costume.
Suoni musica grata nei brindisi il bicchier,
e noi rapisca il fascino ardente del piacer!
Danze, brindisi, follie, il corteo di voluttà
or s'avanza per le vie e la notte regnerà.
È splendente, ed irruente, è una poema di
fulgor.

Tutto avvinca la sua luce e il suo furor.

Giunge il cocchio d'Arras!

Discendono. Vediam!

Viaggiator eleganti, galanti!

Studenti:

Chi non darebbe a quella donnina bella
il gentile saluto del benvenuto?

Lescaut:

Ehi, l'oste!

Cavalier, siete un modello di squisitezza!

Ehi, l'oste!

L'Oste:

Eccomi qua!

Des Grieux:

Dio, quanto è bella!

Is it you, blonde star? Tell me!

Reveal my destiny, and that divine
impassioned face that I will love and adore
eternally.

Is it you, dark haired beauty? Tell me!

Students:

That's splendid!

Edmondo:

Look, friends, no one can complain about
him any more.

All:

Let's celebrate the evening,
as we always do, with songs and toasts,
and capture the enchantment of pleasure!
May dances, toasts, madness, and pleasure
come and rule the night.

It's splendid and impetuous. It is a radiant
poem.

May it charm and dazzle everyone.

Here comes the coach from Arras!

They're getting off. Let's see!

What elegant and graceful travelers!

Students: (admiring Manon)

Who wouldn't give that lovely girl a gracious
welcome?

Lescaut:

Hey, innkeeper!

(to Geronte)

Sir, you're a model of refinement!

Hey, innkeeper!

The Innkeeper:

Here I am!

Des Grieux: (gazing at Manon)

God, how lovely she is!

Andante Lento Espressivo



Geronte:

Questa notte, amico, qui poserò.
Scusate! Ostiere, v'occupate del mio bagaglio!

Geronte: *(to the Innkeeper)*

Innkeeper, I'll stay here tonight.
Excuse me! Innkeeper, take care of my luggage.

L'Oste:

Ubbidirò. Vi prego, mi vogliate seguire.

Innkeeper:

Certainly. Please follow me.

Des Grieux:

Cortese damigella, il priego mio accettate:
dicano le dolci labbra come vi chiamate.

Des Grieux: *(approaching Manon)*

Gentle young lady, please excuse me:
let your sweet lips tell me your name.

**Manon**

Manon Lescaut mi chiamo.

Manon: *(simply and modestly)*

My name is Manon Lescaut.

Des Grieux:

Perdonate al dir mio, ma da un fascino
arcano a voi spinto son io.
Persino il vostro volto parmi aver visto,
e strani moti ha il mio cuore.
Quando partirete?

Des Grieux:

Forgive my words, but I'm drawn to you by
a mysterious fascination.
I feel as though I've even seen you before,
and my heart beats with strange movement.
When are you leaving?

Manon:

Domani all'alba io parto. Un chiostro
m'attende.

Manon:

I leave at dawn tomorrow. I am going to a
convent.

Des Grieux:

E in voi l'aprile nel volto si palesa e fiorisce!
O gentile, qual fato vi fa guerra?

Des Grieux:

The flowers of spring adorn you face!
Oh pretty lady, what cruel fate defeated you?

Manon:

Il mio fato si chiama voler del padre mio.

Manon:

My fate is decided by my father's will.

Des Grieux:

Oh, come siete bella! Ah, no!
Non è un convento che sterile vi brama!
No! Sul vostro destino riluce un'altra stella.

Des Grieux:

Oh, you are so beautiful! Oh, no!
It can't be a barren convent that you desire!
No! A different star shines over your destiny.

Manon:

La mia stella tramonta!

Manon:

My star is fading!

Des Grieux:

Or parlar non possiamo.
Ritornate fra poco e, cospiranti contro i
fato, vinceremo.

Manon:

Tanta pietà traspare dalle vostre parole!
Vo' ricordarvi! Il nome vostro?

Des Grieux:

Sono Renato des Grieux.

Lescaut:

Manon!

Manon:

Lasciarvi debbo. Vengo!
Mio fratello m'ha chiamata.

Des Grieux:

Qui tornate!

Manon:

No, non posso. Mi lasciate!

Des Grieux:

O gentile, vi scongiuro!

Manon:

Mi vincete!
Quando oscuro l'aere intorno a noi sarà.

Des Grieux:

We can't talk now.
Come back soon, and we'll conspire how to
triumph over your fate.

Manon:

You speak with such compassion!
I want to remember you! What's your name?

Des Grieux:

I am Renato des Grieux.

Lescaut: (calling from the inn)

Manon!

Manon:

I have to leave now. I'm coming!
My brother has called me.

Des Grieux:

Please come back!

Manon:

No, I can't. Let me go!

Des Grieux:

I implore you, lovely lady!

Manon:

You've persuaded me!
I'll come back when it is dark

*Manon hurries to Lescaut, who awaits her on the balcony of the inn.
Des Grieux, following her movements, becomes impassioned.*

Andante Lento
DES GRIEUX

**Des Grieux:**

Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!
A dirle "io t'amo" a nuova vita l'alma mia
si desta.
"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo."
Come queste parole profumate mi vagan
nello spirito, e ascose fibre vanno a carezzare.
O sussurro gentil, deh, non cessare!

Des Grieux:

I've never before seen such a woman!
To say to her, "I love you," awakens a new
inspiration in my soul.
"My name is Manon Lescaut."
How those fragrant words wander in my
spirit, and every part of me wants to caress her.
May the gentle whispers never cease!

Studenti e Edmondo:

La tua ventura ci rassicura.
O di Cupido degno fedel, bella e divina
la cherubina per tua delizia scese dal ciel!
Fugge: è dunque innamorato.

Studenti:

Venite, o fanciulle! Augurio ci siate di
buona fortuna.

Fanciulle:

È bionda od è bruna la diva che guida la
vostra tenzon?

Studenti:

È calva la diva: ma morbida chioma voi fa
desiar.
Chi perde e chi vince, voi brama,
o fanciulle, chi piange e chi ride.
Noi prostra ed irride la mala ventura.
Ma lieta prorompe d'amore la folle, l'eterna
canzon.

Fanciulle:

Amiche fedeli di un'ora, volete il bacio?
Volete il sospir? Orniam la vittoria,
e il core del vinto al tiepido effluvio
di molle carezza riposa obliando,
e l'onta e il martir.

Edmondo:

Addio, mia stella. Addio, mio fior,
vaga sorella del Dio d'amor.
A te d'intorno va il mio sospir,
e per un giorno non mi tradir.

Geronte:

Dunque vostra sorella il velo cingerà?

Lescaut:

Malo consiglio della gente mia.

Geronte:

Diversa idea mi pare la vostra?

Lescaut:

Certo, certo, ho più sana la testa di quel
che sembri, benchè triste fama mie gesta
circondi.

Students and Edmondo:

Your good luck reassures us. You are in
Cupid's favor. A lovely angel has descended
from heaven to delight you!
Go to her and be inspired by love.

Students:

Come, girls! There is good fortune in your
future.

Girls:

Is it a blonde or brunette goddess who
inspires your poetry?

Students:

The goddess is bald, but it is your fair hair
that we desire.
Whoever wins or loses, yearns for you.
Whoever cries and laughs,
is defeated by poor luck.
But love bursts; it is the eternal song.

Girls:

Faithful friends, do you want a kiss?
Do you want to sigh? We crown the victor,
but the heart of the loser enters the warm
oblivion of soft, forgotten kisses,
and of shame and dishonor.

Edmondo:

Farewell, my star. Farewell, my flower,
wandering sister of Venus.
My sigh surrounds you,
and for one day do not betray me.

Geronte: (walking with Lescaut)

So your sister is taking the veil?

Lescaut:

Bad advice from my family.

Geronte:

I suppose you have different ideas?

Lescaut:

Certainly. I've more sense than it seems,
although my bad reputation seems to be
haunting me.

Ma la vita conosco, forse troppo.
Parigi è scuola grande assai.
Di mia sorella guida, mormorando,
adempio al mio dovere, come un vero soldato!
Solo dico che ingrato evento al mondo
non ci coglie senza qualche compenso.
E voi conobbi, Signor?

Geronte:

Geronte di Ravoir.

Lescaut:

Diporto vi conduce in viaggio?

Geronte:

No, dovere.

L'affitto delle imposte a me fidato
dalla bontà del Re, dalla mia borsa.

Lescaut:

(Che sacco d'oro!)

Geronte:

E non mi sembra lieta neppur vostra
sorella.

Lescaut:

Pensate! Ha diciott'anni!
Quanti sogni e speranze!

Geronte:

Comprendo. Poverina!
È d'uopo consolarla.
Questa sera meco verrete a cena?

Lescaut:

Quale onor! E intanto permettete...

Geronte:

Scusate, m'attendete per breve istante:
qualche ordine io debbo all'ostier impartir.

I know life, perhaps too well.
Paris is a large enough school.
As my sister's guardian, I reluctantly fulfill
my duty, like a true soldier!
But for every misfortune in this world, there
is some compensation.
And have we met, sir?

Geronte:

Geronte di Ravoir.

Lescaut:

Are you travelling for pleasure?

Geronte:

No, for business.

Thanks to the King's grace, which I have to
pay for, I collect taxes.

Lescaut:

(What a gold mine!)

Geronte:

Your sister seems very unhappy to me.

Lescaut:

Imagine! She's eighteen!
Full of so many hopes and dreams!

Geronte:

I understand. Poor girl!
We should console her.
Will you dine with me tonight?

Lescaut:

What an honor! Meanwhile, permit me...
(Lescaut gestures to offer Geronte a drink)

Geronte:

Excuse me a moment while I give some
orders to the innkeeper.

*Geronte departs. As evening approaches, Lescaut observes some students
who are intently engrossed in their card game.*

Gli Studenti:

Un asso! Un fante! Un tre!
Che gioco maledetto!

Students:

An ace! A jack! A three!
What awful cards!

Lescaut:

(Giocano! Oh, se potessi tentare anch'io qualche colpo perfetto!)

Studenti:

Puntate! Carte! Un asso!

Lescaut:

Un asso? Mio signore, un fante!
Errore, errore!

Studenti

È vero, un fante. Siete un maestro!

Lescaut:

Celiate! Un dilettante.

Studenti:

A noi, v'invito, banco!

Lescaut:

Carte!

Geronte:

Amico, io pago prima e poche ciarle!
Una carrozza e cavalli che volino sì come il vento. Fra un'ora!

L'Oste:

Signore!

Geronte:

Dietro l'albergo fra un'ora, capite?
Verrano un uomo e una fanciulla.
E via sì come il vento, via verso Parigi!
E ricordate che il silenzio è d'or!

L'Oste:

L'oro adoro.

Geronte:

Bene, bene! Adoratelo e ubbidite.
Or mi dite, questa uscita ha l'osteria solamente?

L'Oste:

Ve n'ha un'altra.

Lescaut: (*with feverish interest*)

(They're gambling! Perhaps I could join them and have a stroke of good luck!)

Students:

Ante up! Cards! An ace!

Lescaut: (*watching them play*)

An ace? My dear sir, play a jack!
You've made a mistake!

Students:

That's right, a jack. You're a master!

Lescaut: (*with exaggerated modesty*)

You're joking! I'm just a beginner.

Students:

Come, I invite you to play! I'm banker!

Lescaut: (*Lescaut joins the game*)

Cards!

Geronte: (*to the innkeeper*)

I'll pay in advance, and keep your mouth shut!
I want a coach and horses that fly like the wind. An hour from now!

Innkeeper:

As you wish, sir!

Geronte: (*unaware Edmondo observes him*)

Behind the inn, an hour from now, understand?
There'll be a man and a young girl.
Then away, off like the wind, to Paris!
Remember, silence is golden!

Innkeeper:

I adore gold.

Geronte: (*giving him a purse*)

Good! Adore it and obey me.
Now tell me. Is this the only way out of the inn?

Innkeeper:

There's another way.

Geronte:

Indicatemi la via.

Geronte:

Show it to me.

*Geronte and the innkeeper leave.***Edmondo:**

Vecchietto amabile, incipriato Pluton sei tu!

La tua Proserpina di resisterti forse avrà virtù?

Edmondo: *(after overhearing Geronte)*

You poor old codger. You're a Pluto with a powdered wig!

Perhaps your Prosperina will be strong enough to resist you?

Des Grieux is approached by Edmondo.

Cavaliere, te la fanno!

Chevalier, they're outwitting you!

Des Grieux:

Che vuoi dir?

Des Grieux:

What do you mean?

Edmondo:

Quel fior dolcissimo che olezzava poco fa, dal suo stel divolto, povero fior, fra poco appassirà!

La tua fanciulla, la tua colomba or vola, or vola: del postiglione suona la tromba.

Via, ti consola: un vecchio la rapisce!

Edmondo: *(ironically)*

That gentle flower, so sweetly fragrant a little while ago, is having her stem uprooted and will soon wither!

Your girlfriend, your white dove, will fly away at the sound of the post-boy's horn.

But don't lose heart; an old man abducts her!

Des Grieux:

Davvero?

Des Grieux:

Is that true?

Edmondo:

Impallidisci? Per Dio, la cosa è seria!

Edmondo:

You're pale? By God, it's a serious matter!

Des Grieux:

Qui l'attendo, capisci?

Des Grieux:

I'm waiting for her here, understand?

Edmondo:

Siamo a buon punto!

Edmondo:

Our timing is good!

Des Grieux:

Salvami!

Des Grieux:

Help me!

Edmondo:

Salvarti? La partenza impedire?

Tentiamo! Senti! Forse ti salvo.

Del gioco morse all'amo il soldato laggiù.

Edmondo:

Help you? Prevent her departure?

Let's try! Listen! Perhaps I can help you.

The soldier is hooked by the gambling.

Des Grieux:

E il vecchio?

Des Grieux:

And the old man?

Edmondo:

Il vecchio?

Oh, il vecchio l'avrà da far con me!

Edmondo:

The old man?

He'll have to deal with me!

*Edmondo disappears among the students. Manon appears at the staircase.
She looks around anxiously, sees des Grieux, and then descends.*

Manon:

Vedete? Io son fedele alla parola mia.
Voi mi chiedeste, con fervida preghiera,
che voi tornassi un'altra volta.
Meglio non rivedervi, io credo
e al vostro prego benignamente opporre il
mio rifiuto.

Manon:

You see? I'm true to my word.
You asked me to return with such ardor,
that I decided that I would indeed return.
But I think it would have been wise
not to see you again, and I should have
politely refused.

Des Grieux:

Oh, come gravi le vostre parole!
Sì ragionar non suole l'età gentile
che v'infiora il viso:
mal s'addice al sorriso che dall'occhio
traluce questo disdegno melanconico!

Des Grieux:

How serious your words are!
The youth that flowers in your face
is in conflict;
with your smile and radiant eyes,
they scorn sadness!

Manon:

Eppur lieta, assai lieta un tempo io fui!
La quieta casetta risonava di mie folli risate,
e colle amiche giocando ne andava a danza!
Ma di gaiezza il bel tempo fuggì!

Manon:

I was once so happy!
Our quiet little house used to resound with
my childish laughter when I used to dance,
but those beautiful days of gaiety are gone!

Des Grieux:

Nelle pupille fulgide profonde sfavilla
il desiderio dell'amore.
Amor ora vi parla!

Des Grieux:

The desire for love sparkles in the depths of
your radiant eyes.
Love now speaks to you!

Andante Amoro**DES GRIEUX**

Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce labbro e il cor. V'amo! V'amo!

Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce
labbro e il core.
V'amo! Quest'attimo di giorno rendete
eterno ed infinito!

Surrender your sweet lips and heart to a new
enchantment.
I love you! Make this blissful moment of the
day eternal and infinite!

Manon:

Una fanciulla povera son io, non ho sul
volto luce di beltà, regna tristezza sul
destino mio.

Manon:

I am a modest girl, and I don't have a
beautiful ray of light shining on my face:
only sadness reigns over my destiny.

Des Grieux:

Vinta tristezza dall'amor sarà!
La bellezza vi dona il più vago avvenir.
O soave persona, mio infinito sospir!

Manon:

No, non è vero!
Ah, sogno gentil, mio sospiro infinito!

Des Grieux:

Love will conquer your sadness!
Your beauty assures you an enchanting future.
Oh gentle lady, my infinite hope!

Manon:

No, it isn't real!
Gentle dream, my infinite hope!

Lescaut, playing cards with the students, raps on the table.

Lescaut:

Non c'è più vino? E che? Vuota è la botte?

Lescaut:

No more wine? What? An empty barrel?

*Manon becomes dismayed at the sound of Lescaut's voice.
She tries to return to the inn, but des Grieux prevents her.*

Des Grieux:

Deh, m'ascoltate: vi minaccia un vile
oltraggio, un rapimento!
Un libertino audace, quel vecchiero che con
voi giunse, una trama a vostro danno ordì.

Manon:

Che dite?

Des Grieux:

Listen to me: you are in danger of a
horrible outrage; an abduction!
That audacious libertine, that old man who
arrived with you, has plotted it.

Manon: (stunned)

What are you saying?

Des Grieux:

Il vero!

Des Grieux:

The truth!

Edmondo:

Il colpo è fatto, la carrozza è pronta.
Che burla colossale! Presto! Partite!

Edmondo: (hurriedly to Des Grieux)

The deed is done. The carriage is ready.
What a colossal joke! Hurry! Leave quickly!

Manon:

Fuggir?

Manon: (surprised)

Run away?

Des Grieux:

Fuggiamo! Che il vostro rapitor un altro sia!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee! I'll be your kidnapper, no other!

Manon:

Voi mi rapite?

Manon:

You will kidnap me?

Des Grieux:

No, vi rapisce amore!

Des Grieux:

No, love kidnaps you!

Manon:

Ah, no!

Manon:

Oh, no!

Des Grieux:

V'imploro!

Des Grieux:

I implore you!

Edmondo:

Presto, via ragazzi!

Edmondo:

Hurry, go!

Des Grieux:

Manon, v'imploro: Fuggiamo!

Des Grieux:

Manon, I implore you. Let's flee!

Manon:

Andiam!

Manon: *(resolutely)*

Let's go!

Edmondo

Oh, che bei pazzi!

Edmondo:

What beautiful craziness!

*Edmondo give his cloak to des Grieux as a disguise, and all run behind the inn.
Geronte appears. He seems pleased as he notices Lescaut intently playing in the card game,
and then cautiously seeks the innkeeper.*

Geronte:

Di sedur la sorellina è il momento!

Via, ardimento!

Il sergente è al gioco intento!

Vi rimanga. Ehi dico: pronta è la cena?

Geronte: *(to himself)*

Now is the time to seduce the little sister!

Come, be brave!

The sergeant is absorbed in the game!

Let him stay here! Is dinner ready?

L'Oste:

Sì, Eccellenza!

Innkeeper:

Yes, your Excellency!

Geronte:

L'annunziate a quella signorina che...

Geronte:

Then announce to the young lady that...

Edmondo:

Quella signorina?

Eccellenza, guardatela!

Essa parte in compagnia d'uno studente.

Edmondo: *(interrupting Geronte)*

That young lady?

Excellency, look!

She's leaving with a student.

Geronte:

L'hanno rapita!

Geronte: *(in great agitation)*

They've abducted her!

Lescaut:

Chi?

Lescaut: *(continuing to gamble)*

Who?

Geronte:

Vostra sorella!

Geronte:

Your sister!

Lescaut:

Che! Mille e mille bombe!

Lescaut: *(rising in agitation)*

What! Thousands of bombshells explode!

Geronte:

L'inseguiamo! È uno studente!

Lescaut:

È inutil! Riflettiamo.
Cavalli pronti avete? Il colpo è fatto!
Dispersarsi è da matto!
Vedo. Manon con sue grazie leggiadre
ha suscitato in voi un affetto di padre.

Geronte:

Non altrimenti!

Lescaut:

E a chi lo dite! Ed io, da figlio rispettoso,
vi do un ottimo consiglio.
Parigi! È là Manon!
Manon già non si perde.
Ma borsa di studente presto rimane al
verde. Manon non vuol miserie!
Manon riconoscente accetterà un palazzo
per piantar lo studente!
Voi farete da padre ad un'ottima figlia ed io
completerò, Signore, la famiglia.
Che diamine! Ci vuole calma, filosofia.
Ecco il vostro tricorno!
E, domattina, in via!
Dunque, dicevo...
A cena e il braccio a me!
Degli eventi all'altezza esser convien!
Perchè...

Edmondo e Studenti:

Venticelli, ricciutelli che spirano fra
vermigli, fiori e gigli,
avventura strana e dura, deh, narrate per
mia fe'!

Assetato labbro aveva coppa piena.
Ber voleva, e avidamente già suggeriva.
Ah, ah, ah!
A volpe invecchiata l'uva fresca e
vellutata
sempre acerba rimarrà.

Geronte:

Let's follow them! It's a student!

Lescaut:

It's useless! Let's think about this.
Do you have horses ready? The deed is done!
It's foolish to despair!
I see that Manon's charming graces have
aroused your fatherly affection.

Geronte:

Nothing less!

Lescaut:

I'm certain of that! Like a respectful son,
I'll give you some excellent advice.
Paris! Manon is off to Paris!
But Manon is not yet lost.
A student's purse will soon be empty,
and Manon does not want poverty!
Manon will gratefully accept a palace and
forsake her student!
You'll play a father to a wonderful daughter,
and I, Sir, will complete the family.
What the devil! One must be calm and
philosophical. Here is your hat!
And tomorrow morning, we'll be on our way!
Therefore, as I was saying...
Let's dine now! Give me your arm!
One must rise to the occasion accordingly!
Because...

Edmondo and Students:

Fragrant breezes, lightly twisting amid the
vermilion, flowers and lilies,
tell us the story of the strange and cruel
adventure!

Thirsty lips drew near a full cup.
To drink brought bliss and pleasure.
Ah, ah, ah!
To an old fox, the young velvet grape will
seem fresh,
but will always remain sour.

The students burst into laughter, and then run off.

END OF ACT I

Act II

*Paris. A sumptuous room in the home of Geronte di Ravoir.
Manon is seated at a dressing table, attended by a hairdresser.*

Manon:

Dispettosetto questo riccio!
Il calamistro, presto! Presto!
Or, la volandola!
Severe un po' le ciglia!
La cerussa!
Lo sguardo vibri a guisa di dardo!
Qua la giunchiglia!

Lescaut:

Buon giorno, sorellina!

Manon:

Il minio e la pomata!.

Lescaut:

Questa mattina mi sembri un po' imbronciata.

Manon:

Imbronciata? Perché?

Lescaut:

No? Tanto meglio!
Geronte ov'è?
Così presto ha lasciato il gineceo?

Manon:

Ed ora, un neo!

Lescaut:

Lo sfrontato! Il birichino!
No? Il Galante!

Manon:

Non saprei.
Ebben, due nei!
All'occhio l'assassino!
e al labbro il voluttuoso!

Manon: *(to the hairdresser)*

This curl is unruly!
The curling iron, quickly!
Now the powder!
Make the eyebrows a little darker!
The base!
My look quivers like an arrow!
Put the jonquil perfume here!

Lescaut: *(upon entering)*

Good morning, little sister!

Manon: *(to the hairdresser)*

The rouge and the pomade!

Lescaut:

This morning you seem a little upset.

Manon:

Gloomy? Why?

Lescaut:

You're not? So much the better!
Where is Geronte?
How come he left your nest so early?

Manon:

And now, a beauty mark!

Lescaut:

The "audacious" one! The "roguish" one!
No? The "flirtatious" one!

Manon:

I'm not sure.
Then, give me two beauty marks!
The "assassin" beside the eye,
and the "volutuous" one near the lips!

The hairdresser finishes; he calls his assistants, and bows to Manon as he leaves.

Lescaut:

Ah! Che insieme delizioso!
 Sei splendida e lucente!
 M'esalto! E n'ho il perchè!
 È mia la gloria se sei salva dall'amor
 d'uno studente.
 Allora che sei fuggita, là, ad Amiens,
 mai la speranza il cor m'abbandonò!

Là, la tua sorte vidi!
 Là il magico fulgor di queste sale balenò.
 T'ho ritrovata!

Lescaut: (*admiringly to Manon*)

What an attractive package you are!
 You look resplendent and radiant!
 I've good reason to be proud of you!
 I have the glory of saving you from the love
 of a student.
 And when you eloped from Amiens, I never
 abandoned hope in my heart!

I saw your destiny!
 I imagined the magic splendor of these rooms.
 I found you again!

Andantino Mosso
LESCAUT



Una casetta angusta era la tua dimora;
 possedevi baci, e niente scudi!
 È un bravo giovinotto quel Des Grieux!
 Ma, ahimè, non è cassiere generale!
 È dunque naturale che tu abbia
 abbandonato per un palazzo aurato
 quell'umile dimora.

You lived in a modest little cottage, with
 many kisses but no money!
 That Des Grieux is a fine young man!
 But it's too bad he's not a rich cashier at a bank!
 So it was right and proper for you to
 abandon that humble dwelling for this
 golden palace.

Manon:

E dimmi.

Manon:

And tell me.

Lescaut:

Che vuoi dire?

Lescaut:

What do you want to know?

Manon:

Nulla!

Manon:

Nothing!

Lescaut:

Nulla? Davver?

Lescaut:

Nothing? Really?

Manon:

Volevo dimandar...

Manon:

I wanted to ask...

Lescaut:

Risponderò!

Lescaut:

I'll answer you!

Manon:
Risponderai?

Lescaut:
Ho inteso!
Nei tuoi occhi io leggo un desiderio.
Se Geronte lo sospettesse!

Manon:
È ver! Hai colto!

Lescaut:
Brami nuove di lui?

Manon:
È ver! L'ho abbandonato
senza un saluto, un bacio!

Manon:
Will you answer?

Lescaut: (*mischievously*)
That's my intension!
I read a desire in your eyes.
If Geronte should suspect it!

Manon:
It's true! You've guessed it!

Lescaut:
You long for news about him?

Manon:
It's true! I left him without a word of good-
bye, without even a kiss!

Moderato con moto
MANON



In quelle trine morbide nell'alcova dorata
v'è un silenzio gelido, mortal, v'è un
silenzio, un freddo che m'agghiaccia!

Ed io che m'ero avvezza a una carezza
voluttuosa, di labbra ardenti e d'infuocate
braccia, or ho tutt'altra cosa!

O mia dimora umile, tu mi ritorni innanzi
gaia, isolata, bianca come un sogno gentile
di pace e d'amor!

Lescaut:
Poichè tu vuoi saper.
Des Grieux, qual già Geronte, è un grande
amico mio.
Ei mi tortura sempre: "Ov'è Manon?
Ove fuggì? Con chi?
A Nord? Ad Est? A Sud?"
Io rispondo: non so!
Ma alfin l'ho persuaso!

In these soft silken drapes and gilded alcove,
there's a cold and deadly silence,
a coldness that freezes me!

Then I had fervent caresses and sensuous
kisses from ardent lips, but now I have
something totally different!

I again think about my humble dwelling,
happy, secluded, and white:
like a gentle dream of peace and of love!

Lescaut:
Since you want to know.
Des Grieux, like Geronte, is a great friend of
mine.
He keeps pestering me: "Where is Manon?
Where has she gone? With whom?
To the North? To the East? To the South?"
I answer that I don't know!
But at last I've persuaded him!

Manon:

Ei m'ha scordata?

Lescaut:

No! No! Ma che vincendo può coll'oro
forse scoprir la via che mena a te!
Or, correggendo la fortuna sta!
L'ho lanciato al giuoco!
Vincerà!

Manon:

Per me tu lotti, per me, vile, che ti lasciai!
che tanto duol ti costai!
Ah! Vieni! Il passato mi rendi,
l'ore fugaci le tue carezze ardenti!
Ah! Rendimi i baci, i baci tuoi cocenti,
quell'ebbrezza che un dì mi beò!
Ah! Vieni! Son bella?
Ah! Vien, resister più non so!

Lescaut:

È il vecchio tavolier per noi tal quale
la cassa del danaro universale!
Da me lanciato e istruito pelerà tutti e tutto!
Ma nel martirio delle lunghe lotte
intanto il dì e la notte vive incosciente della
sua follia, e chiede al giuoco ove tu sia!
Ei vincerà!

Manon: *(surprised)*

Has he forgotten me?

Lescaut:

No! No! But if he wins lots of money,
perhaps he'll find his way back to you!
Now, he's improving his fortune!
I've launched him into gambling!
He will win!

Manon:

You struggle for my love, the worthless
woman who left you! What pain I cost you!
Come! Restore the past, with your
impassioned kisses!
Give me back those burning kisses, the
intoxication that once made me happy!
Come! Am I still beautiful?
Come! I can no longer resist you!

Lescaut:

It's the old game for us: like the strong box
of the world bank!
I taught him how to swindle: to fleece!
But in his suffering struggle, he's unaware
of his folly, and lives day and night asking
where you might be!
He will win!

Pensively, Manon look into the mirror, while her hands unconsciously arrange the folds of her dress. Suddenly, she is overcome with a sense of triumph and addresses Lescaut.

Manon:

Davver che a meraviglia questa veste mi
sta?

Lescaut:

Ti sta a pennello!

Manon:

E il tupé?

Lescaut:

Portentoso!

Manon:

E il busto?

Manon:

Do you think this gown fits me to
perfection?

Lescaut:

It suits you to perfection!

Manon:

And my wig?

Lescaut:

Marvellous!

Manon:

And the bosom?

Lescaut:
Bello!

Lescaut:
Beautiful!

Singers enter with music in their hands. They bow and stand before Manon.

Che ceffi son costor?
Ciarlatani o speziali?

Who are those ugly people?
Charlatans or chemists?

Manon:
Son musicì! È Geronte che fa dei madrigali!

Manon:
They're singers! Geronte composes madrigals!

Coro:
Sulla vetta tu del monte
erri, o Clori: hai per labbra due fiori,
e l'occhio è un fonte.

Chorus:
Chloris, you wander over the peak of your
mountain: your lips are like flowers, and
your eyes are a fountain.

Ohimè! Ohimè! Filen spira ai tuoi piè!
Di tue chiome sciogli al vento il portento,
ed è un giglio il tuo petto bianco, ignudetto.

Alas! Phileneus expires at your feet!
Loosen your wondrous hair in the wind,
and your naked lily-white breast.

Clori sei tu, Manon, ed in Filen,
Geronte si mutò!
Filen suonando sta; la sua zampogna
va sussurrando: pietà!
Il eco sospira: pietà!
Piange Filen: "Cuor non hai Clori in sen?
Ve', già, Filen. Vien, men!"
No! Clori a zampogna che soave implorò
non disse mai no!

Manon, you are Chloris, and Geronte has
become Phileneus!
Phileneus plays his pipes
and whispers: have pity!
But there is only a sighing echo: have pity!
Phileneus weeps: "Chloris, have you no heart?"
See, Phileneus is swooning!
No! Chloris has never refused to come to the
gentle sound of those plaintive pipes!

Manon:
Paga costor!

Manon: (*expressing her boredom*)
Pay these people!

Lescaut:
Oibò! Offender l'arte?
Io v'accomiato in nome della Gloria!

Lescaut:
What! And offend art?
I dismiss you in the name of 'Glory'!

*As the singers depart, Geronte arrives, followed by musicians,
friends, Abbés, and the dancing master.*

Manon:
I madrigali! Il ballo! E poi la musica!
Son tutte belle cose!
Pur, m'annoio!

Manon:
Madrigals, dancing, and then the music!
They're all such beautiful things!
But, they bore me!

*The musicians tune their instruments
while Geronte arranges a Minuet lesson for Manon with the dancing master.*

Lescaut:

Una donnina che s'annoia è cosa
da far paura!

(Andiam da Des Grieux!

È da maestro preparar gli eventi!)

Lescaut: (*philosophically*)

A young woman bored with pleasure flirts
with danger!

(I'm going to find Des Grieux!

I'll arrange events like a master!)

*The dancing master advances toward Manon, and takes her hand
in preparation for the Minuet lesson.*

Maestro di ballo:

Vi prego, signorina, un po' elevato il busto
indi. Ma brava, così mi piace!

Tutta la vostra personcina, or s'avanzi!

Così! Io vi scongiuro, a tempo!

Dancing Master: (*to Manon*)

I beg you, young lady, raise your bust a little.

Very good, that's how I like it!

Now place your lovely little body forward!

Like this! I beg you, keep the tempo!

Geronte:

Oh vaga danzatrice!

Geronte:

Such a lovely dancer!

Manon:

Un po' inesperta.

Manon:

A bit inexperienced.

Maestro di ballo:

Vi prego, non badate a lodi sussurate.

È cosa seria il ballo!

Dancing Master: (*impatiently*)

I beg you, pay no attention to their whispered
praise. Dancing is a serious matter!

Coro:

Tacete! Vi frenate, come si fa da noi;
ammirate in silenzio, in silenzio adorate.

È cosa seria.

Chorus:

Be quiet! Restrain yourselves; admire and
adore her in silence.

It is a serious matter.

Maestro di ballo:

A manca! Brava!

A destra! Un saluto!

Attenta! L'occhialeto!

Dancing Master: (*to Manon*)

To the left! Well done!

To the right! A curtsy!

Attention! The lorgnette!

Geronte:

Minuetto perfetto.

Geronte:

A perfect minuet.

Coro:

Che languore nello sguardo!

Che dolcezza! Che carezza!

Troppo è bella!

Pare stella!

Che candori! Che tesori!

Quella bocca baci scocca!

Se sorride stella pare!

Chorus:

What languor in her looks!

What charm! What caress!

She's too beautiful!

She's like a star!

What purity! What treasures!

Her mouth bursts with kisses!

Here smile is like a shining star!

Geronte:

Tropo è bella! Si ribella la parola e canta e vanta!

Manon:

Lodi aurate, mormorate or mi vibrano d'intorno;
vostri cori adulatori, su, frenate! Ah!

Geronte:

Voi mi fate spasimare, delirare!

Coro:

La deità siete del giorno!
Della notte ell'è regina!

Geronte:

She's too lovely! I both sing and praise her, but my words fail me!

Manon:

A chorus of golden praise vibrates around me;
stop flattering and praising me!

Geronte:

You make me mad with desire!

Chorus:

You are the goddess of dawn!
You are the queen of the night!

The dancing master becomes impatient.

Manon:

Il buon maestro non vuol parole. Se m'adulate non diverrò la diva danzatrice ch'ora già si figura la vostra fantasia troppo felice.

Manon:

The good dancing master dislikes this chatter. If you keep flattering me, I'll never become the good dancer you expect.

Maestro di ballo:

Un cavalier!

Dancing Master:

A partner!

Geronte:

Son qua!

Geronte:

I'm here!

Coro:

Bravi! Che coppia!
Evviva i fortunati innamorati!
Ve' Mercurio e Ciprigna!
Con amore e dovizia.
Oh! Qui letizia con amore e dovizia
leggiadramente alligna!

Chorus:

Well done! What wonderful partners!
Long live the fortunate lovers!
They're like Mercury and Venus!
They're blessed with love and riches.
What a joy it is that they are united with love and riches!

Manon:

"L'ora, o Tirsi, è vaga e bella.
Ride il giorno, ride intorno la fida pastorella.
Te sospira, per te spira.
Ma tu giungi e in un baleno viva e lieta,
è dessa allor!
Ah! Vedi il ciel com'è sereno
sul miracolo d'amor!"

Manon: (sarcastically to Geronte)

"Oh, Tirsi, the beautiful moment has arrived.
Your faithful shepherdess awaits you.
She longs for you, and would die for you.
But you arrive and like a flash of lightning,
she is alive and happy!
Look at the sky; it is so serene from the miracle of love!"

Coro:

Voi siete il miracolo, siete l'amore!
Siete il miracolo d'amor!

Chorus:

You are the miracle; you are love!
You are the miracle of love!

Geronte:

Galanteria sta bene; ma obliate che è tardi. Allegra folla ondeggia pei baluardi.

Coro:

Qui il tempo vola!

Geronte:

È cosa ch'io so per prova.
Voi, mia fulgida letizia, esser compagna
a noi prometteste: di poco vi recediamo

Manon:

Un breve istante sol vi chiedo; attendermi
fia lieve fra il bel mondo dorato.

Coro:

Grave è sempre l'attesa.

Geronte:

Dell'anima sospesa non sian lunghe le
pene.
Ordino la lettiga
Addio, bell'idol mio.

Geronte:

Gallantry is all very well; but it's late, and a gay crowd strolls along the promenades.

Chorus:

How times flies by!

Geronte:

It is something I know from experience.
You, my radiant joy, promised to join us.
We'll go ahead and await you.

Manon:

I'll be along shortly; it will be enjoyable to wait for me among fashionable society.

Chorus:

Waiting is always tedious.

Geronte:

Don't prolong the punishment for those
waiting for you.
I'll order the coach.
Good-bye, my lovely idol.

*Geronte kisses Manon's hand, and leaves with the others.
Alone, Manon admires herself in the mirror.*

Manon:

Oh, sarò la più bella!

Manon:

I shall be the most beautiful!

Manon hears someone approaching and thinks it is a servant.

Dunque questa lettiga?

Has the coach arrived yet?

Des Grieux appears. Manon rushes toward him in great agitation.

Allegro Moderato con Agitazione
MANON

Tu, tu, a - mor - re? Tu? Ah! Mio immenso amo - re?

Tu, tu, amore? Tu?
Ah! Mio immenso amore? Dio!

You, my love? You?
You? My dearly beloved? God!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Manon:

Tu non m'ami dunque più?

M'amavi tanto!

Oh, i lunghi baci!

Oh, il lungo incanto!

La dolce amica d'un tempo aspetta la tua vendetta.

Oh, non guardarmi così non era la tua pupilla tanto severa!

Des Grieux:

Sì, sciagurata, la mia vendetta.

Manon:

Ah! La mia colpa! È vero!

Des Grieux:

Ah! Sciagurata, la mia vendetta.

Manon:

Ah! È vero!

Non m'ami più.

Ah! È vero! Non m'ami dunque più?

M'amavi tanto; non m'ami più!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Manon:

Don't you love me anymore?

You loved me so much!

The long kisses!

The long enchantment!

Your sweetheart of a time past awaits your vengeance.

Don't look at me that way! Your eyes were never so severe!

Des Grieux:

Yes, wretched woman, my vengeance.

Manon:

It's true! It was all my fault!

Des Grieux:

Ah! Wretched woman, my vengeance.

Manon:

It's true!

You don't love me anymore.

It's true! Don't you love me anymore?

You loved me so much; you no longer love me!

**Con amarezza
DES GRIEUX****Des Grieux:**

Taci, taci tu! Il cor mi frangi!

Tu non sai le giornate che buie, desolate
son piombate su me!**Des Grieux:**

Be quiet! You're breaking my heart!

You don't know of the dark, desolate days
that fell upon me.**MANON****Manon:**

Io voglio il tuo perdono.

Vedi! Son ricca.

Manon:

I want your forgiveness.

Look! I'm rich.

Des Grieux:

Taci!

Manon:

Questa non ti sembra una festa d'ori
e di colori?

Tutto è per te.

Des Grieux:

Deh! Taci!

Manon:

Pensavo a un avvenir di luce;
amor qui ti conduce.

T'ho tradito, è ver!

Ai tuoi piedi son!

T'ho tradito!

Sciagurata dimmi, ai tuoi piedi son!

Ah! Voglio il tuo perdono.

Non lo negar!

Son forse della Manon d'un giorno meno
piacente e bella?

Des Grieux:

Be quiet!

Manon: (*showing des Grieux jewels*)

Doesn't this seem like a feast of gold and
bright colors?

It's all yours.

Des Grieux:

Be quiet!

Manon:

I thought about a radiant future;
and love guided you here.

It's true, I betrayed you!

I kneel at your feet!

I betrayed you!

Call me wretched; I kneel before you!

I want your forgiveness.

Don't reject me!

Is it because Manon is less charming and
less beautiful than she used to be?

Moderato
DES GRIEUX



O tenta - tri - ce! O tenta-tri -ce! È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!

Des Grieux:

O tentatrice!

È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!

Des Grieux:

You temptress!

This is your old magic that blinds me again!

Manon:

È fascino d'amor; cedi, son tua!

Manon:

It's the magic of love; yield to it, I'm yours!

Des Grieux:

Più non posso lottar!

Son vinto!

Des Grieux:

I can no longer resist!

I'm conquered!

Manon:

Cedi, son tua.

Ah! Vieni! Colle tue braccia stringi Manon
che t'ama.

Manon: (*seductively*)

Give in, I'm yours.

Come! Embrace Manon in your arms;
Manon who loves you.

Des Grieux:

Non posso lottar, o tentatrice!

Des Grieux:

Temptress, I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Stretta al tuo sen m'allaccia!
Manon te solo brama!

Des Grieux:

Più non posso lottar!

Manon:

Cedi, son tua!

Des Grieux:

Son vinto; io t'amo!
Più non posso lottar!

Manon:

Ah vien!
Manon te solo brama!
Vieni, colle tue braccia stringi Manon
che t'ama!

Manon:

Hold me close to your breast!
Manon yearns only for you!

Des Grieux:

I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Give in, I am yours!

Des Grieux:

I am conquered: I love you!
I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Come!
Manon yearns only for you!
Come, embrace Manon in your arms;
Manon who loves you!

Con tutta la passione
DES GRIEUX

**Des Grieux:**

Nell'occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio
destin; tutti i tesori del mondo ha il tuo
labbro divin!

Des Grieux:

In your profound eyes I read my destiny;
all the treasures of the world are in your
divine lips!

Manon:

Ah! Manon te solo brama,
stretta al tuo sen m'allaccia!
Alle mie brame torna deh! Torna ancor!
I baci miei son questi!
Questo è il mio amor!
Vivi e t'inebria sopra il mio cor!
Deh, torna ancor!
Ah! Vivi e t'inebria sopra il mio cor.
La bocca mia è un altare dove il bacio è Dio!

Manon:

Manon yearns only for you,
so hold me close to your breast!
My yearning for you has returned!
These are my kisses!
This is my love!
Live and intoxicate yourself over my heart!
You have returned!
Live and intoxicate yourself on my heart!
My mouth is an altar where my kiss is God!

Des Grieux:

I baci tuoi son questi!
Questo è il tuo amor!
M'arde il tuo bacio, dolce tesoro!
In te m'inebrio ancor, dolce tesoro!
Nelle tue braccia care v'è l'ebbrezza, l'oblio!

Des Grieux:

These are your kisses!
This is your love!
Your kisses set me on fire, my sweet treasure!
You still intoxicate me, sweet treasure!
There is rapture and oblivion in your arms!

Manon:

Labbra adorate e care!

Des Grieux:

Manon, mi fai morire!

Manon:

Labbra dolci a baciare!

Manon, Des Grieux:

Dolcissimo soffrir!

Manon:

Adored and dear lips!

Des Grieux:

Manon, you make want to die!

Manon:

Sweet lips to kiss!

Manon, Des Grieux:

Sweetest suffering!

*Geronte suddenly appears at the door. Des Grieux moves toward Geronte,
but Manon places herself between them.*

Manon:

Ah!

Manon:

Ah!

Geronte:Affè, madamigella, or comprendo il perchè
di nostr'attesa!

Giungo in mal punto.

Errore involontario!

Chi non erra quaggiù?

Anche voi, credo, ad esempio, obliaste

d'essere in casa mia.

Geronte: (ironically)So, young lady, now I understand the reason
we have been waiting!

I've arrived at an inauspicious moment.

An unwitting mistake!

Who doesn't make mistakes!

And you, do not realize that you are
trespassing by being in my house.**Des Grieux:**

Signore!

Des Grieux:

Sir!

Manon:

Taci!

Manon:

Be quiet!

Geronte:

Gratitudine, sia oggi il tuo dì di festa!

Geronte:

It's a holiday for gratitude!

(to Manon)

Donde vi trassi, le prove che v'ho date

d'un vero amore, come rammentate!

After rescuing you from squalor, this is how
you reward my true affection!**Manon:**

Amore? Amore?

Mio buon signore, ecco! Guardatevi!

Se errai, leale ditelo!

E poi guardate noi!

Manon: (holding a mirror to Geronte)

Love? Love?

My good Sir, here! Look at yourself!

If I am wrong, tell me honestly!

And then look at us!

Geronte:

Io son leale, mia bella donnina.

Conosco il mio dovere deggio partir di qui!

O gentil cavaliere, o vaga signorina,

arrivederci, e presto!

Geronte: (offended and sarcastic)

My pretty young lady, I'll be frank with you.

I know my duty, and I must leave here!

Gallant gentlemen, lovely maiden,

we'll meet again, and very soon!

Manon:

Ah! Ah! Liberi!
Liberi come l'aria!
Che gioia, cavaliere, amor mio bello!

Manon: (*happily*)

Ah! Ah! Liberated!
Free as the air!
What joy, my handsome love!

Des Grieux:

Senti, di qui partiamo: un solo istante,
questo tetto del vecchio maledetto
non t'abbia più!

Des Grieux: (*pensive and sad*)

Listen, we must leave here. You must not
stay another moment under this accursed old
man's roof!

Manon:

Peccato! Tutti questi splendori!
Tutti questi tesori! Ahimè! Dobbiam partir!

Manon:

What a pity! Surrender all these treasures!
Alas, we must leave!

Moderatamente
DES GRIEUX



Ah! Ma-non, mi tra-disce il tuo folle pensier: sempre la stessa, sempre la stessa!

Des Grieux:

Ah! Manon, mi tradisce il tuo folle pensier.
Sempre la stessa!
Trepida divinamente, nell'abbandono
ardente.
Buona e gentile come la vaghezza di quella
tua carezza.
Sempre novella ebbrezza; indi, d'un tratto,
vinta, abbacinata dai raggi della vita dorata!
Io? Tuo schiavo, e tua vittima discendo
la scala dell'infamia.
Fango nel fango io sono e turpe eroe da
bisca m'insozzo, mi vendo.
L'onta più vile m'avvicina a te!
Nell'oscuro futuro di, che farai di me?

Des Grieux:

Manon, you betray me with your foolish
thoughts. You're always the same!
You tremble divinely, in your passionate
surrender.
Good and charming, like the loveliness of
your caress.
Always a new enchantment; then suddenly
you're dazzled by the glitter of the gilded life!
I? I am your slave, and your victim who
descends the ladder of shame.
I am the slime who wallows in slime, selling
my soul to the gambling dens.
The most vile shame draws me to you!
What will you do with me in the dark future?

Manon:

Un'altra volta, un'altra volta ancora,
deh, mi perdona!
Sarò fedele e buona, lo giuro, lo giuro.

Manon:

Once again, one more time, please forgive
me!
I'll be faithful and good. I swear it.

Lescaut enters, breathless and distraught.

Des Grieux:

Lescaut!

Des Grieux:

Lescaut!

Manon:

Tu qui?

Des Grieux:

Che avvenne?

Manon:

Che avvenne?

Des Grieux:

Di'!

Manon:

Di'!

Manon, Des Grieux:

O ciel!

Che è stato?

Ci fa tremar!

Lescaut:

Ch'io prenda flato.

Manon, Des Grieux:

Ci fa tremar!

Lescaut:

Onde, parlar.

Manon, Des Grieux:

O ciel! Che è stato?

Des Grieux:

Di'!

Manon:

Di'!

Lescaut:

V'ha denunziato!

Manon:

Chi?

Des Grieux:

Il vecchio?

Lescaut:

Si!

Manon:

You here?

Des Grieux:

What happened?

Manon:

What happened?

Des Grieux:

Speak!

Manon:

Speak!

Manon, Des Grieux:

Oh Heavens!

What has happened?

You make us tremble!

Lescaut:

Let me catch my breath.

Manon, Des Grieux:

You make us tremble!

Lescaut:

I'll tell you all.

Manon, Des Grieux:

Heavens! What has happened?

Des Grieux:

Speak!

Manon:

Speak!

Lescaut:

He has denounced you!

Manon:

Who?

Des Grieux:

The old man?

Lescaut:

Yes!

Manon:
Ohimè!

Lescaut:
Già vengon qui e guardie e arcier!

Manon:
Ohimè!

Des Grieux:
O ciel!

Lescaut:
Su, cavalier, e per le scale, spiegate l'ale!

Manon:
Ohimè!

Lescaut:
Da un granatiere ch'era in quartiere
tutto ho saputo.
Per le scale, cavalier, spiegate l'ale,
già vengon qui e guardie e arcier!
Via, l'ali ai piè!

Des Grieux:
Maledetto il vecchio astuto!

Manon:
Ohimè, ohimè! M'affretto, ohimè!

Des Grieux:
Sì! Bada a te!

Lescaut:
Ah, non sapete, voi la perdete, ah, non sapete,
l'attende crudele sorte spietata: l'esilio!

Manon:
Ohimè! La morte!

Lescaut:
Or v'affrettate! Non esitate!
Pochi minuti, siete perduti!
Già dal quartier uscian gli arcier!

Manon:
Ohimè! M'affretto!
Un istante! Questo smagliante smeraldo.

Manon:
Oh no!

Lescaut:
Guards and archers are on the way here!

Manon:
Oh no!

Des Grieux:
Oh heavens!

Lescaut:
Get up, Chevalier, and fly down the stairs!

Manon:
Oh no!

Lescaut:
All this information was told to me by an old
friend down at the barracks.
The stairs, and unfold your wings.
Soon archers and guards will be coming!
Go, put wings on your feet!

Des Grieux:
Curse that crafty old scoundrel!

Manon:
I'm hurrying!

Des Grieux:
Yes! Watch out for yourself!

Lescaut:
You don't understand, she'll be lost.
A cruel, pitiless fate awaits her: exile!

Manon:
Alas! Death!

Lescaut:
Hurry up! Don't hesitate!
In a few minutes you'll be lost!
The guards have already left their quarters!

Manon: (*gathering jewels*)
Alas! I'm hurrying!
One moment! This dazzling emerald.

Des Grieux:

Sì, bada a te!
Vecchio vil!
Andiam, andiam!
Affrettiam! Orsù!

Manon:

Ma sì! Mio Dio!
Mi sbrigo!
E tu m'aiuta.

Des Grieux:

A far?

Manon:

Ad involtar...

Lescaut:

Il vecchio vile morrà di bile, se trova vuota
la gabbia e ignota gli sia l'altra dimora!
Manon! Suvvia, son già per vial.

Des Grieux:

Andiam, andiam!

Manon:

Ma sì! E tu m'aiuta ad involtar cotesti
oggetti! Vuota i cassetti!

Des Grieux:

Orsù affrettiam!
Andiam, Manon!

Lescaut:

Oh il bel forzier!
Peccato inver!
Nostro cammino sarà il giardino.
In un istante dell'alte piante sotto
l'ombria siam sulla via.
Buon chi ci piglia!

Manon:

E quest'incanto che adoro tanto dovrò
lasciare, abbandonare?

Des Grieux:

O mia diletta Manon, t'affretta!
D'uopo è partir, tosto fuggir!
Torturar mi vuoi ancor!

Des Grieux:

Yes, watch out!
That old man is vile!
Let's go!
Let's hurry! Come on!

Manon:

But yes! My God!
I'm hurrying!
But you help me!

Des Grieux:

To do what?

Manon:

To wrap up...

Lescaut:

The old monster will drop dead when he
finds empty cabinets, and can't find Manon!
Manon! Hurry, they're already on the way.

Des Grieux:

Let's go!

Manon:

All right! Help me wrap these things!
Empty the drawers!

Des Grieux:

Let's go! Hurry up!
Let's go, Manon!

Lescaut:

Oh the beautiful strongbox!
It's a shame to leave it here!
We'll take the path through the garden.
In a moment, we'll be hidden under the
shelter of those tall plants and on our way.
It'll be impossible for them to catch us!

Manon: (with sadness)

And this enchantment I adore so much.
Do I have to leave it here?

Des Grieux:

Oh my dearest Manon, hurry!
We must leave soon, and escape right away!
You're torturing me again!

Manon:

Saria imprudenza lasciar quest'oro,
o mio tesoro!

Des Grieux:

Con te portar dei sol il cor! Ah!
Io vo'salvar solo il tuo amor.

Manon:

My darling, it would be unwise to leave this
gold!

Des Grieux:

Just bring your heart! I only want to save
your love.

During all the confusion, Manon rushes about the room, packing jewels in her cloak.

Lescaut:

Maledizion!

Lescaut:

Curses!

Manon:

Ah!

Manon:

Ah!

Lescaut:

Eccoli, accerchian la casa!

Lescaut:

Here they are, surrounding the house!

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Manon:

Des Grieux! Di qua! Di là!
Fuggiam! Ebben di là!

Manon:

Des Grieux! Through here! Through there!
Let's flee! Well then, through there!

Des Grieux:

Fuggiam! Fuggiam! No! No!
Di là! Presto! Presto!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee! No! No!
Through there! Hurry! Hurry!

Lescaut:

Il vecchio ordina, sbraita, le guardie sfilano.

Lescaut:

Geronte's ordering the guards to file through.

Manon:

Ohimè!

Manon:

Alas!

Des Grieux:

Fuggiam!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee!

Lescaut:

Gli arcieri s'appostano!
Entrano, salgono! Eccoli!

Lescaut:

The guards are taking their places!
They're entering, coming up! Here they are!

Des Grieux:

Dimmi, qui v'è un'uscita?

Des Grieux:

Tell me, is there another exit?

Manon:

Sì! Aggiù all'alcova!

Manon:

Yes! Behind the alcove!

Lescaut:
Eccoli, eccoli, salgono, salgono!

Lescaut:
Here they are, they're coming up!

Manon:
Ah! Ah!

Manon:
Ah! Ah!

*The door bursts open, and a sergeant appears with guards and soldiers.
Geronte stands at the doorway, smiling sardonically.*

Sergente:
Nessun si muova!

Sergeant:
No one move!

Geronte:
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Geronte:
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Des Grieux draws his sword, but Lescaut disarms him.

Lescaut:
Se v'arrestan, cavalier, chi potrà Manon
salvar?

Lescaut:
If they arrest you, who will be able to save
Manon?

Des Grieux:
O Manon! O mia Manon!

Des Grieux:
Oh Manon! Oh my Manon!

Manon is dragged off by the soldiers.

END OF ACT II

INTERMEZZO

The Imprisonment - the journey to Le Havre (from the novel by Abbé Prévost).

Des Grieux:
“Gli è che io l'amo!
La mia passione è così forte che io mi sento
la più sfortunata creatura che viva.
Quello che non ho io tentato a Parigi
per ottenere la sua libertà!
Ho implorato i potenti!
Ho picchiato e supplicato a tutte le porte!

Des Grieux:
“The fact is that I love her!
My passion is so strong that I feel like the
most unfortunate creature alive.
In Paris, I tried unsuccessfully to obtain her
freedom!
I begged the powerful!
I have beaten and supplicated at their doors!

Persino alla violenza ho ricorso!
Tutto fu inutile.
Una sol via mi rimaneva: seguirla!
Ed io la seguo!
Dovunque ella vada!
Fosse pure in capo al mondo!”

I even turned to violence as a recourse!
It was all futile.
Only one path remains open: to follow her!
And I will follow it!
Wherever she may go!
Even to the ends of the earth!”

The above speech is in the score, but rarely spoken in performance.

Act III

*At the harbor of Le Havre, just before dawn.
In the foreground, a barred window projecting from the prison.*

Des Grieux:

Ansia eterna, crudel.

Lescaut:

Pazienza ancora.

La guardia là fra poco monterà l'arcier che
ho compro.

Des Grieux:

L'attesa m'accora!

La vita mia, l'anima tutta è là!

Lescaut:

Manon sa già, e attende il mio segnale e a
noi verrà.

Io intanto cogli amici il colpo tenterò.

Manon all'alba libera farò.

Des Grieux:

Dietro al destino mi traggo livido,
e notte e dì cammino.

E un miraggio m'angoscia e m'esalta!

Vicino or m'è, poi fugge se l'avvinghio!

Parigi ed Havre, fiera, triste agonia!

Oh, lungo strazio della vita mia!

Lescaut:

Vengono.

Des Grieux:

Alfin!

Des Grieux:

Eternal, cruel anxiety.

Lescaut:

Have patience.

The guard I have bribed will soon be on
duty.

Des Grieux:

The waiting breaks my heart!

My life and soul, is there!

Lescaut:

Manon already knows, and she is waiting
for my signal.

Meanwhile, my friends and I will try to
rescue her. At dawn, I'll free Manon.

Des Grieux:

A dark destiny pursues me,
during day and night.

It is an illusion that torments and excites me!

It seems near, but then it vanishes!

Paris and Le Havre: a grim and sad agony!

My life has become prolonged anguish!

Lescaut:

They're coming.

Des Grieux:

Finally!

A sergeant changes the sentinel.

Lescaut:

Ecco là l'uomo. È quello!

È l'Havre addormentata. L'ora è giunta.

Lescaut:

That's the man. It's that one!

Le Havre is asleep. The hour has come.

Lescaut gestures to the sentinel, who then retires. As des Grieux watches anxiously,

Lescaut taps cautiously on the prison window bars.

Manon appears at the window. Des Grieux runs towards her.

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Manon:

Des Grieux!

Lescaut:

Al diavolo l'America! Manon non partirà!

Manon:

Tu, amore? Nell'onta non mi abbandoni?

Des Grieux:

Abbandonarti? Mai!

Se t'ho seguita per la lunga via
fu perchè fede mi regnava in core.
Fra poco mia sarai.

Manon:

Fra poco! Tua, fra poco!

Des Grieux:

Taci!

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Manon:

Des Grieux!

Lescaut:

To hell with America! Manon shall not leave!

Manon:

You, my love? You haven't forsaken me in
my shame?

Des Grieux:

Forsake you? Never!

I followed you on this long dangerous road
because my heart remained faithful.
Soon you'll be mine.

Manon:

Soon! Yours, soon!

Des Grieux:

Be quiet!

A lamplighter sings a tune as he extinguishes lamps in the square.

Il Lampionaio:

E Kate rispose al Re:

D'una zitella perchè tentare il cor?

Per un marito mi fe' bella il Signor.

Rise il Re, poi le die' gemme ed or

e un marito, e n'ebbe il cor.

The Lamplighter:

And Kate replied to the King:

"Why tempt a poor maid's heart?

The Lord made me beautiful for a husband."

The King laughed, and then he gave her

jewels and a husband; he won her heart.

As the lamplighter leaves, day dawns.

Des Grieux:

È l'alba! O mia Manon,

pronta alla porta del cortile sii tu!

V'è là Lescaut con uomini devoti.

Là vanne, e tu sei salva!

Des Grieux:

It's dawn! Oh my Manon, be ready at the
gates of the courtyard!

Lescaut will be there with loyal men.

They'll find you and you'll be rescued!

Manon:

Tremo per te! Tremo! Pavento!

Tremo e m'angoscio, nè so il perchè!

Ah, una minaccia funebre io sento!

Tremo a un pericolo che ignoto m'è.

Manon:

I fear for you! I tremble! I fear!

I tremble and I'm anxious! I don't know why!

Ah, I sense a deadly menace!

I tremble at omens of unknown danger!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon, disperato è il mio prego!
L'affanno la parola mi spezza.
Vuoi che m'uccida qui?
Ti scongiuro, Manon, ah vieni! Salviamoci!

Manon:

E sia! Chiedimi tutto!
Son tua, m'attendi, amore!.

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon, I plead to you in desperation!
My words are broken by grief.
Do you want me to kill myself here?
Manon, I beg you, come! Let's save ourselves!

Manon:

So be it! I'll do everything you ask.
I'm yours, wait for me, my love!

*The sound of a gunshot is heard, and shouts of "All'armi!" ("To arms!")
Lescaut comes running from the street, sword in hand.*

Lescaut:

Perduta è la partita!
Cavalier, salviam la vita!

Lescaut:

The game is lost!
Chevalier, let's run for our lives.

Des Grieux:

Che avvenne?

Des Grieux:

What happened?

Lescaut:

Udite come strillano!
Fallito è il colpo!

Lescaut:

Listen to them screaming!
Our plan has failed!

Des Grieux:

Venga la morte!
Fuggir? Giammai!

Des Grieux:

Then death is welcome!
Escape? Never!

Lescaut:

Ah, pazzo inver!

Lescaut:

You're indeed mad!

Manon:

Se m'ami, in nome di Dio, t'invola, amor mio!

Manon:

My love, if you love me, in the name of God, you must escape!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Lescaut:

Cattivo affare!

Lescaut:

A bad turn of events!

Citizens and villagers arrive in the square, curious about the gunshot they heard.

Borghesi, Uomini e Donne:

Udiste! Che avvenne? Fu un ratto?
Rivolta? Fuggiva una donna! Più d'una!
La folta tenebra protesse laggiù i rapitori!

Citizens and People:

You heard! What happened? Was it a rape?
A revolt? A woman escaped! More than one!
The dark night protected the kidnapper!

Drums signal the arrival of a Sergeant and soldiers. The Sergeant orders the crowd to stand back as his prisoners, mostly women in chains, are brought to the gate.

Il Sergente:

Il passo m'apprite!

Sergeant:

Make way for the prisoners!

The Captain of the ship appears with his crew of sailors.

Comandante:

È pronta la nave. L'appello affrettate!

Captain:

The ship is ready. Hurry up with the roll-call!

Borghesi, Uomini e Donne:

Silenzio! L'appello cominciano già.

Citizens, Men and Women:

Quiet! They're now beginning the roll-call.

**Il Sergente:**

Rosetta!

Sergeant:

Rosetta!

Giovanotti:

Eh, che aria!

Young Men:

What an air!

Altri:

È un amore!

Others:

She's a charmer!

Il Sergente:

Madelón!

Sergeant:

Madelón!

Alcuni Borghesi:

Ah, qui sei ridotta!

Some Citizens:

Ah, here you are humiliated!

Alcune donne:

Che riso insolente!

Some women:

What insolent laughter!

Il Sergente:

Manon!

Sergeant:

Manon!

Alcuni vecchi:

Chissà? Una sedotta.

Some old men:

Who is she? A seduced woman.

Il Sergente:

Ninetta!

Sergeant:

Ninetta!

Donne:

Madonna è dolente!

Women:

The lady is downcast!

Il Sergente:

Caton!

Giovanotti:

Affè, che dolore!

Il Sergente:

Regina!

Altri:

Che incesso!

Il Sergente:

Claretta!

Altri:

È una dea!

Il Sergente:

Violetta!

Altri:

Ah questa vorrei!

Il Sergente:

Nerina!

Altri:

Che bionda!

Il Sergente:

Elisa!

Altri:

Che bruna!

Il Sergente:

Ninon!

Altri:

Che splendidi nèi!

Il Sergente:

Giorgetta!

Altri:

Di vaghe nessuna!

Che gaia assemblea!

Sergeant:

Caton!

Young men:

Indeed, how sorrowful!

Sergeant:

Regina!

Others:

What pride!

Sergeant:

Claretta!

Others:

She's a goddess!

Sergeant:

Violetta!

Others:

I would like this one!

Sergeant:

Nerina!

Others:

What a blonde!

Sergeant:

Elisa!

Others:

What a brunette!

Sergeant:

Ninon!

Others:

What splendid beauty marks!

Sergeant:

Giorgetta!

Others:

Her beauty's fading!

What a gay assemblage!

Borghesi:

È bella davvero!

Lescaut:

Costei? V'è un mistero!

Borghesi:

Sedotta? Tradita?

Lescaut:

Costei fu rapita fanciulla all'amore d'un vago garzone.

Borghesi:

Che infamie, che orrore!

Altri:

Ah! Fa compassione.

Lescaut:

Rapita alle nozze e all'orgia
ed a sozze carezze gittata!

Borghesi:

Ah! Sempre così!

Lescaut:

Pel gaudio d'un dì di vecchio signore.
Poi, sazio, cacciata!
Vedete quel pallido che presso le sta?
Lo sposo è quel misero.

Borghesi:

Ah! Inver fa pietà!

Lescaut:

Così, fra catene, nel fango avvilita,
rivede e rinviene la sposa rapita!

*Des Grieux approaches Manon, cautiously concealing himself behind her.
Manon sees him, tries to suppress her joy, and both clasp each other's hands.*

Manon:

Des Grieux, fra poco lungi sarò.
Questo è il destino mio.
E te perduto per sempre avrò!
Ultimo bene! Addio!
Alla tua casa riedi!
Un giorno potrai ancor amar!

Townspeople: (looking at Manon)

She's quite beautiful!

Lescaut: (answering the townspeople)

This one? It's a mystery!

Townspeople:

Seduced? Betrayed?

Lescaut:

As a young woman she was abducted from her handsome lover.

Townspeople:

What a disgrace! What a horror!

Others:

She deserves compassion.

Lescaut:

She was abducted from her wedding and thrown to a lecherous old man!

Villagers:

That's always the case!

Lescaut:

An old libertine stole her for a day's pleasure.
Then satisfied, he discarded her!
Do you see that pale young man near her?
That unfortunate man is her husband.

Townspeople:

It truthfully deserves pity!

Lescaut:

This is how he finds and sees his ravished wife again: in chains and degraded in the mud!

Manon:

Des Grieux, soon I'll be far away.
It is my destiny.
And I will have lost you forever!
Farewell, my last treasure!
Return to your home!
One day you will love again!

Devi Manon scordar!
 Forse abbastanza non fosti amato!
 Questo è il rimorso mio!
 Ma tu perdona, mio amor, ah!
 Amore immenso, addio!

Des Grieux:

Guardami e vedi com'io soggiaccio a questa
 angoscia amara, ah!
 Ogni pensiero si scioglie in pianto!

Manon:

Ora a tuo padre dei far ritorn!
 Devi Manon scordar! Mio amor, addio!

Des Grieux:

Ah! M'ho nell'animo l'odio soltanto degli
 uomini di Dio!

You must forget Manon!
 Perhaps I didn't love you enough!
 This is my remorse!
 But you have forgiven me, my love!
 My immense love, farewell!

Des Grieux:

Look at me and see how I surrender to this
 bitter anguish!
 Every thought turns into tears!

Manon:

You must return to your father!
 You must forget Manon! Farewell, my love!

Des Grieux:

In my soul, I have hatred in the name of
 humanity and of God!

The Sergeant marshals the women into single file to board the ship.

Il Sergente:

Presto! In fila! Marciate!
 Costui qui ancor? Finiamola!

Sergeant:

Quickly! March in file!
 (Seizing Manon, and seeing Des Grieux)
 You still here? Let's put an end to this!

*The Sergeant seizes Manon roughly by the arm. Des Grieux loses his control
 and wrenches Manon from the Sergeant's grasp.*

Des Grieux:

Indietro!

Des Grieux:

Stand back!

Il Sergente:

Via!

Sergeant:

Go away!

Borghesi:

Coraggio!

Villagers:

What courage!

Des Grieux:

Ah, guai a chi la tocca!
 Manon, ti stringi a me!

Des Grieux:

Woe to anyone who dares to touch her!
 Manon, stay close to me!

Borghesi:

Così! Bravo!

Villagers:

What bravery!

Comandante:

Che avvien?

Captain:

What's happening?

Des Grieux:

Ah, non vi avvicinate!
 Che, vivo me, costei nessun strappar potrà!

Des Grieux:

Don't come closer!
 So long as I live, nobody will tear her away
 from me!

*Des Grieux is overcome with emotion. He loosens Manon from his grasp,
 and then falls at the feet of the Captain.*

No! Pazzo son!

No! I'm insane!

Largo sostenuto
DES GRIEUX



Guarda - te, paz - zo son, guarda - te, com'io piango e implo - ro

Guardate, pazzo son, come io piango e
 imploro, com'io chiedo pietà!

Udite!

M'accettate qual mozzo od a più vile
 mestiere ed io verrò felice!

Vi pigliate il mio sangue, la vita!

Ah, ingrato non sarò!

Look, I'm insane, look how I weep and
 implore you, how I beg for pity!

Listen!

Take me with you as a cabin boy, or for any
 menial work; I'll gladly come!

Take my blood, my life!

I won't be ungrateful!

Comandante:

Ah, popolar le Americhe, giovinotto, desiate?

Ebben, sia pure!

Via! Mozzo, v'affrettate!

Captain:

So you want to populate the Americas?

Well, let it be!

Go, cabin boy, and hurry up!

END OF ACT III

Act IV

*In America. A vast desert plain near New Orleans. The horizon is in the distance.
The sky is overcast. Night is falling.*

*Manon and des Grieux are dishevelled and fatigued.
Manon is weak and exhausted, and leans on des Grieux for support.*

Des Grieux:

Tutta su me ti posa, o mia stanca diletta.
La strada polverosa, la strada maledetta al
termine s'avanza.

Manon:

Innanzi ancor!
L'aria d'intorno or si fa scura.
Erra la brezza nella gran pianura e muore il
giorno.
Innanzi! No...

Des Grieux:

Lean on me, my tired beloved.
Soon, we'll leave this dusty and accursed
road behind us.

Manon:

Let's still move onward!
The air around us darkens.
The breeze wanders over the great plain, and
daylight is ending.
Let's move onward! No...

Manon falls to the ground, exhausted.

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Des Grieux: (in anguish)

Manon!

Manon:

Son vinta! Mi perdona!
Tu sei forte, t'invidio.
Donna e debole, cedo.

Manon: (her voice faint)

I'm finished! Forgive me!
You are strong, I envy you.
I'm a feeble woman. I'm fainting..

Des Grieux

Tu soffri?

Des Grieux:

Are you suffering?

Manon:

Orribilmente! No! Che dissi?
Una vana, una stolta parola.
Deh, ti consola!
Chieggo breve riposo, un solo istante.
Mio dolce amante, a me t'appressa, a me!

Manon:

Terribly! No! What did I say?
Vain, foolish words.
Take heart!
I beg you for a brief rest, just a moment.
My sweet lover, come near me!

Des Grieux:

Manon, senti, amor mio.
Non mi rispondi, amore?

Des Grieux:

Manon, my love, listen to me.
My love, you don't answer?

Andante Espressivo con Moto

Vedi, son io che piango, io che imploro,
io che carezza e bacio i tuoi capelli d'oro!

Look, it is I who weeps and implores you,
I who kisses and caresses your golden hair!

Ah, Manon! Rispondi a me! Tace!
Maledizione! Crudel febbre l'avvince!
Disperato mi vince un senso di sventura,
un senso di tenebre e di paura!
Rispondimi, amor mio! Tace!
Manon, non mi rispondi?

Ah, Manon! Answer me! She is silent!
Curses! A cruel fever grips her!
I'm despairing, overcome by misfortune, and
a sense of darkness and fear.
Answer me, my beloved! She's silent!
Manon, why don't you answer?

Manon

Sei tu, sei tu che piangi?
Sei tu, sei tu che implori?
I tuoi singulti ascolto e mi bagnano il volto
le tue lagrime ardenti.
La sete mi divora. O amore, aita!

Manon:

Is it you who is weeping?
Is it you who implores me?
I hear your sobs, and your impassioned tears
drench my face.
I'm being consumed by thirst. Darling, help me!

Des Grieux:

O amor, tutto il mio sangue per la tua vita!

Des Grieux:

Oh beloved, I'd give my blood for your life!

Des Grieux rises and scans the horizon.

E nulla! Arida landa, non un filo d'acqua.
O immoto cielo!
O Dio, a cui fanciullo anch'io levai la mia
preghiera, un soccorso!

There's nothing! Just barren land and not a
trace of water. Oh heartless Heaven!
God, to whom I prayed as a child, give us
your help!

Manon:

Sì, un soccorso! Tu puoi salvarmi.
Senti, qui posero.
E tu scruta il mister dell'orizzonte,
e cerca monte o casolar.
Oltre ti spingi e con lieta favella!
Lieta novella poi vieni a recar.

Manon:

Yes, help! You can save me.
Listen, I'll rest here.
You explore the horizon, look for a hill or a
cabin.
Use your utmost strength, and afterwards
come back with good news and happy words.

Des Grieux hesitates to leave Manon. He finds a place for her to rest, remains a while undecided, and then goes out into the desert.

As the sky darkens, Manon pours out her distress and fear.

**Con la massima espressione
e con angoscia
MANON**



Sola, perduta, abbandonata in landa
desolata. Orrore!
Intorno a me s'oscura il ciel.
Ahimè, son sola!
E nel profondo deserto io cado, strazio
crudel,
ah sola, abbandonata, io, la deserta donna.
Ah, non voglio morire!
Tutto dunque è finito!

Terra di pace mi sembrava questa.
Ahi, mia beltà funesta, ire novelle accende!
Strappar da lui mi si voleva,
or tutto il mio passato orribile risorge
e vivo innanzi al guardo mio si posa.
Ah, di sangue ei s'è macchiato!
Ah, tutto è finito!
Asil di pace ora la tomba invoco.
No, non voglio morire!

Alone, lost and forsaken in this desolate
land. What a horror!
The sky darkens around me.
Alas, I'm alone!
I die in the depths of the desert, a cruel
torture,
alone and forsaken. I, the deserted woman.
Ah, I don't want to die!
It is all over for me!

This seemed like a land of peace.
My fatal beauty aroused new anguish!
They wanted to tear me away from him,
and now my horrible past resurges and
comes to life.
Ah, it is stained with blood!
It is all over!
I beg for the grave, a peaceful asylum.
I don't want to die!

Des Grieux returns. Manon falls into his arms.

Amore, aita!
Fra le tue braccia, amore.
L'ultima volta! Apporti tu novella lieta?

Des Grieux:

Nulla rinvenni, l'orizzonte nulla mi rivelò,
lontano spinsi lo sguardo invano.

Manon:

Muoio, scendon le tenebre.
Su me la notte scende.

Des Grieux:

Un funesto delirio ti percuote, t'offende!
Posa qui dove palpito, in me ritorna ancor.

My love, help me!
In your arms, my love.
For the last time! Do you have good news?

Des Grieux:

I found nothing. The horizon revealed
nothing. I searched far and wide in vain.

Manon:

I'm dying. The shadows are closing in.
Night descends upon me.

Des Grieux:

You're delirious frenzy overcomes you!
Rest on my heart until you recover.

Manon:

Oh, t'amo tanto e muoio.
Già la parola manca al mio voler.
Ma posso dirti che t'amo tanto! Oh, amore!
Ultimo incanto, ineffabile ebbrezza,
o mio estremo desir!

Manon:

I love you so much, and I'm dying.
Words have already failed me, and I have no will.
But I can tell you that I love you so much!
My darling, my delight and treasure,
my ultimate desire!

Manon begins to faint. Des Grieux desperately tries to support her.

Des Grieux:

Gelo di morte! Dio, l'ultima speme
infrangi!

Des Grieux:

The chill of death! God, you have shattered
my last hope!

Manon:

Mio dolce amor, tu piangi.
Ora non è di lagrime, ora di baci è questa.
Il tempo vola, baciami!

Manon:

My sweet beloved, you're crying.
This is not the time for tears, but kisses.
Time is flying by. Kiss me!

Des Grieux:

E vivo ancor! Infamia!

Des Grieux:

And I still live! Disgraceful!

Manon:

Io vo' che sia una festa di divine carezze di
novissime ebbrezze per me la morte.

Manon:

For my death, I want you to shower me with
divine kisses and embraces.

Des Grieux:

O immensa delizia mia, tu fiamma d'amore
eterna.

Des Grieux:

Oh my supreme treasure, the flame of
eternal love.

Manon:

La fiamma si spegne. Parla, deh, parla,
ahimè, più non t'ascolto.
Qui, vicino a me, voglio il tuo volto.
Così, mi baci, ancor ti sento.

Manon:

The flame is dying. Speak to me my love,
alas, I can no longer hear you.
Here, near me, I want you face.
In this way, kiss me, and I feel you again.

Des Grieux:

Senza di te, perduto, ti seguirò.

Des Grieux:

I'm lost without you. I'll follow you.

Manon:

Non voglio! Addio, cupa è la notte, ho
freddo.
Era amorosa la tua Manon?
Rammenti? Dimmi, la luminosa mia
giovinezza?
Il sole più non vedrò.

Manon:

I forbid it! Farewell, the night is dark, and I
am cold.
Was your Manon loving?
Remember? Tell me, was it the splendor of
my youth?
I won't see the sun anymore.

Des Grieux:

Mio Dio!

Des Grieux:

My God!

Manon:

Le mie colpe, travolgerà l'oblio,
ma l'amor mio, non muore.

Manon:

My faults will be forgotten, but my love will
never die.

*Manon dies. Des Grieux, tortured by despair, breaks into tears,
and then falls on the corpse of Manon.*

END OF OPERA

La bohème

Opera in Italian in four acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica,
adapted from the novel and play by Henri Murger,
Scènes de la vie de bohème (“Scenes from Bohemian Life”)**

**Premiere: Teatro Reggio, Turin, Italy,
February 1, 1896**

Principal Characters in La bohème

Marcello, a painter	Baritone
Rodolfo, a poet	Tenor
Colline, a philosopher	Bass
Schaunard, a musician	Baritone
Mimi, a seamstress	Soprano
Musetta, a singer	Soprano
Benoit, the landlord	Bass
Alcindoro, a state councilor	Bass
Parpignol, a vendor	Tenor

Students, townspeople, shopkeepers,
street-vendors, soldiers, waiters, and children.

TIME: about 1830

PLACE: Paris

Story Synopsis

It is Christmas Eve. Rodolfo, a poet, gazes out the window of his garret studio at the snow-covered rooftops of Paris while his friend Marcello works on a painting. Both artists have no money and are starving. To provide heat, Rodolfo feeds one of his manuscripts to the stove. Two friends arrive: Colline, a philosopher, and Schaunard, a musician, the latter bringing food and wine. Benoit, the landlord, arrives to collect the overdue rent, but he is quickly dispatched after they fill him with wine and express mock outrage when he reveals his amorous exploits.

Marcello, Colline, and Schaunard go off to the Café Momus to celebrate Christmas Eve, but Rodolfo remains behind to finish a manuscript. His neighbor, Mimi, knocks on the door, seeking a light for her extinguished candle. She is seized by a coughing fit and faints, and Rodolfo revives her. Suddenly, Rodolfo and Mimi fall in love.

In the Latin Quarter, Rodolfo buys Mimi a bonnet; Colline buys a secondhand overcoat; and Schaunard bargains over the cost of a pipe and horn. All sit at a table at the Café Momus and order lavish dinners.

Musetta, Marcello's former sweetheart, arrives, accompanied by the elderly Alcindoro. While Alcindoro goes off to buy Musetta a pair of new shoes, Musetta succeeds in luring Marcello to become sweethearts again. Unable to pay for their dinners, the bohemians sneak away amidst the passing military retreat. Alcindoro returns to find no Musetta, but only the bohemians' exorbitant dinner bill.

Mimi and Rodolfo have argued incessantly, causing Rodolfo to move to an inn where Marcello and Musetta reside. Mimi seeks and finds Marcello, and reveals that Rodolfo's petty jealousies have tormented their love affair; she begs him to help them separate. When Rodolfo appears, Mimi hides, only to be given away by a fit of

coughing. The lovers reunite and decide to remain together until spring, while Musetta and Marcello quarrel vociferously.

Back in their garret, Rodolfo and Marcello are bachelors again, nostalgically reminiscing about the wonderful times they shared with their sweethearts. Colline and Schaunard arrive, and all the bohemians rollick and engage in horseplay, temporarily forgetting about their misfortunes.

Musetta announces that Mimì has arrived, and that she is deathly ill. Musetta sends Marcello to sell her earrings for money to buy medicine, get a doctor, and buy a muff to warm Mimì's freezing hands; Colline goes off to sell his treasured coat.

The two lovers, left by themselves, reminisce about their first meeting. While Mimì sleeps, she dies. The grief-stricken Rodolfo is shattered, unable to cope with the death of Mimì and the death of love.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: Christmas Eve. A garret overlooking the snow-covered roofs of Paris.

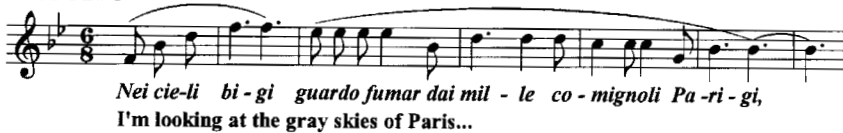
La bohème begins without overture or prelude; its brief opening music conveys the lighthearted, carefree spirit of the bohemian artists.

Allegro vivace



These young artists are poverty-stricken and nearly destitute. It is freezing in the garret because they have no money for firewood. Marcello, a painter, is huddled near an easel with his painting, "Crossing of the Red Sea," a work he never seems to be able to finish; Rodolfo, a poet, tries to work on a manuscript.

Both artists are hungry, cold, and uninspired. Rodolfo stares out the garret window, and observes that smoke rises from every chimney but their own.

*“Nei cieli bigi guardo fumar dai mille comignoli Parigi”***Allegro vivace****RODOLFO**

The scene is transformed into humor and mayhem when the two freezing artists try to find ways to generate heat from their stove. They ponder their options: burn a chair for firewood, throw in Marcello's painting, or sacrifice an act from Rodolfo's drama.

While Rodolfo's doomed play goes into the flames, Colline, a philosopher, arrives; he notes how quickly the fire has expired by using Rodolfo's manuscript as fuel, cynically proclaiming that "brevity is a great asset" (literally, "brevity is the soul of wit").

Schaunard, a musician-friend, triumphantly arrives with provisions: beef, pastry, wine, tobacco, and firewood.

Schaunard's theme:**Allegro**

The ecstatic bohemians celebrate boisterously. Schaunard explains his sudden wealth: he received money from an eccentric Englishman, who paid him an outrageous sum to play to a neighbor's noisy parrot until it dropped dead; he actually succeeded in killing the parrot not through his music, but by feeding it poisoned parsley.

The landlord, Benoit, arrives to collect his long-overdue rent. To divert him, the bohemians ply him with wine, which, together with flattery, inspire him to boast about his amorous and indiscreet exploits with young women. The bohemians pretend mock outrage as they dismiss him, their rent payment temporarily deferred.

Marcello, Colline, and Schaunard leave for the Café Momus to celebrate Christmas Eve. Rodolfo decides to stay behind awhile in order to complete an article for a magazine.

Alone, Rodolfo is lethargic and unmotivated. As he throws down his pen, he is suddenly interrupted by a timid knock on the door. It is his beautiful neighbor Mimi; the fragile woman is exhausted and out of breath from climbing the stairs. Mimi's candle has extinguished because of the hallway drafts, and she seeks light to find her way to her room.

Mimi's coughing indicates that she is ill. But their first meeting has aroused love. Both become nervous and fidgety; a candle blows out, a candle is re-lit, and

then the candle blows out again. Mimì faints, and Rodolfo revives her with sprinkles of water and sips of wine.

Just as Mimì is about to leave, she accidentally drops her key, and both grope for it in the dark. Rodolfo finds the key, and without Mimì's knowing it, he places it into his pocket. Their hands meet in the dark, and Rodolfo notices how cold her hand is.

“Che gelida manina, se la lasci riscaldar”

Andantino affettuoso

RODOLFO



Che ge - li - da ma - ni - na, se la la-sci ris-cal - dar,
How cold your little hand is! Let me warm it for you.

Mimì's presence has inspired the struggling poet. He tells Mimì about himself: he is poor, but with his rhymes, dreams, and visions, he has the soul of a millionaire. Then Rodolfo admits that Mimì has captivated him; his words are underscored with the sweeping and sumptuous signature music of the opera.

Rodolfo: “Talor dal mio forziere”

Con molto espressione

RODOLFO



Ta-lor dal mio for - zi - è - re, ruban tutti i gioielli due ladri gli occhi belli.
But two thieves robbed my treasures: a pair of pretty eyes.

Mimì replies modestly to Rodolfo's sudden ardor. She explains to Rodolfo that she embroiders artificial flowers, and yearns for the real blossoms of spring, the flowers that speak of love.

“Sì, Mi chiamano Mimì”

Andante lento

MIMI



Sì, Mi chia-ma - no Mi - mi, ma il mio no - me è Lu-ci - a.
Yes. They call me Mimì, but my real name is Lucia.

From the street below, Rodolfo's friends call him to hurry up and join them to celebrate Christmas Eve at the Café Momus. Rodolfo opens the window and tells them that he will be along shortly, but that they should be sure to hold two places at the café.

As moonlight envelops them, Rodolfo, enchanted with Mimì's beauty and charm, turns to her, and together they proclaim their newfound love. Rodolfo begins their rapturous duet, "O soave fanciulla" ("Oh lovely maiden"). The music rises ecstatically as both affirm, "Ah! tu sol commandi, amor" ("Only you rule my heart").

Arm in arm, Mimì and Rodolfo walk out into the night to join their friends at the Café Momus.

Act II: The Latin Quarter and the Café Momus.

Outside the Café Momus, crowds, street hawkers, and waiters create a kaleidoscope of Christmas Eve joy and merriment. Schaunard tries to negotiate the purchase of a toy horn, Colline tries on a coat, and then Rodolfo appears with Mimì, who wears a charming pink bonnet that he has just bought for her as a present. They proceed to an outside table at the Café Momus where Rodolfo introduces Mimì to his friends.

"Questa è Mimì, gaia fioraia"

Allegro moderato
RODOLFO



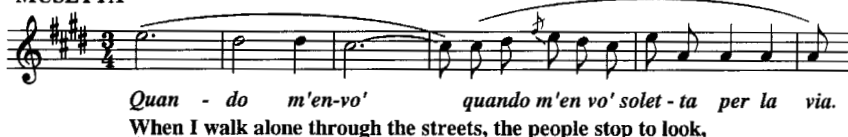
Questa è Mimì, gaia fiorata. Il suo venir comple - ta la bella compagna,
This is Mimì, happy flower girl. Her presence completes our beautiful gathering.

All the bohemians proceed to order themselves a lavish dinner, oblivious of the reality that they have no money to pay for it.

Marcello suddenly turns gloomy as he hears in the distance the voice of his former sweetheart, Musetta. Musetta, elegantly dressed, makes a dashing and noisy entrance on the arm of the state councilor, the old and wealthy Alcindoro, whom she orders around unmercifully.

Musetta is the last entry into the bohemian family. She is a singer who is volatile, tempestuous, conceited, egotistical, flirtatious, and hungry for adulation. Amid the mayhem at the café, Musetta tries to get Marcello's attention, but he pretends to ignore her. Frustrated, Musetta becomes tempestuous, and when that fails, she approaches Marcello and addresses him directly, using every bit of her irresistible charm.

Musetta sings her famous waltz, a song in which she brags about her own popularity and how men are attracted to her. Musetta implores Marcello to return to her, but he continues to ignore her.

Musetta's Waltz: "Quando m'en vo'"**Tempo di Valser lento****MUSETTA**

Musetta, now totally baffled and frustrated, pretends that her shoes are pinching her, and she sends the dutiful Alcindoro to buy her another pair. After Alcindoro is gone, Marcello suddenly becomes seized again by Musetta's spell; he capitulates, Musetta falls into Marcello's arms, and the lovers are reunited.

A waiter brings the bohemians their staggering check, and Musetta has the waiter add it to Alcindoro's. As soldiers fill the square and drum their retreat, the four bohemian artists, with Mimì and Musetta, follow the parade and disappear into the crowd.

Alcindoro returns with Musetta's new shoes, only to find an immense bill. Jilted and abandoned, he drops helplessly into a chair.

Act III: The Barrière d'Enfer, the snowy outskirts of Paris.

It is a cold winter's dawn at the customs tollgate at the entrance to the city. Gatekeepers admit milkmaids and street cleaners, and from a nearby tavern the voice of Musetta is heard singing amid sounds of laughter and gaiety.

Marcello and Musetta now live in the tavern. Marcello's "Red Sea" painting has become its signboard, and he has found sign painting more profitable than art. Musetta gives singing lessons.

Mimì appears, shivering and seized by a nasty coughing fit. She asks a policeman where she can find the painter Marcello. Marcello emerges from the tavern, and Mimì proceeds to pour out her desperation to him: Rodolfo has been exploding into irrational fits of incessant jealousy that have led to constant bickering. Mimì pleads with Marcello to help them separate.

As Marcello attempts to comfort Mimì, Rodolfo emerges from the tavern. Mimì fears meeting him and hides in the background. She overhears Rodolfo tell Marcello that he wants to separate from his fickle sweetheart; he calls her a heartless coquette.

When Marcello questions his veracity, he admits that he truly loves Mimì, but he is terrified that she is dying from her illness, and he feels helpless because he has no money to care for her.

"Una terribil tosse"**Lento triste****RODOLFO**

Mimi, overcome with tears, rushes from hiding and embraces Rodolfo. She insists that they must part for their own good and without regrets. She would be grateful if he would send her her little prayer book and bracelet, but as a reminder of their love, he should keep the little pink bonnet he bought her on Christmas Eve.

“Addio, senza rancor”

Andantino mosso

MIMI



Ad - di - o, *sen - za* *ran - cor,*
Goodbye, no hard feelings,

However, the love of Mimì and Rodolfo is so intense that they cannot separate, and their intended farewell is transformed into a temporary reconciliation. In a renewed wave of tenderness, they decide to postpone their parting and vow to remain together until springtime.

In a quartet, the music of Mimì and Rodolfo conveys the warmth and tenderness of their love, vividly contrasted with a temperamental and feisty quarrel between Marcello and Musetta: Marcello suspects that Musetta has been flirting again, and they furiously hurl insults at each other.

Act IV: The bohemians' garret, several weeks later.

Rodolfo and Marcello have parted from their respective sweethearts, Mimì and Musetta, and they lament their loneliness. They pretend to work, but are uninspired. They tease each other about their ex-lovers, but then become pensive, nostalgic, and reminiscence of their past happiness with their absent amours.

Rodolfo and Marcello: “O Mimì, tu più non torni”

Andantino mosso

RODOLFO



O Mi-mi, tu più non tor - ni, o gior - ni bel - li,
 Oh Mimì, you will never return! Oh lovely days!

Schaunard and Colline arrive with provisions, and the bohemians' spirits become elevated: they dance, horse around, stage a hilarious mock duel, and feign an imaginary banquet.

Just as their festive mood peaks, Musetta, with great agitation, interrupts them and announces that Mimì is outside; she is deathly sick and they must prepare a bed for her. Mimì told Musetta that she felt that she was deathly ill and wanted to be near her true love, Rodolfo.

Rodolfo and Mimì are reunited, and past quarrels are forgotten. Mimì is suffering from her illness and complains of the cold. There is no food or wine, and Musetta gives Marcello her earrings and asks him to pawn them so they can pay for medicine and a doctor. Likewise, Colline decides to pawn his treasured overcoat and bids it a touching farewell.

“Vecchia zimarra” (“Old faithful coat”)

Allegretto moderato e triste
COLLINE



Vecchia zimarra, senti, io resto al pian, tu ascendere il sacro monte or devi. Le mie grazie ricevi.
Listen, my venerable coat, I'm staying behind, but you go on to greater heights. I thank you.

Mimì and Rodolfo are left alone and poignantly reminisce about their first meeting.

“Sono andati?”

Andante calmo
MIMI



Sono and - a - ti? Fingevo di dormire perchè volli con te so-la restare.
Have they gone? I pretended to sleep to make them leave us alone.

Afterwards, Mimì drifts off to sleep. Marcello returns with medicine, and Musetta prays for Mimì while Rodolfo lowers the blinds to soften the light while she sleeps.

Schaunard looks toward Mimì and realizes she has died. Rodolfo glances at his friends and senses the tragic truth. Marcello embraces his friend and urges him to have courage.

Rodolfo falls on Mimì's lifeless body as a thunderous, anguished orchestral fortissimo accompanies his despairing and wrenching cries of grief and loss: “Mimì, Mimì, Mimì!”

Commentary and Analysis

Critics and public were unanimous in their praise of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, the eminent critic George Bernard Shaw suggesting that the heir of Verdi had emerged. Puccini's fourth opera, *La bohème*, would verify the composer's ingenious magical lyricism and musico-dramatic craftsmanship.

La bohème was adapted from Henri Murger's vivid story, *Scènes de Bohème* (*Scenes of Bohemian Life*), initially published in a French periodical about life among the artists of the Latin Quarter in Paris during the 1830s; its wide popularity prompted its conversion into a stage play, and then a novel.

Ricordi assembled two of the finest talents in Italy as Puccini's librettists: the scenarist Luigi Illica and the poet, playwright, and versifier, Giuseppe Giacosa; both had participated in the much tormented and tortured libretto for the earlier *Manon Lescaut*, and both would later collaborate to write the librettos for Puccini's *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*.

Illica (1857-1919) had many successes as playwright and librettist. His many librettos represented a potpourri of contemporary literary fashions: verismo, historical drama, art nouveau symbolism, and evocations of the old commedia dell'arte traditions. Illica created the dynamic and dramatic "Roll-call of the Prostitutes" in *Manon Lescaut*, the exuberant Café Momus scene in *La bohème*, and in *Andrea Chénier*, which he wrote for Umberto Giordano, the parade of the People's Representatives in the second act.

Giacosa (1847-1906) was a lawyer turned playwright; by the turn of the century he was regarded as Italy's leading theatrical craftsman. For *La bohème*, Giacosa is credited with astutely contrasting the characterization of the two female leads, Mimì and Musetta, an important dramatic aspect of the story.

La bohème was initially conceived in four acts with five scenes, but Puccini and his librettist team struggled intensively to slash what they began to consider to be inherent superfluities: therefore, the original Murger scene in which Mimì deserts Rodolfo for a rich viscount was discarded, replaced simply with Rodolfo's Act III explanation to Marcello of his pretext for leaving Mimì: that Mimì was a coquette who flirted with a "viscontino." Another scene discarded took place in the courtyard of Musetta's house after she had been evicted, a scene excised because Puccini felt that it bore too much similarity to the mayhem of the Café Momus scene.

In 1896, La Scala was under the management of Ricordi's arch-rival, the publisher Edoardo Sonzogno, a vengeful competitor who unabashedly excluded all Ricordi operas from the La Scala repertory. As such, in February 1896, *La bohème* premiered at the Teatro Reggio in Turin, Italy, under the baton of a very young conductor named Arturo Toscanini.

Critics were strangely cool to *La bohème*, several of them finding the opera a restrained work, perhaps trivial, and far removed from the fierce and inventive passions of the earlier *Manon Lescaut*. In the newspaper *La Stampa*, the eminent music critic Carlo Bersezio wrote: "It hurts me very much to have to say it, but frankly this *Bohème* is not an artistic success. There is much in the score that is empty and downright infantile. The composer should realize that originality can be obtained perfectly well with the old established means, without recourse to consecutive fifths and a disregard of good harmonic rules." The critic

further opined that *La bohème* had not made a profound impression on the audience, and that the opera would leave no great impact on the history of the lyric theatre. He boldly accused Puccini of making a momentary mistake, and suggested that he consider *La Bohème* an accidental error in his artistic career.

Vienna's powerful Gustav Mahler, hostile to Puccini, virtually banned *La bohème* in favor of Ruggero Leoncavallo's treatment of the same subject.

In 1892, Leoncavallo had achieved worldwide acclaim for his opera *I pagliacci*, and one year later participated with the legion of librettists who wrote the libretto for Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, although he was later fired. Leoncavallo also wrote a *La bohème* that was based on the same Murger story, *Scènes de bohème*. Friends attempted to persuade both Puccini and Leoncavallo not to write operas based on Murger's story, a caution based primarily on the fact that certain elements of the plot were uncomfortably too close to Verdi's renowned *La traviata*: both heroines die of tuberculosis, and in Murger, Mimi is persuaded to leave Rodolfo by his wealthy uncle, who employs many of the same arguments posed by Giorgio Germont in *La traviata*.

Nevertheless, both composers were intransigent and attacked the composition of their operas, despite the fact that they were composing music to an identical story. A spirited competition developed, but in true operatic tradition, passions erupted; what began as a friendly rivalry eventually transformed into bitter enmity between Puccini and Leoncavallo, particularly after Leoncavallo claimed that he had precedence in the subject. Ricordi claimed that he had secured exclusive rights for Puccini; but if that were true, Leoncavallo would have been legally prevented from writing his opera. The fact was that Murger's story was in the public domain, and both composers had the right to compose operas based on the story.

Leoncavallo's *La bohème* premiered in 1897, one year after Puccini's *La bohème*. Critics and audiences lauded Leoncavallo's opera, however, it is rarely performed in modern times, eclipsed by the more popular Puccini work, perhaps unjustly,

Puccini's *La bohème*, considered a masterpiece by twenty-first century audiences, did not garner immediate accolades. The composer Shostakovich commented sarcastically, "Puccini writes marvelous operas but dreadful music." Another critic, citing the finale of the Act II Latin Quarter scene, condemned it as an operetta rather than an opera. Some critics considered it a tearjerker underscored with trivial music. And a New York critic called it "summer operatic flotsam and jetsam." Nevertheless, when *La bohème* was staged in Palermo shortly after its 1896 Turin premiere, the audience response was delirious, and they refused to leave the theater until the final scene had been repeated.

Many critics belabored Puccini's breach of so-called rules of musical composition, such as his effective but proscribed use of parallel fifths to evoke the gay Christmas celebration in the Latin Quarter of Paris in Act II. George Bernard Shaw provided his own rebuttal of critics — if not cynicism: "The fact is, there are no rules, and there never were rules, and there will never be any rules of musical composition except the rules of thumb; and thumbs vary in length, like ears."

Critics can at times be self-proclaimed soothsayers. They seem to be assisted by an infallible crystal ball; and most of the time they are right. In sum, after *La bohème*'s premiere, critics prophesied that the opera would fail to capture the collective minds and hearts of the opera public; they turned out to be wrong. Mark Twain, an astute critic himself, damned the critics in favor of the public's opinion; in historical retrospect, Mark Twain was right.

La bohème is a poignant and human story, the underlying inspiration for many other theatrical vehicles. In 1935, Gertrude Lawrence starred in a movie adaptation of *La bohème* called "Mimi"; Deana Durbin sang "Musetta's Waltz" in the 1940 film "It's a Date"; Cher, in the film "Moonstruck," indeed became "lovestruck" after her first encounter with *La bohème*; and *La bohème* became a brief Broadway hit under the direction of Baz Luhrmann.

La bohème's poignant story can readily adapt to contemporary situations: Jonathan Larson wrote the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning rock opera *Rent*, a modernized *La bohème* story depicting anxious young people struggling to survive in their existential world; in this version of the story, the heroine's tragic death occurs because of drug addiction rather than consumption.

Today, Puccini's *La bohème* remains one of the opera world's most popular sentimental favorites, a central pillar of the opera canon that is among the indispensable handful. One can delightfully argue as to which is THE smash hit of opera — *La bohème*, *Carmen*, *La traviata*, *Aida*, or...

The British critic Frank Granville Barker reviewed a reissue of the Bjorling-de Los Angeles-Beecham recording of *La bohème*; he lauded the opera performance and explained how a magical cast can breathe life into Puccini's masterful opera of love and tears; he praised *La bohème* as a seminal work of the opera stage, "one of the wonders of the world."

La bohème eventually mesmerized opera audiences; and in the process, Puccini became the superstar of Italian opera.

La bohème does not deal with the romantic or melodramatic world of kings, nobles, gods, or heroes; rather, it portrays ordinary people, realistic and simple bohemian artists involved in the everyday conflicts of life and love: the carefree bohemian artists, Mimi an embroiderer of flowers, and the singer Musetta. The opera story and its characters epitomize Puccini's oft-invoked world of *cosettine*, his world of small things, the opera's grandeur not emanating from supercharged passions involving world-shattering events, but rather from tender and poignant moments of human intimacy.

La bohème is an opera masterpiece, its glory and magnificence emanating from Puccini's perfect balance of comedy and pathos, of realism and sentimentality. Puccini himself was overawed by his creation, and he vigorously sought similar librettos throughout his entire career, but failed.

In *La bohème*, Puccini proved that he had few equals or rivals in inventing a personal lyricism that portrayed intimate humanity with sentiment, tenderness, and beauty. His great song-writing talents emerged and flowered in *La bohème*, the opera saturated with a hit parade of great operatic tunes: Rodolfo's "Che gelida manina!" ("How cold your little hand is!"); Mimi's "Si. Mi chiamano Mimi" ("Yes, they call me Mimi"); the sumptuous

duet exploding with the opera's leitmotif of love, "O soave fanciulla" ("Oh, gentle young lady"); Musetta's Waltz; Mimì's "Addio senza rancor" ("Goodbye, no hard feelings"); the Rodolfo-Marcello duet, "O Mimì, tu più non torni" ("Oh Mimì, you won't return!"); Colline's "Vecchia zimarra" ("Listen, my venerable coat"); and Mimì's "Sono andati?" ("Have they gone?")

And Puccini recycles so much of this lush and impassioned music throughout the opera: leitmotifs that provide recollection

Henri Murger's *Scènes de Bohème* was a series of vivid autobiographical sketches and episodes drawn from Murger's own experiences as a struggling writer in Paris during the 1830s. Murger's story first appeared serialized for a magazine, and its huge success prompted its conversion to a novel and then a play.

Puccini drew his characters directly from Murger's *Scènes*: Rodolfo, the poet and writer, was Murger himself — a poor, struggling, headstrong and impetuous literary man; characteristically, a poet thinks in metaphors and similes, so in Act I, Rodolfo addresses the empty stove as "an old stove that is idle and lives like a gentleman of leisure"; and in Act IV, after Mimì and Rodolfo are reunited, Rodolfo refers to Mimì as "beautiful as the dawn," but she corrects his metaphor: that she is as "beautiful as a sunset."

Marcello was a figure drawn from several painters who Murger knew in Paris, particularly a painter named Tabar, who was endlessly trying to complete a painting called "Crossing the Red Sea." In Murger, the "Red Sea" painting was so often rejected by the Louvre that friends joked that if it was placed on wheels, it could make the journey itself from the Louvre's attic to the committee room and back.

Schaunard was based on Alexandre Schanne, a real-life character who preferred the pseudonym Schaunard. He was the bohemian version of a Renaissance man: a painter, a writer who published his memoirs, and a musician and composer of rather unorthodox symphonies.

Colline, the philosopher, was patterned after a friend known as the "Green Giant": his oversized green overcoat had four big pockets, each jokingly named after one of the four main libraries of Paris.

When translated into English, "Bohème" is a word that has a variety of definitions and connotations. Geographically, Bohemia is in central Europe, formerly part of Czechoslovakia, but presently one of the Slovak republics. Bohemian is also the name western Europeans once gave to gypsies to describe their carefree and vagabond life style. For the Murger/Puccini story, the name applies to the colonies of aspiring and starving young nineteenth century Parisian artists who gathered in Montmartre at the time of the building of the Church of Sacre Coeur.

So the bohemian world that Murger describes does not refer to a place on the map of central Europe, but rather, to the ethos of a group of people living on the edge of bourgeois society. His prospective writer, painter, composer, or thinker experience love, hardship, suffering, and even death: necessary and important experiences in an artist's development, the artist's opportunity to mature and gain wisdom.

But bohemian life can also become a time of false illusions, aptly described by the painter Marcello in Act II of Puccini's opera: "Oh, sweet age of false utopias! You hope

and believe, and all seems beautiful.” Marcello is cautioning and admonishing his fellow artists to move forward in their lives: to leave the carefree bohemian life before they are destroyed, a destruction caused not necessarily by freezing or starvation, but by arresting them in a world of false dreams and hopes; of capriciousness, promiscuity, and rebellion.

Most importantly, the prospective artist must learn discipline: if he does not, he will despair and never really learn that first and foremost, it is discipline itself, the antithesis of bohemian life, that he must develop in order to write his poem or paint his picture.

On the surface, *La bohème* is a simple story that brings to life several episodes in the lives of four struggling artists — their joys, their sorrows, and their amours. But underlying their experiences is a larger truth that is synonymous with the struggles portrayed in many of the ancient myths; archetypes experience turbulent trials and tribulations that serve to raise their consciousness and awareness.

Plato said that you cannot teach philosophy to youth; they are entangled in emotions and reject reason. For youth, only experiences — pain, suffering, and even tragedy — provide transcendence: the wherewithal to develop maturity and understanding. In that sense, the suffering and struggles of the bohemians in Murger’s story represent their coming of age.

So, the inner meaning of the *La bohème* story is that it portrays a critical moment in the lives of its characters: their transformation. This chapter in their lives is their rehearsal for life; in effect, it is a potent emotional blueprint for the future. As their struggles transform them, they lose their innocence; they cross a bridge from adolescence to adulthood: a bridge to artistic maturity.

The cruel tragedy of Mimì’s death becomes their most shocking experience, in which their carefree facade transforms into heartfelt grief. But those sorrows serve a necessary and useful purpose: they develop inner wisdom and elevate sensibilities; compassion and understanding. The positive result is that they mature and become good artists; they learn the essence underlying the creative process.

In this early episode of their lives, they have learned good fellowship, young love, and humanity, all essential ingredients in the understanding of life. But their creative and artistic souls transform toward a new and more profound maturity. Their transition enables them to find their compass of life, build their confidence, and bring their intuitive creativity to the surface: maturity and artistic growth are the underlying essences of the *La bohème* story.

The fascinations of Puccini’s *La Bohème* is its intimate portrait of its characters. In painting, when the plane of the composition is moved forward, the viewer experiences the sensation that he has become integrated with the scene; he senses a greater presence and an emotional closeness to the subject.

Similarly, Puccini’s characters absorb the viewer/listener into their intimate time and space, and the viewer/listener becomes an integral part of this heartwarming story. Puccini, the narrator and dramatist of this story, captures the listener through the compelling emotionalism of his lush music. As such, *La bohème* is poignantly overpowering entertainment, its hypnotic and seductive appeal emanating from its subtle blend of comedy and *joie de vivre* that are fused with pathos, sentiment, tears — and tragedy.

Puccini's bohemian characters overwhelm their audience, and one cannot help becoming enamored by their charismatic personalities: Rodolfo the poet, Marcello the painter, Schaunard the musician, Colline the philosopher, Mimì the embroiderer of flowers, and Musetta the singer. Puccini himself commented that he had become integrated with "his creatures," absorbed in their everyday problems, their dilemmas, their little joys, their loves, and their sorrows.

So it is virtually impossible not to identify with these youngsters; suddenly, each of them becomes part of our intimate family. In certain ways they transport us to a time lost in memory, a time of youth, challenges, and dreams, and a catalog of forgotten ambitions, idealisms, aspirations, and hopes. Their abandon, horseplay, and uninhibited mayhem are expressions of innocence, insecurity, and all the natural fears and anxieties of youth. They mirror our family, our children, our grandchildren — or us. Therefore, we empathize with them: we are happy to see them enjoy life and love; but when things go wrong, we feel their pain and anguish. And when we witness the cruel fate of Mimì's death, we grieve for Mimì and the bohemians as if we ourselves have lost a loved one from our family.

In many respects, *La bohème*'s characters become part of our collective unconscious. We understand their youthful dreams and anxieties; the opera's underlying story is also a reminder of our own rite of passage.

Some of the youthful experiences that Puccini portrayed in *La Bohème* were autobiographical. When Puccini was a student at the Milan Conservatory, he was, like the bohemians in his opera story, a starving young artist.

Pietro Mascagni — later the composer of *Cavalleria rusticana* — was his roommate. They lived in a garret, where they were forbidden to cook. In order to use their stove, they sang and played the piano as loudly as they could in order to disguise the sounds from their pots and dishes.

They were so poor that they had to pool their pennies to buy a *Parsifal* score in order to study Wagner. Always in deep debt, they supposedly marked a map of Milan with red crosses to show the danger areas where they thought they might run into their creditors. And Puccini, like Colline in Act IV of *La bohème*, once pawned his coat, but that was to raise enough money to take a young ballerina out on the town.

Puccini and his cronies captured the spirit of bohemian life style and formed "Club La Bohème," their refuge to talk, gamble, and drink. The "Club La Bohème" even had a constitution that suggested its atmosphere of abandon and mayhem: its members swore to drink and eat to excess; the treasurer was permitted to abscond with dues; it was prohibited to play cards honestly; and silence was strictly prohibited.

In Puccini's *La bohème*, the curtain falls after Mimì's death. But at the close of Murger's *Scènes de Bohème* the author relates the fate of the bohemians after Mimì's death. The bohemians leave "la vie de Bohème" as they are supposed to: they join the mainstream and establishment just like most young idealists, counterculture rebels, and the "flower children" of the 1960s.

Murger reveals that the musician Schaunard eventually becomes successful in writing popular songs, and — perish the thought — he makes tons of money.

The philosopher Colline marries a rich society lady and spends the rest of his life, as Murger says, “eating cake.”

Marcello gets his paintings displayed in an exhibition, and ironically, actually sells one to an Englishman whose mistress is the very Musetta he had once loved.

Rodolfo gets good reviews for his first book and is en route to a successful writing career.

Murger has Marcello commenting cynically on their artistic successes. He tells Rodolfo: “We’re done for, my friend, dead and buried. There is nothing left for the two of us but to settle down to steady work.”

These artists are sadder, but wiser. Their loves, Mimì and Musetta, always remaining with them as beautiful and nostalgic memories of their youth and their bohemian past.

In Puccini’s *La bohème*, the transformation and transition from youthful innocence to maturity succeeds.

And in the process, Puccini’s *La bohème* truly became “one of the wonders of the world.”

LIBRETTO

La bohème

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Act I

*Agarret. A large window reveals the snow-covered roofs of Paris.
There is a painter's easel with a half finished canvas, a stove, a table, a bed,
chairs, and books and manuscripts strewn everywhere.
Rodolfo is thoughtful as he looks out the window. Marcello attempts to work at his painting,
"The Crossing of the Red Sea," his hands stiff from the cold.
He tries in vain to warm them by blowing on them.*

Allegro vivace**Marcello:**

Questo "Mar Rosso" mi ammolisce e
assidera
come se addosso mi piovesse in stille.
Pervendarmi affogo un Faraone.

Che fai?

Marcello: *(seated at the easel)*

This "Red Sea" of mine makes me feel cold
and numb,
as if it were pouring over me in drops.
In revenge, I'll drown a Pharaoh.
(To Rodolfo)

What are you doing?

Allegro vivace**RODOLFO****Rodolfo:**

Nei cieli bigi guardo fumar dai mille
comignoli Parigi,

Rodolfo:

I'm looking at the gray skies of Paris where
smoke comes from a thousand chimneys,

e penso quel poltone d'un vecchio
caminetta ingannatore che vive in ozio come
un gran signor!

Marcello:

Le sue redite oneste da un pezzo non
riceve.

Rodolfo:

Quelle sciocche foreste che fan sotto la
neve?

Marcello:

Rodolfo, io voglio dirti un mio pensier
profondo: ho un freddo cane.

Rodolfo:

Ed io, Marcel, non ti nascondo che non
credo al sudor della fronte.

Marcello:

Ho ghiacciate le dita quasi ancora le tenessi
immollate, giù in quella gran ghiacciaia che è
il cuore di Musetta.

Rodolfo:

L'amore è un caminetto che sciupa troppo.

Marcello:

...e in fretta!

Rodolfo:

...dove l'uomo è fascina...

Marcello:

...e la donna è l'alare...

Rodolfo:

...l'uno brucia in un soffio...

Marcello:

...e l'altra sta a guardare.

Rodolfo:

Ma intanto qui si gela!

and I'm thinking of that lazy old stove that is
idle and lives in leisure like a great lord!

Marcello:

It's been a long time since he received his
just wages.

Rodolfo:

What are those stupid forests doing, all
covered with snow?

Marcello:

Rodolfo, I want to reveal a profound thought
to you: I'm freezing cold.

Rodolfo:

As for me, Marcello, I'll be frank: I'm not
exactly sweating.

Marcello:

And my fingers are frozen as if they were
still plunged in that enormous icebox:
Musetta's heart.
(*Marcello stops painting*)

Rodolfo:

Love is a stove that consumes too much.

Marcello:

...and too fast!

Rodolfo:

...where the man is the fuel...

Marcello:

...and woman the andiron...

Rodolfo:

...he burns in a flash...

Marcello:

...and she stands by watching!

Rodolfo:

Meanwhile, we're freezing in here!

Marcello:
..e si muore d'inedia!

Marcello:
...and dying from starvation!

Rodolfo:
Fuoco ci vuole!

Rodolfo:
We must have a fire!

Marcello:
Aspetta! Sacrifichiam la sedia!

Marcello: (*seizing a chair*)
Wait! Let's sacrifice the chair!

Rodolfo stops Marcello. Suddenly Rodolfo has an idea and shouts with joy.

Rodolfo:
Eureka!

Rodolfo:
Eureka!

Rodolfo runs to the table and grabs his voluminous script.

Marcello:
Trovasti?

Marcello:
You've found it?

Rodolfo:
Sì. Aguzza l'ingegno.
L'idea vampi in fiamma.

Rodolfo:
Yes. Sharpen your wits.
Let "thought" burst into flame.

Marcello:
Bruciamo il "Mar Rosso"?

Marcello: (*pointing to his painting*)
Shall we burn the "Red Sea"?

Rodolfo:
No. Puzza la tela dipinta.
Il mio dramma, l'ardente mio dramma ci
scaldi.

Rodolfo:
No. A painted canvas stinks.
My play, let my impassioned drama warm
us.

Marcello:
Vuoi leggerlo forse? Mi geli.

Marcello:
Are you going to read it? You're freezing me.

Rodolfo:
No, in cener la carta si sfaldi e l'estro rivoli ai
suoi cieli.
Al secol gran danno minaccia.
È Roma in periglio!

Rodolfo:
No, the paper will become ash and genius
will soar back to its heaven.
A serious loss to the age.
And Rome is in danger!

Marcello:
Gran cor!

Marcello:
What a magnanimous heart!

Rodolfo:
A te l'atto primo!

Rodolfo:
Here, take the first act!

Marcello:

Qua.

Marcello:

Here.

Rodolfo:

Straccia.

Rodolfo:

Tear it up.

Marcello:

Accendi.

Marcello:

Light it.

Rodolfo lights part of the manuscript and throws it into the fire. Then both draw their chairs close to the heat and savor its warmth.

Rodolfo e Marcello:

Che lieto baglior.

Rodolfo and Marcello:

What a happy glow!

The door opens and Colline enters, frozen and stamping his feet. He angrily throws some books on the table that are tied with a handkerchief.

Colline:

Già dell'Apocalisse appariscono i segni.

In giorno di Vigilia non si accettano pegni!

Colline:

Signs of the Apocalypse begin to appear. No

pawning is allowed on Christmas Eve!

Colline interrupts himself, surprised to see the fire.

Una fiammata!

A fire!

Rodolfo:

Zitto, si dà il mio dramma.

Rodolfo:

Quiet, my play's being given.

Marcello:

...al fuoco.

Marcello:

... to the stove.

Colline:

Lo trove scintillante.

Colline:

I find it sparkling.

Rodolfo:

Vivo.

Rodolfo:

Brilliant.

Marcello:

Ma dura poco.

Marcello: *(as the fire diminishes)*

But it's a little brief.

Rodolfo:

La brevità gran pregio.

Rodolfo:

Brevity is a great asset.

Colline:

Autore, a me la sedia.

Colline:

Your chair, please, Mr. Author.

Marcello:

Questi intermezzi fan morir d' inedia. Presto!

Marcello:

These intermissions kill you with boredom.
Get on with it!

Rodolfo:

Atto secondo.

Rodolfo: *(adding more of his play)*

Act two.

Marcello:

Non far sussurro.

Marcello:

Don't make a whisper.

*Rodolfo rips off another part of the manuscript to kindle the fire.
Colline takes a chair and draws himself near to the fire.
Rodolfo stands nearby, ready with the remainder of his manuscript.*

Colline:

Pensier profondo!

Colline:

What profound thoughts!

Marcello:

Giusto color!

Marcello:

How colorful!

Rodolfo:

In quell' azzurro guizzo languente sfuma
un'ardente scena d'amor.

Rodolfo:

In that dying blue flame there is an ardent
love-scene that is vanishing.

Colline:

Scoppietta un foglio.

Colline:

A page crackles.

Marcello:

Là c'eran baci!

Marcello:

Those were the kisses!

Rodolfo:

Tre atti or voglio d'un colpo udir.

Rodolfo:

I want to hear three acts at once.

Rodolfo throws the rest of the manuscript into the fire.

Colline:

Tal degli audaci l'idea s'integra.

Colline:

And your bold conception is so unified.

Tutti:

Bello in allegra vampa svanir.

All:

Joyous ideas vanish.

They applaud enthusiastically, but suddenly the flame dies.

Marcello:

Oh Dio! Già s'abbassa la fiamma.

Marcello:

Oh God! The flame is already dying.

Colline:

Che vano, che fragile dramma!

Colline:

So vain, so fragile a drama!

Marcello:

Già scricchiola, increspasi, muor!

Marcello:

It's already creaking and curling up to die!

Colline e Marcello:

Abbasso, abbasso l'autore!

Colline and Marcello:

Down with the author!

*Schaunard arrives with two porters, who carry food,
bottles of wine, cigars, and a bundle of wood.
At the sound, the three men shout with joy, and fall upon the provisions.*

**Rodolfo:**

Legna!

Rodolfo:

Wood!

Marcello:

Sigari!

Marcello:

Cigars!

Colline:

Bordò!

Colline:

Bordeaux!

Rodolfo:

Legna!

Rodolfo:

Firewood!

Marcello:

Bordò!

Marcello:

Bordeaux!

Tutti:

Le dovizie d'una fiera il destin ci destinò!

All:

Destiny provides us with a feast of plenty!

The porters leave. Schaunard, with an air of triumph, throws some coins on the floor.

Schaunard:

La Banca di Francia per voi si sbilancia.

Schaunard:

The Bank of France has gone broke just for you.

Colline:

Raccatta, raccatta!

Colline: (gathering up coins)

Pick them up!

Marcello:

Son pezzi di latta!

Marcello: (incredulously)

They're made of tin!

Schaunard:

Sei sordo? Sei lippo?
Quest'uomo chi è?

Rodolfo:

Luigi Filippo! M'inchino al mio Re!

Tutti:

Sta Luigi Filippo ai nostri piè!

Schaunard:

Are you deaf? Are you nearsighted?
Who is this man?

Rodolfo:

Louis Philippe! I bow to my king!

All: (*referring to coins on the floor*)

Louis Philippe is at our feet!

Schaunard tries to relate his good fortune, but the others are heedless, all busily placing the provisions on the table and the firewood in the stove.

Schaunard:

Or vi dirò: quest'oro, o meglio, argento,
ha la sua brava istoria.

Rodolfo:

Riscaldiamo il camino!

Colline:

Tanto freddo ha sofferto!

Schaunard:

Un inglese, un signor, lord o milord
che sia volea un musicista.

Marcello:

Via! Prepariamo la tavola!

Schaunard:

Io? Volo!

Rodolfo:

L'esca dov'è?

Colline:

Là!

Marcello:

Qua.

Schaunard:

E mi presento. M'accetta, gli domando.

Colline:

Arrosto freddo!

Schaunard:

Now I'll tell you: this gold, or better, this
silver, has a noble history.

Rodolfo:

Let's warm up the stove!

Colline:

It has suffered so much in this cold!

Schaunard:

An Englishman, a gentleman, a lord was
looking for a musician.

Marcello:

Go away! Let's set the table!

Schaunard:

And I? I flew to him!

Rodolfo:

Where are the matches?

Colline:

There!

Marcello:

Here.

Schaunard:

I introduce myself. He hires me, I ask him.

Colline:

Cold roast beef!

Marcello:

Pasticcio dolce!

Schaunard:

A quando le lezioni?

Risponde: "Incominciam! Guardare!"

e un pappagallo m'addita al primo pian,
poi soggiunge:

"Voi suonare finchè quello morire!"

Rodolfo:

Fulgida folgori la sala splendida!

Marcello:

Ora le candele!

Schaunard:

E fu così:

suonai tre lunghi dì.

Allora usai l'incanto di mia presenza bella.

Affascinai l'ancella.

Gli propinai prezzemolo!

Lorito allargò l'ali,

Lorito il becco aprì,

da Socrate morì!

Colline:

Pasticcio dolce!

Marcello:

Mangiar senza tovaglia?

Rodolfo:

No: un'idea!

Marcello e Colline:

Il "Costituzional"!

Rodolfo:

Ottima carta.

Si mangia a si divora un'appendice!

Colline:

Chi?

Marcello:

Sweet pastry!

Schaunard:

When do the lessons begin?

He replies: "Let's start! Look!"

And he points to a parrot on the first floor,
and then adds:

"You play until that bird dies!"

Rodolfo:

The dining room is brilliant!

Marcello:

Now the candles!

Schaunard:

And so it went:

I played for three long days.

Then I used my charm, my handsome figure,
and I won over the serving-girl.

We gave a little parsley to the parrot!

Polly spread its wings,

Polly opened its beak, took a piece of parsley,
and died like Socrates!

Colline:

Sweet pastry!

Marcello:

Eating without a tablecloth?

Rodolfo: (*Rodolfo takes a newspaper*)

No! I've an idea!

Marcello and Colline:

The "Constitutional"!

Rodolfo:

Excellent paper.

You eat and devour a supplement!

Colline: (*to Schaunard*)

Who?

Schaunard:

Il diavolo vi porti tutti quanti!
Ed or che fate?
No! Queste cibarie sono la salmeria pei dì
futuri, tenebroso e oscuro.
Pranzare in casa il dì della Vigilia mentre il
Quartier Latino le sue vie
addobba di salsiccie e leccornie?
Quando un olezzo di fritelle imbalsama le
vecchie strade?
Là le ragazze cantano contente.

Tutti:

La vigilia di Natal!

Schaunard:

Ed han per eco ognuna uno studente!
Un po' di religione, o miei signori:
si beva in casa, ma si pranzi fuor!

Schaunard:

Go to the devil, all of you!
Now what are you doing?
No! These delicacies are the provisions for
dark and gloomy days in the future.
Do we dine at home on Christmas Eve when
the Latin Quarter has decked its streets with
sausages and delicacies?
When the aroma of fritters perfumes the
ancient streets?
There, the girls sing happily.

All:

On Christmas Eve!

Schaunard:

And each girl has a student echoing her!
Gentlemen, have some religion:
we drink at home, but we dine out!

As the bohemians pour wine, there is a knock at the door; all are dumbfounded.

Benoit:

Si può?

Benoit: (from outside)

May I come in?

Marcello:

Chi è là?

Marcello:

Who's there?

Benoit:

Benoit.

Benoit:

Benoit.

Marcello:

Il padrone di casa!

Marcello:

The landlord!

Schaunard:

Uscio sul muso!

Schaunard:

Bolt the door!

Colline:

Non c'è nessuno!

Colline:

Nobody's home!

Schaunard:

È chiuso!

Schaunard:

It's locked!

Benoit:

Una parola.

Benoit:

Just one word.

Schaunard:

Sola!

Schaunard: (*opens the door*)

Just one!

Benoit enters smiling, and hands a paper to Marcello.

Benoit:

Affitto!

Benoit:

Rent!

Marcello:

Olà. Date una sedia.

Marcello: (*with exaggeration*)

Here! Give him a chair.

Rodolfo:

Presto!

Rodolfo:

Quickly!

Benoit:

Non occorre, io vorrei...

Benoit:

Don't bother, I'd like...

Schaunard:

Segga.

Schaunard:

Sit down.

Marcello:

Vuol bere?

Marcello: (*pouring Benoit a glass of wine*)

Something to drink?

Benoit:

Grazie.

Benoit:

Thanks.

Rodolfo e Colline:

Tocchiamo!

Rodolfo and Colline:

Let's toast!

Schaunard:

Beva!

Schaunard:

Drink!

Benoit sets his glass down and shows Marcello the paper.

Benoit:

Questo è l'ultimo trimestre.

Benoit:

This is the bill for last three month's rent.

Marcello:

E n'ho piacere.

Marcello:

That's fine.

Benoit:

E quindi.

Benoit:

Therefore.

Schaunard:

Ancora un sorso?

Schaunard: (*refilling Benoit's glass*)

Another drop?

Benoit:

Grazie.

Benoit:

Thank you.

I Quattro:

Tocchiam!

Benoit:

Grazie.

I Quattro:

Alla sua salute!

Benoit:

A lei ne vengo perchè il trimestre scorso mi promise...

Marcello:

Promisi ed or mantengo.

Rodolfo:

Che fai?

Schaunard:

Sei pazzo!

Marcello:

Ha visto? Or via, resti un momento in nostra compagnia.

Dica: quant'anni ha, caro Signor Benoit?

Benoit:

Gli anni? Per carità!

Rodolfo:

Su a giù la nostra età?

Benoit:

Di più, molto di più!

The Four:

Let's toast!

Benoit:

Thanks.

The Four:

To your health!

Benoit: *(to Marcello again)*

I come to you because last quarter you promised me...

Marcello: *(pointing to money on the table)*

I promised and I'll keep my promise.

Rodolfo: *(aside to Marcello)*

What are you doing?

Schaunard:

You're crazy!

Marcello: *(to Benoit, ignoring the others)*

You see? Don't go.

Stay with us a moment.

Tell me dear M. Benoit: how old are you?

Benoit:

My age? For pity's sake!

Rodolfo:

Your age, more or less?

Benoit:

Much more than less!

While they chat, they refill Benoit's empty glass.

Colline:

Ha detto su a giù.

Marcello:

L'altra sera, al Mabil l'han colto in peccato d'amor.

Colline:

He said more or less.

Marcello: *(slyly)*

The other evening they caught you sinfully making love at the Mabil.

Benoit:

Io?

Marcello:

A1 Mabil 1'altra sera 1'han colto.
Neghi!

Benoit:

Un caso.

Marcello:

Bella donna!

Benoit:

Ah! Molto!

Schaunard poi Rodolfo:

Briccone!

Colline:

Seduttore!

Marcello:

Una quercia, un cannone!

Rodolfo:

L'uomo ha buon gusto.

Marcello:

Il crin ricciuto e fulvo.
Ei gongolava arzillo e pettoruto.

Benoit:

Son vecchio ma robusto!

Colline, Schaunard, e Rodolfo:

Ei gongolava arzuto e pettorilo.

Marcello:

E a lui cede la femminil virtù.

Benoit:

Timido in gioventù, ora me ne ripago!
Si sa, è uno svago qualche donnetta allegra,
e un po'...
Non dico una balena, o un mappamondo, o
un viso tondo da luna piena.

Benoit:

Me?

Marcello:

They caught you at the Mabil the other
evening. Deny it!

Benoit:

An accident.

Marcello: (*flattering Benoit*)

A lovely woman!

Benoit: (*half drunk*)

Ah! Very much!

Schaunard then Rodolfo:

You rogue!

Colline:

Seducer!

Marcello:

He's an oak, a ball of fire!

Rodolfo:

He's a man of good taste.

Marcello:

Her hair was curly and auburn.
How he swaggered, proud and happy!

Benoit:

I'm old but robust!

Colline, Schaunard, and Rodolfo:

How he swaggered, proud and happy!

Marcello:

Feminine virtue surrendered to him.

Benoit: (*confiding completely*)

I'm avenging my youthful timidity!
You know, a lovely woman is my hobby, and
a little...
I don't necessarily mean built like a whale,
or a globe, or a round face like a moon.

Ma magra, proprio magra, no, poi no!
Le donne magre son grattacapi e spesso,
sopracapi!
E son piene di doglie, per esempio,
mia moglie!

But thin, really thin. No!
Skinny women are tiresome and often a
nuisance!
And they're always complaining of aches,
for example, my wife!

Marcello rises, feigning moral indignation. The others do the same.

Marcello:
Quest'uomo ha moglie e sconcie voglie ha
nel cor!

Marcello:
This man has a wife and hides obscene
desires in his heart!

Gli Altri:
Orror!

The Others:
What a horror!

Rodolfo:
E ammorba e appesta la nostra onesta
magion!

Rodolfo:
He corrupts and pollutes our respectable
home!

Gli Altri:
Fuor!

Others:
Out with him!

Marcello:
Si abbruci dello zucchero!

Marcello:
Burn some sugar!

Colline:
Si discacci il reprobò!

Colline:
Throw the scoundrel out!

Schaunard:
È la morale offesa che vi scaccia!

Schaunard:
Our offended morality expels you!

Benoit:
Io di...io di....

Benoit:
I said...I...

Gli Altri:
Silenzio!

The Others:
Silence!

Benoit:
Miei signori...

Benoit:
My dear sirs...

Gli Altri:
Silenzio! Via signore!
Via di qua!
E buona sera a vostra signori. Ah! Ah! Ah!

The Others:
Silence! Get our, sir!
Out of here!
And good evening to your Lordship. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Benoit is thrown out.

Marcello:
Ho pagato il trimestre!

Schaunard:
Al Quartiere Latin ci attende Momus.

Marcello:
Viva chi spende!

Schaunard:
Dividiamo il bottin!

Gli Altri:
Dividiam!

Marcello: (*closing the door*)
I've paid the rent for the quarter!

Schaunard:
Momus awaits us at the Latin Quarter.

Marcello:
Long life to the man who spends!

Schaunard:
We'll divide my loot!

The Others:
Let's divide!

They divide up the coins on the table.

Marcello:
Là ci son beltà scese dal cielo.
Or che sei ricco, bada alla decenza!
Orso, ravviati il pelo.

Colline:
Farò la conoscenza la prima volta d'un
barbitonsore. Guidatemi al ridicolo oltraggio
d'un rasoio.

Tutti:
Andiam!

Rodolfo:
Io resto per terminar l'articolo di fondo del
"Castoro."

Marcello:
Fa presto!

Rodolfo:
Cinque minuti. Conosco il mestier.

Colline:
T'aspetterem dabbasso dal portier.

Marcello:
Se tardi udrai che coro!

Rodolfo:
Cinque minuti.

Marcello: (*giving Colline a mirror*)
There, there are heavenly beauties.
Now that you're rich, you must look
presentable. You bear! Trim your fur.

Colline:
I'll make my first acquaintance with a beard-
barber. Lead me to the ridiculous outrage of
a razor.

All:
Let's go!

Rodolfo:
I'll stay to finish the lead article for the
"Beaver."

Marcello:
Hurry up!

Rodolfo:
Five minutes. I know my trade.

Colline:
We'll wait for you downstairs at the concierge.

Marcello:
If you're late you'll hear the chorus!

Rodolfo:
Five minutes.

Rodolfo takes the light and opens the door. The others start down the stairs.

Schaunard:

Taglia corta la coda al tuo “Castoro!”

Schaunard:

Cut that “Beaver’s” tail short!

Marcello:

Occhio alla scala. Tienti alla ringhiera.

Marcello: *(from the stairs)*

Watch the stairs. Hold on to the railing.

Rodolfo:

Adagio!

Rodolfo: *(raising the light for them)*

Go slowly!

Colline:

E buio pesto!

Colline: *(from the stairs)*

It’s pitch dark!

Schaunard:

Maledetto portier!

Schaunard:

That damn concierge!

There is the sound of someone tumbling down the stairs.

Colline:

Accidenti!

Colline:

An accident!

Rodolfo:

Colline, sei morto?

Rodolfo:

Colline, are you dead?

Colline:

Non ancor!

Colline: *(from below)*

Not yet!

Marcello:

Vien presto!

Marcello:

Come soon!

Rodolfo closes the door, sets his light on the table and tries to write.

Uninspired, he tears up the paper and throws the pen down.

Rodolfo:

Non sono in vena.

Rodolfo:

I’m not inspired.

There is a timid knock at the door.

Chi è là?

Who’s there?

Mimì:

Scusi.

Mimì: *(outside)*

Excuse me.

Rodolfo:

Una donna!

Rodolfo:

A woman!

Mimì:

Di grazia, mi s’è spento il lume.

Mimì:

I’m sorry, my light has gone out.

Rodolfo:

Ecco!

Rodolfo: (*opening the door*)

I'm here!

Mimi appears in the doorway holding the spent candle and a key in her hands.

Mimi:

Vorrebbe?

Mimi:

Would you?

Rodolfo:

S'accomodi un momento.

Rodolfo:

Make yourself comfortable for a moment.

Mimi:

Non occorre.

Mimi:

That's not necessary.

Rodolfo:

La prego, entri.

Rodolfo: (*insisting*)

Please, come in.

Mimi enters. She is suddenly seized by a fit of coughing.

Si sente male?

Are you ill?

Mimi:

No, nulla.

Mimi:

No, it's nothing.

Rodolfo:

Impallidisce!

Rodolfo:

You're pale!

Mimi:

È il respir, quelle scale.

Mimi:

I'm out of breath, the stairs.

*Mimi faints. Rodolfo catches her and helps her to a chair.
The key and the candlestick fall from her hands.*

Rodolfo:

Ed ora come faccio?

Rodolfo:

What shall I do now?

Rodolfo fetches some water and sprinkles Mimi's face.

Così. Che viso d'ammalata!

So. How sickly she looks!

Si sente meglio?

(*Mimi revives.*)

Do you feel better?

Mimi:

Sì.

Mimi:

Yes.

Rodolfo:

Qui c'è tanto freddo. Segga vicino al fuoco.

Rodolfo:

It's so cold here. Come and sit by the fire.

Rodolfo helps Mimì to a chair by the stove.

Aspetti, un po' di vino.

Wait, some wine.

Mimì:

Grazie.

Mimì:

Thanks.

Rodolfo:

A lei.

Rodolfo: (*giving her a glass and pouring*)

Here.

Mimì:

Poco, poco.

Mimì:

Just a little.

Rodolfo:

Così?

Rodolfo:

Like this?

Mimì:

Grazie.

Mimì:

Thanks.

Rodolfo:

(*Che bella bambina!*)

Rodolfo: (*admiring her*)

(*What a beautiful girl!*)

Mimì:

Ora permetta che accenda il lume.

È tutto passato.

Mimì: (*looking for her candlestick*)

Now, please allow me to relight my candle.

I'm better now.

Rodolfo:

Tanta fretta?

Rodolfo:

Why such a hurry?

Mimì:

Sì.

Mimì:

Yes.

Rodolfo lights Mimì's candle.

Grazie. Buona sera.

Thank you. Good evening.

Rodolfo:

Buona sera.

Rodolfo: (*accompanying Mimì to the door*)

Good evening.

Mimì leaves, but then reappears at the door.

Mimì:

Oh! Sventata, sventata!

La chiave della stanza dove l'ho lasciata?

Mimì:

Oh! Foolish me!

Where have I left the key to my room?

Rodolfo:

Non stia sull'uscio: il lume vacilla al vento.

Rodolfo:

Don't stand at the door: the wind makes your light flicker.

Mimi's candle extinguishes.

Mimi:

Oh Dio! Torni ad accenderlo?

Mimi:

Oh God! Will you relight it?

*Rodolfo runs to Mimi with his light, but when he reaches the door,
his candle also extinguishes. The room is dark.*

Rodolfo:

Oh Dio! Anche il mio s'è spento!

Rodolfo:

Oh God! Mine is also out!

Mimi:

Ah! E la chiave ove sarà?

Mimi:

Ah! And where is my key?

Rodolfo:

Buio pesto!

Rodolfo: (*groping for the key*)

It's pitch dark!

Mimi:

Disgraziata!

Mimi:

Unlucky me!

Rodolfo:

Ove sarà?

Rodolfo:

Where can it be?

Mimi:

Importuna è la vicina.

Mimi:

You've a bothersome neighbor.

Rodolfo:

Ma le pare!

Rodolfo:

Not at all!

Mimi:

Importuna è la vicina.

Mimi:

You've a bothersome neighbor.

Rodolfo:

Cosa dice, ma le pare!

Rodolfo:

What I said is, not at all!

Mimi:

Cerchi.

Mimi:

Look for the key.

Rodolfo:

Cerco.

Rodolfo:

I'm looking.

Mimi and Rodolfo search for the key, groping in the dark.

Mimi:

Ove sarà?

Mimi:

Where can it be?

Rodolfo finds the key and puts it in his pocket.

Rodolfo:

Ah!

Rodolfo:

Ah!

Mimi:
L'ha trovata?

Mimi:
Did you find it?

Rodolfo:
No!

Rodolfo:
No!

Mimi:
Mi parve....

Mimi:
It seemed to me...

Rodolfo:
In verità!

Rodolfo:
Honestly!

Mimi:
Cerca?

Mimi:
Are you looking?

Rodolfo:
Cerco!

Rodolfo:
I'm looking!

Mimi:
Ah!

Mimi: (*surprised*)
Ah!

Rodolfo pretends to be looking for the key. Guided by Mimi's voice, he draws closer to her, and then he grasps her hand.

Andantino affetuoso

RODOLFO



Rodolfo:
Che gelida manina!
Se la lasci riscaldar.
Cercar che giova? Al buio non si trova.
Ma per fortuna è una notte di luna,
e qui la luna l'abbiamo vicina.
Aspetti, signorina, le dirò con due parole chi
son, chi son, e che faccio, come vivo. Vuole?
Chi son? Chi son? Son un poeta.
Che cosa faccio? Scrivo.
E come vivo? Vivo!
In povertà mia lieta, scialo da gran signore
rime ed inni d'amore.
Per sogni a per chimere e per castelli in aria
l'anima ho milionaria.

Rodolfo: (*holding Mimi's hand*)
How cold your little hand is!
Let me warm it for you.
What's the use of searching? We can't find it
in the dark. But fortunately it's a moonlit
night, and she's our neighbor.
Just wait, my dear young lady, and I'll tell
you in two words who I am, what I do, and
how I live. Shall I?
Who am I? I'm a poet.
What do I do? I write.
And how do I live? I live!
In the happiness of my poverty, I squander
poems and songs of love like a great Lord.
I have a millionaire's soul, with hopes and
dreams of heavenly castles.

Con molto espressione
RODOLFO



Ta-lor dal mio for - zie-re, ruban tutti i gioielli due ladri gli occhi belli.

Talor dal mio forziere ruban tutti i gioielli
due ladri: gli occhi belli.
V'entrar con voi pur ora ed i miei sogni
usati, ed i bei sogni miei tosto si dileguar! Ma
il furto non m'accora poichè, poichè v'ha preso
stanza la speranza!

But two thieves just robbed my treasures:
a pair of beautiful eyes.
They came in with you, and all my past
dreams have vanished.
But the theft doesn't upset me,
because it has been replaced by hope!

Or che mi conoscete parlate voi.
Deh parlate. Chi siete? Vi piaccia dir?

Now that you know me, it's your turn to
speak. Who are you? Will you tell me?

Andante lento
MIMI



Sì, Mi chia-ma-no Mi-mi, ma il mio no-me è Lu-ci-a.

Mimi:

Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì, ma il mio nome è
Lucia.
La storia mia è breve. A tela o a seta ricamo
in casa e fuori.
Son tranquilla e lieta, ed è mio svago far gigli
e rose.
Mi piaccion quelle cose che han sì dolce
malia, che parlano d'amor, di primavere, che
parlano di sogni e di chimere,
quelle cose che han nome poesia.
Lei m'intende?

Mimi:

Yes. They call me Mimì, but my name is
Lucia.
My story is brief. I embroider cloth at home
or away.
I'm placid and happy, and my pastime is
making lilies and roses.
I love all things that speak about love, of the
spring, of dreams, and of fairy tales: that
have the gentle magic of poetry.

Do you understand me?

Rodolfo:

Sì.

Rodolfo:

Yes.

Mimi:

Mi chiamano Mimì. Il perchè non so.
Sola, mi fo il pranzo da me stessa.
Non vado sempre a messa,
ma prego assai il Signor.

Mimi:

They call me Mimì. I don't know why.
I live all by myself and I eat alone.
I don't often go to church,
but I pray a lot to God.

Vivo sola, soletta.
Là in una bianca cameretta
guardo sui tetti e in cielo.
Ma quando vien lo sgelo
il primo sole è mio,
il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!
Il primo sole è mio!

Germoglia in un vaso una rosa.
Foglia a foglia la spiro!
Così gentil è il profumo d'un fior!
Ma i fior ch'io faccio, ahimè!
I fior ch'io faccio, ahimè non hanno odore!

Altro di me non le saprei narrare:
Sono la sua vicina che la vien fuori d'ora a
importunare.

Schaunard:
Ehi! Rodolfo!

Colline:
Rodolfo!

Marcello:
Olà! Non senti? Lumaca!

Colline:
Poetucolo!

Schaunard:
Accidenti al pigro!

I live alone, all alone.
There, in my little white room
I can see the roofs and the sky.
But when spring comes
the sun's first rays of sun are mine.
April's first kiss is mine!
The sun's first rays are mine!

I place rose blossoms in my vase.
I breathe its aroma, petal by petal!
A flower's perfume is so delicate!
But it is too bad that the flowers I make have
no fragrance!

What else can I say about myself?
I'm your neighbor, who is disturbing you at
this importune hour.

Schaunard: (*from below*)
Hey! Rodolfo!

Colline:
Rodolfo!

Marcello:
Hey! Can't you hear? You slowpoke!

Colline:
You scribbler!

Schaunard:
To hell with that lazy guy!

*Rodolfo, impatient, goes to the window to answer his friends.
The moonlight floods the room with light.*

Rodolfo:
Scrivo ancora tre righe avolo.

Mimì:
Chi sono?

Rodolfo:
Amici.

Schaunard:
Sentirai le tue!

Rodolfo:
I've three more lines to write.

Mimì: (*inquiring of Rodolfo*)
Who are they?

Rodolfo:
Friends.

Schaunard:
You'll hear about this!

Marcello:

Che te ne fai lì solo?

Rodolfo:

Non son solo. Siamo in due.
Andate da Momus, tenete il posto.
Ci saremo tosto.

Marcello, Schaunard e Colline:

Momus, Momus, Momus,
zitti e discreti andiamocene via.
Momus, Momus.
Trovò la poesia!

Marcello:

What are you doing there alone?

Rodolfo:

I'm not alone. There's two of us.
Go to Momus and hold a table.
We'll be there soon.

Marcello, Schaunard and Colline:

Momus, Momus, Momus.
Quietly, discreetly, we're off.
Momus, Momus.
At last, he found his poetry!

The moonlight illuminates Mimi. Rodolfo contemplates her ecstatically.

Rodolfo:

O soave fanciulla!
O dolce viso, di mite circonfuso alba lunar,
in te ravviso il sogno ch'io vorrei
sempre sognar!

Mimi:

Ah, tu sol comandi, amor!

Rodolfo:

Fremon già nell'anima le dolcezze estreme.

Mimi:

Tu sol comandi, amore!

Rodolfo:

Fremon nell'anima dolcezze estreme, nel
bacio freme amor!

Mimi:

Oh! Come dolci scendono le sue lusinghe al
core! Tu sol comandi, amor!

No, per pietà!

Rodolfo:

Sei mia!

Rodolfo:

Oh gentle young lady!
Oh sweet face bathed in the moonlight.
I see in you the fulfillment of all my dreams!

Mimi:

Ah! You alone command love!

Rodolfo:

My soul throbs from your sublime tenderness!

Mimi:

You alone command love!

Rodolfo:

My soul throbs from your sublime tenderness,
in love's trembling kiss!

Mimi:

Oh! How his sweet flattery pierces my heart!
You alone command love!

(Rodolfo kisses Mimi.)

No, for pity's sake!

Rodolfo:

You're mine!

Mimi:

V'aspettan gli amici.

Rodolfo:

Già mi mandi via?

Mimi:

Vorrei dir, ma non oso.

Rodolfo:

Di'.

Mimi:

Se venissi con voi?

Rodolfo:

Che? Mimi! Sarebbe così dolce restar qui.
C'è freddo fuori.

Mimi:

Vi starò vicina!

Rodolfo:

E al ritorno?

Mimi:

Curioso!

Rodolfo:

Dammi il braccio, o mia piccina.

Mimi:

Obbedisco, signor!

Rodolfo:

Che m'ami, di'!

Mimi:

Io t'amo!

Rodolfo e Mimi:

Amor! Amor! Amor!

Mimi:

Your friends are waiting for you.

Rodolfo:

Are you already sending me away?

Mimi:

I want to say, but I dare not.

Rodolfo:

Say it.

Mimi:

Can I come with you?

Rodolfo:

What? Mimi! It would be so much nicer to
stay here. It's cold outside.

Mimi:

I'll be close to you!

Rodolfo:

And when we return?

Mimi:

Who knows?

Rodolfo:

Give me your arm, my little one.

Mimi:

I obey, sir!

Rodolfo:

Tell me you love me!

Mimi:

I love you!

Rodolfo and Mimi: (as they depart)

Love! Love! Love!

END OF ACT I

Act II

Christmas Eve at the Latin Quarter.

*In the square there is the Café Momus, surrounded by shops of all kinds.
Mimi and Rodolfo move about the crowd. Colline is at a shop negotiating the purchase
of an old coat; Schaunard is at a stand testing a pipe and horn.*

I Venditori:

Aranci, datteri! Caldi i marroni!
Ninnoli, croci, torroni, panna montata!
Oh! La crostata! Caramelle!
Fiori alle belle!
Fringuelli, passerì!
Latte di cocco! Panna, torroni!

La Folla:

Quanta folla, Che chiasso!
Su corriam! Stringiti a me!
Quanta folla! Su, partiam!
Date il passo!

Al Café:

Presto qua! Camerier!
Un bicchier!
Corri! Birra! Da ber!

La Madre:

Emma, quando ti chiamo!

Al Café:

Dunque? Un caffè!
Da ber!
Giubbe! Carote!

Monelli:

Voglio una lancia!

Hawkers:

Oranges, dates! Hot roasted chestnuts!
Trinkets, crosses, nougats, whipped cream!
Oh! Pie! Caramel!
Flowers for the ladies!
Finches, sparrows!
Coconut milk! Cream, nougats!

The Crowd:

What a crowd! What noise!
Let's run! Hold me tightly!
What a crowd! Up, let's leave!
Make way there!

At the Café:

Come here quickly! Waiter!
A glass!
Run! Beer! Something to drink!

A Mother:

Emma, when I call you!

At the Café:

Well? A coffee!
Something to drink!
Jackets! Carrots!

Urchins:

I want a lance!

Schaunard blows a horn that produces false notes.

Schaunard:

Falso questo Re!
Pipa a corno quant'è?

Schaunard:

This D is out of tune.
How much for the horn and pipe?

*Rodolfo and Mimi, arm in arm, pass through the crowd
and head toward the milliner's shop.*

Colline is at a shop seeking to buy a large coat.

Colline:

È un poco usato...

Colline:

It's a bit worn...

Rodolfo:

Andiam.

Rodolfo:

Let's go.

Mimi:

Andiam per la cuffietta?

Mimi:

Are we going to buy the bonnet?

Colline:

Ma è serio e a buon mercato.

Colline:

But it's cheap and dignified.

Rodolfo:

Tienti al mio braccio stretta.

Rodolfo:

Hold my arm tightly.

Mimi:

A te mi stringo.

Mimi:

I'll hold you tightly.

Mimi e Rodolfo:

Andiam!

Mimi and Rodolfo:

Let's go!

Mimi and Rodolfo enter the millinery shop.

Marcello:

Io pur mi sento in vena di gridar: Chi vuol,
donnine allegre, un po' d'amor?

Marcello: *(to passing girls)*

I'm also feel like shouting: which of you
happy girls wants a little love?

Venditori:

Datteri! Trote! Prugne di Tours!

Hawkers:

Dates! Trout! Plums from Tours!

Marcello:

Facciamo insieme a vendere a comprar!
Io dò ad un soldo il vergine mio cuor!

Marcello:

Let's play a bargaining game!
I'll give my virgin heart away for one sou!

Schaunard:

Fra spintoni e pestate accorrendo
affretta la folla e si diletta nel provar gioie
matte insoddisfatte.

Schaunard:

The rushing and running crowd is being
shoved and trampled, but delights in this
madness of unsatisfied pleasure.

Venditori:

Ninnoli, spillette, datteri e caramelle!
Fiori alle belle!

Hawkers:

Trinkets, brooches, dates and candies!
Flowers for the beauties!

Colline:
Copia rara, anzi unica: la rammatica Runica!

Colline: (*triumphantly waving a book*)
A rare copy, truly unique: Runic grammar!

Schaunard:
Uomo onesto!

Schaunard:
What an honest fellow!

Marcello:
A cena!

Marcello:
Let's eat!

Schaunard e Colline:
Rodolfo?

Schaunard and Colline:
And where's Rodolfo?

Marcello:
Entrò da una modista.

Marcello:
He went into the milliner's shop.

*Marcello, Schaunard and Colline enter the Café Momus; they carry out a table.
Rodolfo and Mimì exit the milliner's shop.*

Rodolfo:
Viene, gli amici aspettano.

Rodolfo:
Come, my friends are waiting.

Mimì:
Mi sta ben questa cuffietta rosa?

Mimì:
How do you like my pink bonnet?

Venditori:
Panna montata! Latte dicocco!
Oh! La crostata! Panna montata!

Hawkers:
Whipped Cream! Coconut milk!
Pies! Whipped cream!

Al Café:
Camerier! Un bicchier! Presto! Olà!
Ratafià!

At the Café:
Waiter! A glass! Quickly! Hey there!
Ratafià liqueur!

Rodolfo:
Sei bruna e quel color ti dona.

Rodolfo:
That color suits your brunette hair.

Mimì:
Bel vezzo di corallo!

Mimì: (*looking back at the shop*)
That was such a beautiful coral necklace!

Rodolfo:
Ho uno zio milionario. Se fa senno il buon
Dio voglio comprarti un vezzo assai più bel!

Rodolfo:
I've a millionaire uncle. If God acts wisely,
I'll buy you a necklace much more beautiful!

Borghesi:
Facciam coda alla gente!
Ragazze, state attente!

Townspeople:
Let's follow the train of people!
Girls, watch out!

Che chiasso! Quanta folla!

Pigliam Via Mazzarino!
Io soffoco, partiamo!
Vedi il café è vicin!
Andiam là da Momus! Ah!

Rodolfo:

Chi guardi?

Colline:

Odio il profano volgo al par d'Orazio.

Mimi:

Sei geloso?

Rodolfo:

All'uom felice sta il sospetto accanto.

Schaunard:

Ed io quando mi sazio vo'abbondanza di spazio.

Mimi:

Sei felice?

Marcello:

Vogliamo una cena prelibata.

Rodolfo:

Ah sì, tanto!

Marcello:

Lesto!

Schaunard:

Per molti!

Rodolfo:

E tu?

Mimi:

Sì, tanto!

Studenti, Sartine:

Là, da Momus!

What noise! What a crowd!

We'll take the Rue Mazarin!

I'm suffocating, let's go!

See, the cafe's near here!

Let's go over there to Momus! Ah!

Rodolfo:

Whom are you looking at?

Colline: *(at the Bohemian's table)*

I hate the vulgar herd just as Horace did.

Mimi:

Are you jealous?

Rodolfo:

Suspicion is always nearby a happy man.

Schaunard:

And when I'm stuffing myself I want plenty of room about me.

Mimi:

Are you happy?

Marcello: *(to the waiter)*

We want a special dinner.

Rodolfo:

Oh yes, very much!

Marcello: *(to the waiter)*

Quickly!

Schaunard:

And bring plenty!

Rodolfo:

And you?

Mimi:

Yes, very much!

Students, Dressmakers:

There, to Momus!

Marcello, Colline, Schaunard:

Lesto!

Marcello, Colline, Schaunard:

Quickly!

Voce di Parpignol:

Ecco i giocattoli di Parpignol!

Voice of Parpignol: (*in the distance*)

Here are Parpignol's toys!

Rodolfo:

Due posti!

Rodolfo:

Two places!

Colline:

Finalmente!

Colline:

Finally!

Rodolfo:

Eccoci qui!

Rodolfo:

We're here!

*Rodolfo and Mimì join their friends at the Café Momus.***Allegro moderato****RODOLFO***Questa è Mimì, gaia fiorata. Il suo venir comple - ta la bella compagnia,*

Questa è Mimì, gaia fioraia.
 Il suo venir completa la bella compagnia.
 Perché, perchè son io il poeta, essa la
 poesia.
 Dal mio cervel sbocciano i canti,
 dalle sue dita sbocciano i fiori,
 dall'anime esultanti sboccia l'amor!

This is Mimì, happy flower-maker.
 Her presence completes our beautiful company.
 Because I am the poet; and she is the
 poetry.
 As verses flow from my brain, the flowers
 bloom from her fingers, and love blossoms
 from our joyous souls!

Marcello:

Dio che concetti rari!

Marcello: (*ironically*)

Lord, what rare concepts!

Colline:*Digna est intrari.***Colline:**

She's worthy of our company!

Schaunard:*Ingrediat si necessit.***Schaunard:**

Let her become part of us, if necessary.

Colline:Io non dò che un *accessit!*.**Colline:**

I grant her access!

Voce di Parpignol:

Ecco i giocattoli di Parpignol!

Voice of Parpignol: (*coming closer*)

Here are Parpignol's toys!

Parpignol arrives in the square, pushing a cart covered with toys and flowers.

Colline:

Salame!

Ragazzi e Bambine:

Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol!

Ecco Parpignol!

Col carretto tutto fior!

Voglio la tromba, il cavallin, il tambur,
tamburel.

Voglio il cannon, voglio il frustin, dei
soldati i drappel.

Schaunard:

Cervo arrosto!

Marcello:

Un tacchineo!

Schaunard:

Vin del Reno!

Colline:

Vin da tavola!

Schaunard:

Aragosta senza crosta!

The mothers scold their children, trying in vain to get them away from Parpignol.

Madres:

Ah! Razza di furfanti indemoniati,
che ci venite a fare in questo loco?
A casa! A letto! Via! Brutti sguaiati!
Gli scappellotti vi parranno poco!

Un Ragazzo:

Vo' la tromba, il cavallin!

Rodolfo:

E tu Mimì, che vuoi?

Mimì:

La crema.

Schaunard:

È gran sfarzo. C'è una dama!

Colline: *(to the waiter)*

Salami!

Boys and Children:

Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol!

Here is Parpignol!

His cart is all decked with flowers!

I want the horn, the toy horse, the drum, the
tambourine!

I want the cannon; I want the toy soldier's
horn.

Schaunard:

Roast venison!

Marcello:

A turkey!

Schaunard:

Rhine wine!

Colline:

House wine!

Schaunard:

Shelled lobster!

Mothers:

What a bunch of devilish rascals!
What are you doing in this place?
Go home! To bed! You nasty bawlers!
A spanking will be the least you'll get for
the way you're behaving!

A Boy:

I want the horn, the little horse!

Rodolfo:

And you Mimì, what will you have?

Mimì:

The custard.

Schaunard: *(to the waiter)*

It's a great luxury! A lady's with us!

Ragazzi e Bambine:

Viva Parpignol!

Boys and Girls:

Bravo Parpignol!

Parpignol goes off, many of the children following him.

Marcello:

Signorina Mimì, che dono raro le ha fatto il suo Rodolfo?

Marcello:

Tell me, Mimì, what rare gift has Rodolfo given you?

Mimì:

Una cuffietta a pizzi tutta rosa ricamata;
coi miei capelli bruni ben si fonde.
Da tanto tempo tal cuffietta è cosa desiata!
Ed egli ha letto quel che il core asconde.
Ora colui che legge dentro a un core sa
l'amore, ed è lettore.

Mimì:

An embroidered pink bonnet, all with lace;
it goes well with my brunette hair.
I've wanted such a bonnet for a long time!
And he read what was hidden in my heart.
Anyone who can read the heart's secret
knows about love, and he's an astute reader.

Schaunard:

Esperto professore.

Schaunard:

He's an expert professor on the subject.

Colline:

Che ha già diplomi e non son armi prime
le sue rime.

Colline:

He already has diplomas, and his verses are
not those of a beginner.

Schaunard:

Tanto che sembra ver ciò ch'egli esprime!

Schaunard:

Everything he expresses seems so realistic!

Marcello:

O bella età d'inganni e d'utopie!
Si crede, spera, a tutto bello appare.

Marcello: *(looking at Mimì)*

Oh, beautiful age of delusions and utopias!
You hope and believe, and all seems beautiful.

Rodolfo:

La più divina delle poesie è quella, amico,
che c'insegna amare!

Rodolfo:

The poem most divine, my friend, is the
one that teaches us to love!

Mimì:

Amare è dolce ancora più del miele!

Mimì:

To love is even sweeter than honey!

Marcello:

Secondo il palato è miele o fie!e!

Marcello: *(hearing Musetta)*

It's honey or gall, depending on one's taste!

Mimì:

O Dio, l'ho offeso!

Mimì: *(surprised)*

Oh God, I've offended him!

Rodolfo:

E in lutto, o mia Mimì.

Rodolfo:

My Mimì, he's in mourning.

Schaunard e Colline:

Allegri, e un toast.

Marcello:

Qua del liquor!

Tutti:

E via i pensier, alti i bicchier. Beviam!

Marcello:

Ch'io beva del tossico!

Schaunard and Colline:

Cheer up! A toast!

Marcello:

Some liquor here!

All:

Away with brooding, let's drink!

Marcello: (*seeing Musetta approaching*)

Let me drink some poison!

The beautiful Musetta appears, followed by the old Alcindoro.

Schaunard, Colline e Rodolfo:

Oh! Musetta!

Marcello:

Essa!

Le Bottegaie:

To'! Lei! Sì! Musetta!

Siamo in auge! Che toeletta!

Schaunard, Colline and Rodolfo:

Oh! Musetta!

Marcello: (*turning pale*)

She!

The Shopwomen:

What! She! Yes! Musetta!

We're in awe! What a get-up!

Alcindoro:

Come un facchino correr di qua, di là.

No, no, non ci sta.

Alcindoro:

I'm running like a porter, back and forth.

No, it's not proper.

Musetta:

Vien, Lulù!

Musetta: (*calling Alcindoro*)

Come, Lulù!

Alcindoro:

Non ne posso più!

Alcindoro:

I can't stand any more of this!

Musetta:

Vien, Lulù!

Musetta:

Come, Lulù!

Schaunard:

Quel brutto coso mi par che sudi!

Schaunard:

That ugly old fool seems to be sweating!

Musetta sits down at a vacant table in front of the café.

Alcindoro:

Come? Qui fuori? Qui?

Alcindoro:

What? Here outside? Here?

Musetta:

Siedi, Lulù!

Alcindoro:

Tali nomignoli, prego, serbateli al te per tu!

Musetta:

Non farmi il Barbablù!

Colline:

È il vizio contegnoso!

Marcello:

Colla casta Susanna!

Mimi:

È pur ben vestita!

Rodolfo:

Gil angeli vanno nudi.

Mimi:

La conosci? Chi è?

Marcello:

Domandatelo a me.

Il suo nome è Musetta;
cognome "Tentazione!"

Per sua vocazione fa la rosa dei venti;
gira e muta soventi d'amanti e d'amore.
E come la civetta, è uccello sanguinari;
il suo cibo ordinario è il cuore!

Mangia il cuore!

Per questo io non ne ho più!

Musetta:

(Marcello mi vide, e non mi guarda, il vile!
Quel Schaunard che ride!

Mi fan tutti una bile!

Se potessi picchiar! Se potessi graffiar!

Ma non ho sotto man che questo pellican!
Aspetta!)

Ehi! Camerier!

Musetta:

Sit, Lulù!

Alcindoro: (*showing irritation*)

Those nicknames, please, save them for
when we're alone!

Musetta:

Don't act like a Bluebeard with me!

Colline: (*examining Alcindoro*)

He's evil behind that front!

Marcello: (*with contempt*)

With the chaste Susanna!

Mimi: (*to Rodolfo*)

She's beautifully dressed!

Rodolfo:

Angels go naked.

Mimi: (*curiously, to Rodolfo*)

Do you know her? Who is she?

Marcello:

Ask me that question.

Her name is Musetta;
her nickname is "Temptation!"

Her occupation is being a leaf in the wind;
always turning, changing her lovers and
her loves. Like an owl, she's a bird of prey;
her favorite food is the heart!

She eats the heart!

For that reason, I no longer have a heart!

Musetta: (*upset that no one is looking*)

(Marcello saw me, but the coward won't
look at me. And that Schaunard's laughing!

They all make me angry!

If I could just hit them! Scratch them!

But I've got this old pelican on my hands.
Just wait!)

Hey! Waiter!

Marcello:
Passatemi il ragù!

Marcello: (*hiding his emotion*)
Pass me the stew!

Musetta:
Ehi! Camerier! Questo piatto ha una puzza di rifritto!

Musetta:
Hey! Waiter! This plate has the smell of stale fat!

Musetta throws the plate to the ground.

Alcindoro:
No, Musetta, zitto, zitto!

Alcindoro: (*trying to calm her*)
No, Musetta! Quiet now!

Musetta:
(Non si volta! Ora lo batto!)

Musetta: (*angrily looking at Marcello*)
(He won't turn around! No I'll hit him!)

Alcindoro:
Zitto! Modi, garbo!
A chi parli?

Alcindoro:
Quiet now. Manners, tact!
To whom are you speaking?

Colline:
Questo pollo è un poema!

Colline:
This chicken is a poem!

Alcindoro:
Con chi parli?

Alcindoro:
With whom are you speaking?

Musetta:
Al cameriere! Non seccar!

Musetta:
To the waiter! Don't bother me!

Schaunard:
Il vino è prelibato!

Schaunard:
The wine is excellent!

Musetta:
Voglio fare il mio piacere!

Musetta:
I want to do what I please!

Alcindoro:
Parla pian!

Alcindoro:
Lower your voice!

Musetta:
Vo' far quel che mi pare!

Musetta:
I want to do as I like!

Alcindoro:
Parla pian, parla pian!

Alcindoro:
Lower your voice!

Alcindoro takes a menu and begins to order dinner.

Musetta:
Non seccar!

Musetta:
Don't bother me!

Sartine e Studenti:

Guarda chi si vede!
Proprio lei, Musetta!
Con quel vecchio che balbetta.
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Musetta:

(Che sia geloso di questa mummia?)

Alcindoro:

La convenienza, il grado, la virtù!

Musetta:

(Vediamo se mi resta tanto poter su lui da farlo cedere!)

Schaunard:

La commedia è stupenda!

Musetta:

Tu non mi guardi!

Alcindoro:

Vedi bene the ordino!

Schaunard:

La commedia è stupenda!

Colline:

Stupenda!

Rodolfo:

Sappi per tuo governo che non darei perdono in sempiterno!

Schaunard:

Essa a l'un parla perchè l'altro intenda.

Mimi:

Io t'amo tanto, e sono tutta tua!
Che mi parli di perdono?

Colline:

E l'altro invan crudel finge di non capir ma sugge miel!

Dressmakers and Students:

Look, look who's there!
It's Musetta herself!
With that stuttering old man.
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Musetta:

(But could he be jealous of that mummy?)

Alcindoro:

Propriety, rank, virtue!

Musetta:

(Let's see if I still have enough power over him to make him surrender!)

Schaunard:

The comedy is stupendous!

Musetta: (*looking at Marcello*)

You're not looking at me!

Alcindoro:

Can't you see that I'm ordering!

Schaunard:

The comedy is stupendous!

Colline:

Stupendous!

Rodolfo: (*to Mimi*)

If you ever behaved like that I wouldn't forgive you!

Schaunard:

She speaks to one for the other to understand.

Mimi: (*to Rodolfo*)

I love you so much, and I'm all yours!
Why speak of forgiveness?

Colline: (*to Schaunard*)

And the other is cruel and pretends he is deaf, but he enjoys it all!

Musetta:

Ma il tuo cuore martella!

Musetta:

But your heart is pounding!

Alcindoro:

Parla piano!

Alcindoro:

Lower your voice!

Tempo di Valser lento**MUSETTA****Musetta:**

Quando m'envo' soletta per la via,
la gente sosta e mira,
e la bellezza mia tutta ricerca in me,
da capo a piè.

Musetta:

When I walk alone on the street,
the people stop, look,
and inspect my beauty, examining me from
head to toe.

Marcello:

Legatemi alla seggiola!

Marcello: (*to his friends*)

Tie me to the chair!

Alcindoro:

Quella gente che dirà?

Alcindoro:

What will people say?

Musetta:

Ed assaporo allor la bramosia sottil che
dagli occhi traspira
e dai palesi vezzi intender sa alle occulte
beltà.
Così l'effluvio del desio tutta m'aggira,
felice mi fa, felice me fa!

Musetta:

And then I savor the subtle longing in
their eyes
when they appreciate my charms and
mysterious beauty.
A rush of desire surrounds me,
and it makes me happy!

Alcindoro:

(Quel canto scurrile mi muove labile!)

Alcindoro:

(This scurrilous song infuriates me!)

Musetta:

E tu che sai, che memori e ti struggi,
da me tanto rifuggi?
So ben: le angosce tue non le vuoi dir,
ma ti senti morir!

Musetta: (*addressing Marcello*)

Do you must remember that you destroyed
yourself when you escaped from me?
I know it well: you won't admit that you felt
like you wanted to die!

Mimi:

Io vedo ben che quella poveretta tutta
invaghita ell'è di Marcel!

Mimi:

I can tell that the poor girl is head over
heels in love with Marcello.

Alcindoro:

Quella gente che dirà?

Rodolfo:

Marcello un dì l'amò,
la fraschetta l'abbandonò .
per poi darsi a miglior vita.

Schaunard:

Ah! Marcello cederà!

Colline:

Chi sa mai quel che avverrà!

Schaunard:

Trovan dolce al pari il laccio chi lo tende e
chi ci dà.

Colline:

Santi numi! In simil briga mai Colline
intopperà!

Musetta:

(Ah! Marcello smania, Marcello è vinto!)

Alcindoro:

Parla piano! Zitto, zitto!

Mimi:

(Quell'infelice mi muove a pietà.)

Colline:

Essa è bella, io non son cieco.

Mimi:

T'amo!

Schaunard:

(Quel braccioli a momenti cederà!
Stupenda è la commedia!
Marcello cederà!)

Se tal vaga persona ti trattasse a tu per tu, la
tua scienza brontolona manderesti a
Belzebù!

Alcindoro:

What will people say?

Rodolfo: *(to Mimi)*

Marcello loved her once,
but the coquette abandoned him
for a better life.

Schaunard:

Ah! Marcello will give in!

Colline:

Who knows what will happen!

Schaunard:

They find the snare equally sweet to the
hunter as well as the hunted.

Colline:

Holy Gods! I'd never land myself in such a
situation!

Musetta:

(Ah! Marcello's raving! Marcello is conquered!)

Alcindoro:

Lower your voice! Be quiet!

Mimi:

(I feel so sorry for the poor girl.)

Colline:

She's lovely, I'm not blind.

Mimi: *(nestling close to Rodolfo)*

I love you!

Schaunard:

(The braggart is about to yield!
The play is stupendous!
Marcello will surrender!)

(to Colline)

If such a pretty person stopped and talked
intimately to you, you'd gladly send all
your grumpy science to the devil!

Musetta:

So ben: le angoscie tue non le vuoi dir.
Ah! ma ti senti morir!

Io voglio fare il mio piacere!
Voglio far quel che mi par!

Mimi:

Quel l' infelice mi muove a pietà!
L'amor ingeneroso è tristo amor!

Rodolfo:

È fiacco amore quel che le offese vendicar
non sa! Non risorge spento amor!

Colline:

Ma piaccionmi assai più una pipa e un testo
greco. Essa è bella, non son cieco!

Alcindoro:

Modi! Garbo! Zitta!

Musetta:

Non seccar!
(Or conviene liberarsi del vecchio.)

Ahi!

Alcindoro:

Che c'è?

Musetta:

Qual dolore! Qual bruciore!

Alcindoro:

Dove?

Musetta:

A1 piè!
Sciogli! slaccia!
Rompi! Straccia! Te ne imploro!
Laggiù c'è un calzolaio.
Corri, presto! Ne voglio un altro paio!
Ahi! che fitta, maledetta scarpa stretta!
Or la levo. Eccola qua.
Corri, va presto!

Musetta:

I know: you won't admit your suffering.
Ah! But you feel like you are dying!
(to Alcindoro)
I want to do as I please!
I want to do what suits me!

Mimi:

I feel so sorry for the poor girl!
Love is sad when it's unforgiving.

Rodolfo:

Love is weak when wrongs are unavenged!
A dead love does not return!

Colline:

I'm much happier with my pipe and a
Greek text. She's beautiful, I'm not blind!

Alcindoro:

Manners! Tact! Hush!

Musetta:

Don't bother me!
(Now to get rid of the old man.)
(pretending pain from her shoes)
Ouch!

Alcindoro:

What is it?

Musetta:

What pain! What burning!

Alcindoro:

Where?

Musetta:

In my foot!
Loosen it! Untie it!
Break it! Tear it! I implore you!
There's a shoemaker down there.
Run there quickly! I want another pair!
Ah, how it pinches, this damn tight shoe!
No I'll take it off. Here it is.
Run, go quickly!

Marcello:

Gioventù mia, tu non sei morta, nè di te
morto è il souvenir!
Se tu battessi alla mia porta t'andrebbe il
mio core ad aprir!

Marcello: (*greatly moved*)

(My youth, you are not dead, and neither is
the memory of you!
If you knocked at my door, my heart would
open the door for you!)

Alcindoro:

Imprudente! Quella gente che dirà?
Ma il mio grado! Vuoi ch'io comprometta?
Aspetta!

Alcindoro:

How unwise! What will people say?
My reputation! Do you want to ruin it?
Wait!

Alcindoro takes Musetta's shoe and runs hastily toward the cobbler's shop.

Musetta! Vo'!

Musetta! I'm going!

Schaunard, Colline:

La commedia è stupenda!

Schaunard, Colline:

The comedy is stupendous!

Mimi:

(Io vedo ben: ell'è invaghita di Marcello!)

Mimi:

(I can see she's madly in love with Marcello!)

Rodolfo:

(Io vedo ben: la commedia è stupenda!)

Rodolfo:

(I can see that the comedy is stupendous!)

Musetta jumps into Marcello's arms, and they embrace passionately.

Musetta:

Marcello!

Musetta:

Marcello!

Marcello:

Sirena!

Marcello:

Siren!

Schaunard:

Siamo all'ultima scena!

Schaunard:

We're at the last scene!

The waiter brings the bill.

Tutti:

Il conto!

All:

The bill!

Schaunard:

Così presto?

Schaunard:

So soon?

Colline:

Chi l'ha richiesto?

Colline:

Who asked for it?

Schaunard:

Vediam!

Schaunard:

Let's see!

Colline e Rodolfo:

Caro!

Colline and Rodolfo:

It's high!

Rodolfo, Schaunard, Colline:

Fuori il danaro!

Rodolfo, Schaunard, Colline:

Out with the money!

Schaunard:

Colline, Rodolfo e tu, Marcel?

Schaunard:

Colline, Rodolfo and you, Marcello?

*Drums of the retreat are heard approaching.***Ragazzi:**

La Ritirata!

Children:

The Retreat!

Marcello:

Siamo all'asciutto!

Marcello

We're broke!

Schaunard:

Come?

Schaunard:

What?

Sartini, Studenti:

La Ritirata!

Dressmakers, Students:

The Retreat!

Rodolfo:

Ho trenta soldi in tutto!

Rodolfo:

I've only got thirty sous!

Borghesi:

La Ritirata!

Townpeople:

The Retreat!

Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Come? Non ce n'è più?

Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

What? There's no more money?

Schaunard:

Ma il mio tesoro ov'è?

Schaunard: (in terror)

But where's my treasure?

Monelli:

S'avvicinan per di qua?

Urchins:

Are they coming this way?

*The Bohemians find their pockets empty. The people run from all sides to see from which direction the retreat is coming.***Musetta:**

Il mio conto date a me.

Musetta: (to the waiter)

Give me my bill.

Sartine, Studenti:No! Di là! S'avvicinan per di là!
Vien di qua! No! Vien di là!**Dressmakers, Students:**No! There! They're approaching from there!
No! From here! No! From there!

Monelli:

S'avvicinan per di là!

Sartine, Studenti:

Vien di qua!

Monelli:

No, vien di là!

Musetta:

Bene!

Borghesi:

Largo!

Ragazzi:

Voglio veder! Voglio sentir!

Musetta:

Presto, sommate quello con questo!

Paga il signorche stava qui con me!

Mamme:

Lisetta, vuoi tacere! Tonio, la vuoi finire!

Fanciulle:

Mamma, voglio vedere! Papà, voglio sentire!

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Paga il signor!

Monelli:

Come sarà arrivata, la seguiremo al passo!

Colline, Schaunard, Marcello:

Paga il signor!

Musetta:

E dove s'è seduto, ritrovi il mio saluto!

Borghesi:

In quel rulliò tu senti la patria maestà!

Rodolfo, Colline, Schaunard, Marcello:

E dove s'è seduto, ritrovi il suo saluto!

Urchins:

They're coming from there!

Dressmakers, Students:

They're coming this way!

Urchins:

No, that way!

Musetta:

Very well!

Townspeople:

Make way!

Children:

I want to see! I want to hear!

Musetta: *(to the waiter)*

Quick, add these two bills together! .

The gentleman who was with me will pay!

Mothers:

Lisetta, please be quiet! Tonio, stop that at once!

Girls:

Mamma, I want to see! Papa, I want to hear!

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

The gentleman will pay!

Urchins:

When it comes by, we'll march with it!

Colline, Schaunard, Marcello:

The gentleman will pay!

Musetta:

And here, where we sat, he'll find my greetings!

Townspeople:

That drumroll expresses our country's glory!

Rodolfo, Colline, Schaunard, Marcello:

And here, where we sat, he'll find greetings!

La Folla:

Largo, largo, eccoli qua!

Monelli:

Ohè! Attenti! Eccoli qua!

Marcello:

Giunge la Ritirata!

La Folla:

In fila!

Colline, Marcello:

Che il vecchio non ci veda fuggir colla sua preda!

Rodolfo:

Giunge la Ritirata!

Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Quella folla serrata il nascondiglio appresti!

La Folla:

Ecco il tambur maggiore!

Più fiero d'un antico guerriero!

Mimi, Musetta, Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Lesti! Lesti! Lesti!

La Folla:

I Zappatori! Olà!

Ecco il tambur maggior!

Pare un general!

La Ritirata è qua!

Eccola là, il bel tambur maggior!

La canna d'or tutto splendor!

Che guarda, passa, va!

Di Francia è il più bell'uom!

The Crowd:

Make way, make way, here they come!

Urchins:

Hey! Watch out! Here they are!

Marcello:

The Retreat is arriving!

The Crowd:

All in line!

Colline, Marcello:

Don't let the old fool see us make off with his prey!

Rodolfo:

The Retreat is arriving!

Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

We'll hide ourselves in the packed crowd!

The Crowd:

Here's the drum major!

More proud than an ancient warrior!

Mimi, Musetta, Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Hurry! Let's run off!

The Crowd:

The Sappers! Hey!

Here's the drum major!

He looks like a general!

The Retreat is here!

There he is, the handsome drum-major!

The golden baton, all aglitter!

See, he looks at us as he goes past!

He's the handsomest man in France!

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Viva Musetta! Cuor biricchin!

Gloria ed onor, del Quartier Latin!

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline:

Long live Musetta! Heart of a rogue!

The glory and honor of the Latin Quarter!

Musetta, with only one shoe, is carried on the shoulders of Marcello and Colline.

All follow the Retreat and disappear. Alcindoro returns with Musetta's new shoes.

The waiter hands him the bill, and exasperated, he falls into a chair.

END OF ACT II

Act III

It is February, and snow is everywhere.

It is dawn at the Barrière d'Enfer, the tollgate to the city. Customs men doze, seated before the barrier. From the tavern, there is the clinking of glasses and the sounds of laughter and merriment.

Spazzini:

Ohè, là, le guardie! Aprite!
Quelli di Gentilly! Siam gli spazzini!
Fiocca la neve. Ohè, là! Qui s'agghiaccia!

Undoganiere:

Vengo!

Voci dal Cabaret:

Chi nel ber trovò il piacer nel suo bicchier,
ah, d'una bocca nell'ardor trovò l'amor!

Voce di Musetta:

Ah! Se nel bicchiersta il piacer,
in giovin bocca sta l'amor!

Voci dal Cabaret:

Trallerallè. Eva a Noè!

Voci dal Boulevard:

Hopplà! Hopplà!

Doganiere:

Son già le lattivendole!

Sweepers:

Hey, there! Guards! Open up!
We're the sweepers from Gentilly.
It's snowing. Hey! We're freezing here!

Customs Officer:

I'm coming!

Voices from the Tavern:

Some find pleasure in their cups,
and others find love in the ardor of lips!

Voice of Musetta: (inside the tavern)

Ah! If pleasure is in the glass,
love lies in your youthful lips!

Voices from the Tavern:

Trallerallè. Eve and Noah!

Voices from the Highway:

Giddap!

Customs Officer:

Here come the milkmaids!

The gate is opened for the milkmaids, who pass through with their donkeys.

Le Lattivendole:

Buon giorno!

Milkmaids:

Good morning!

Le Contadine:

Burro a cacio! Polli ed ova!
Voi da the pane andate?
A San Michele. Ci troverem più tardi?
A mezzodi!

Peasant Women: (carrying baskets)

Butter and cheese! Chickens and eggs!
Which way are you going?
To Saint Michel! Shall we meet later?
Yes, at noon!

*Mimi enters, immediately seized by a fit of coughing.
She then recovers herself, and then approaches the Sergeant.*

Mimi:

Sa dirmi, scusi, qual è l'osteria dove un pittor lavora?

Sergente:

Eccola!

Mimi:

Grazie!

Mimi: *(to the Sergeant)*

Excuse me, which is the tavern where a painter works?

Sergeant:

There it is!

Mimi:

Thank you!

A waitress emerges from the tavern. Mimi approaches her.

A buona donna, mi fate il favore di cercarmi il pittore Marcello?
Ho da parlargli. Ho tanta fretta.
Ditegli piano, che Mimi l'aspetta.

Oh, good woman, would you please be kind enough to find the painter Marcello?
I have to speak to him. I'm in such a hurry.
Tell him quietly that Mimi is waiting for him.

Sergente:

Ehi, quel paniere!

Sergeant: *(to a passing man)*

Hey! That basket!

Doganiere:

Vuoto!

Customs Officer:

Empty!

Sergente:

Passi!

Sergeant:

Let him through.

Marcello emerges from the tavern, sees Mimi, and rushes towards her.

Marcello:

Mimi!

Marcello:

Mimi!

Mimi:

Speravo di trovarvi qui.

Mimi:

I hoped I'd find you here.

Marcello:

È ver, siam qui da un mese di quell'oste alle spese. Musetta insegna il canto ai passeggierei. Io pingo quei guerrieri sulla facciata.

Marcello:

That's right. We've been here a month, at the tavern's expense. Musetta teaches singing to travellers. I paint those warriors on the facade.

È freddo. Entrate.

Mimi coughs.

It's cold. Come inside.

Mimi:

C'è Rodolfo?

Mimi:

Is Rodolfo there?

Marcello

Sì.

Mimi:

Non posso entrar. No! No!

Marcello:

Perchè?

Mimi:

O buon Marcello, aiuto! Aiuto!

Marcello:

Cos'è avvenuto?

Mimi:

Rodolfo m'ama e mi fugge,
il mio Rodolfo si strugge per gelosia.
Un passo, un detto, un vezzo, un fior lo
mettono in sospetto,
onde corucci ed ire.
Talor la notte fingo di dormire e in me te
sento fisso spiarmi i sogni in viso.
Mi grida ad ogni istante: non fai per me,
ti prendi un altro amante, non fai per me!
Ahimè! In lui parla il rovello, lo so, ma che
rispondergli, Marcello?

Marcello:

Quando s'è come voi non si vive in
compagnia.

Mimi:

Dite ben, dite bene, lasciarci conviene.
Aiutateci, aiutateci voi;
noi s'è provato più volte, ma invano.

Marcello:

Son lieve a Musetta, ell'è lieve a me,
perchè ci amiamo in allegria.
Canti a risa, ecco il fior d'invariabile amor!

Mimi:

Dite bene, dite bene. Lasciarci conviene!
Fate voi per il meglio.

Marcello:

Yes.

Mimi:

I can't go in. No! No!

Marcello: (*in surprise*)

Why not?

Mimi: (*bursting into tears*)

Oh, good Marcello! Help me!

Marcello:

What has happened?

Mimi:

Rodolfo loves me and flees from me.
Rodolfo is consumed by jealousy.
A footstep, a word, a compliment or a
flower arouse his suspicions,
and he frowns and becomes angry.
Sometimes at night I pretend to sleep, and I
sense that he's spying on my dreams.
He shouts at me all the time: "You're not
for me. Find yourself another lover."
Alas! I know it's his anger speaking, but
Marcello, what can I answer him?

Marcello:

When two people act like that, they
shouldn't live together.

Mimi:

You're right. It's better that we separate.
Help us, help us;
we've tried many times, but in vain.

Marcello:

I take Musetta lightly, and she behaves like
me. We're both merry and gay.
Laughter and song is the secret of a lasting love!

Mimi:

You're right, you're right. It's better that we
separate!. Do what is best for us.

Marcello:

Sta ben! Ora lo sveglio.

Mimi:

Dorme?

Marcello:E piombato qui un'ora avanti l'alba,
s'assopì sopra una panca. Guardate.**Marcello:**

All right! Now I'll wake him up.

Mimi:

Is he sleeping?

Marcello:He stumbled in here an hour before dawn
and fell asleep on a bench. Look at him.*He hears a window and motions for Mimi to look inside. Mimi coughs.*

Che tosse!

What a cough!

Mimi:Da ieri ho l'ossa rotte. Fuggì da me
stanotte dicendomi: è finita. A giorno sono
uscita e me ne venni a questa volta.**Mimi:**I've been exhausted since yesterday. He
fled during the night, saying "It's all over."
At dawn I came here to find you.**Marcello:**

Si desta, s'alza, mi cerca, viene.

Marcello: (*observing Rodolfo*)

He's waking, looking for me, he's coming.

Mimi:

Ch'ei non mi veda!

Mimi:

He shouldn't see me!

Marcello:Or rincasate Mimi per carità!
Non fate scene quà!**Marcello:**Mimi, go home now, for pity's sake.
Don't make scenes here!*Mimi hides as Rodolfo emerges from the tavern.***Rodolfo:**Marcello, finalment!. Qui niun ci sente.
Io voglio separarmi da Mimi!**Rodolfo:**Marcello, at last! No one can hear us here.
I want to separate from Mimi.**Marcello:**

Sei volubil così?

Marcello:

Are you so fickle?

Rodolfo:Già un'altra volta credetti morto il mio cor,
ma di quegli occhi azzurri allo splendor
esso è risorto. Ora il tedio l'assal.**Rodolfo:**Once again I thought my heart was dead,
but it revived at the glow of her blue eyes.
Now it drives me insane.**Marcello:**

E gli vuoi rinnovare il funeral?

Marcello:

And you want another funeral?

Rodolfo:

Per sempre!

Marcello:

Cambia metro! Dei pazzi è l'amor tetro
che lacrime distilla.

Se non ride e sfavilla, l'amore è fiacco a roco.

Tu sei geloso!

Rodolfo:

Un poco.

Marcello:

Collerico, lunatico, imbevuto di pregiudizi,
noioso, cocciuto!

Mimì:

(Or lo fa incollerire! Me poveretta!)

Rodolfo:

Mimì è una civetta che frascheggia con tutti.
Un moscardino di Viscontino le fa l'occhio di triglia.

Ella sgonnella a scopre la caviglia,
con un far promettente a lusinghier.

Marcello:

Lo devo dir? Non mi sembri sincero.

Rodolfo:

Ebbene, no. Non lo son.

Invan nascondo la mia vera tortura.

Amo Mimì sopra ogni cosa al mondo,
io l'amo, ma ho paura.

Mimì è tanto malata! Ogni dì più declina.
La povera piccina è condannata!

Marcello:

Mimì?

Mimì:

(Che vuol dire?)

Rodolfo:

For ever!

Marcello:

Change your tune! Gloomy love that
causes tears to flow belongs to madmen.

If it doesn't laugh and sparkle, love is
hoarse and weak.

You are jealous!

Rodolfo:

A little.

Marcello:

You're a choleric, a lunatic, steeped in
prejudices, troublesome and stubborn!

Mimì:

(Poor me! Now he'll make him angry!)

Rodolfo:

Mimì is a coquette who flirts with everyone.
A dandy of a Viscount eyes her with
longing,

and she wiggles her ankles, and lures him
with promising and flattering gestures.

Marcello:

Is that the truth? You aren't being sincere.

Rodolfo:

All right, no. No I'm not being sincere.

I try in vain to hide my real anguish.

I love Mimì more than anything in the world,.

I love her, but I'm afraid!

Mimì is so sick, getting weaker every day.

The poor girl is doomed.

Marcello:

Mimì?

Mimì:

(What does he mean?)

Lento triste**RODOLFO****Rodolfo:**

Una terribil tosse l'esil petto le scuote.
Già le smunte gote di sangue ha rosse.

Rodolfo:

A terrible cough racks her fragile chest.
Her pale cheeks have become flushed.

Marcello:

Povera Mimì!

Marcello:

Poor Mimì!

Mimì:

(Ahimè, morire!?)

Mimì: (*overhearing*)

(Alas! I am dying?)

Rodolfo:

La mia stanza è una tana squallida.
Il fuoco è spento. V'entra e l'aggira il vento
di tramontana.
Essa canta e sorride e il rimorso m'assale.
Me cagion del fatale mal che l'uccide.

Rodolfo:

My room is a squalid den.
The fire has gone out. The north wind
enters and extinguishes it.
She smiles and sings, and I'm seized with
remorse. I'm the cause of her fatal illness.

Marcello:

Che far dunque?

Marcello:

What can be done?

Mimì:

(O mia vita! E finita! Ahimè, morir!)

Mimì:

(Oh! My life is over! Alas, to die!)

Rodolfo:

Mimì di serra è fiore. Povertà l'ha sfiorita;
per richiamarla in vita non basta amor!

Rodolfo:

Mimì's like a flower lacking water and sun;
love alone won't bring her back to life!

Marcello:

Oh qual pietà! Poveretta! Povera Mimì!

Marcello:

What a pity! Poor girl! Poor Mimì!

Mimì's sobs and coughs reveal her presence.

Rodolfo:

Che? Mimì! Tu qui! M'hai sentito?

Rodolfo:

What! Mimì? You here! You heard me?

Marcello:

Ella dunque ascoltava?

Marcello:

Was she listening?

Rodolfo:

Facile alla paura per nulla io m'arrovello.
Vien là nel tepor!

Mimi:

No, quel tanfo mi soffoca!

Rodolfo:

Ah, Mimi!

Marcello:

È Musetta che ride. Con chi ride?
Ah la civetta! Imparerai!

Rodolfo:

I'm easily frightened, angry over nothing.
Come inside where it's warm!

Mimi:

No, the moldy smell would choke me!

Rodolfo:

Ah, Mimi!

Marcello: (*hearing Musetta in the tavern*)

That's Musetta laughing. And with whom?
That flirt! I'll teach her!

Marcello runs into the tavern.

Mimi:

Addio!

Mimi: (*to Rodolfo*)

Good-bye!

Rodolfo:

Che! Vai?

Rodolfo:

What? You're going?

Mimi:

Donde lieta uscì al tuo grido d'amore,
torna sola Mimi al solitario nido.
Ritorna un'altra volta a intesser finti fior!

Mimi:

Where I was happy before your love called,
back again to my lonely nest,
where I'll once again weave fake flowers!

Andantino mosso**MIMI**

Ad - di - o

sen - za ran - cor,

Addio senza rancor.

Ascolta, le poche robe aduna che lasciai
sparse.

Nel mio cassetto stan chiusi quel cerchietto
d'or e il libro di preghiere.

Involgi tutto quanto in un grembiale e
manderò il portiere.

Bada, sotto il guanciale c'è la cuffietta rosa.
Se vuoi serbarla a ricordo d'amor!

Addio, senza rancor.

Goodbye without bitterness.

Listen, gather up the few things I've left
behind.

The gold ring and my prayer book are in
the drawer.

Wrap everything in an apron and I'll send
the concierge for them.

Wait! My pink bonnet is under the pillow.

If you want, keep it as a memory of our love.

Goodbye, without bitterness.

Rodolfo:

Dunque è proprio finita!
Te ne vai, la mia piccina?
Addio, sogni d'amor!

Mimi:

Addio dolce svegliare alla mattina!

Rodolfo:

Addio sognante vita!

Mimi:

Addio rabuffi a gelosie!

Rodolfo:

Che un tuo sorriso acqueta.

Mimi:

Addio sospetti.

Rodolfo:

Baci.

Mimi:

Pungenti amarezze.

Rodolfo:

Ch'io da vero poeta rimavo con "carezze"!

Rodolfo e Mimi:

Soli, l'inverno è cosa da morire!

Mimi:

Soli!

Rodolfo e Mimi:

Mentre a primavera c'è compagno il sol!

Rodolfo:

Then it's really over!
You're leaving, my little one?
Farewell to dreams of love!

Mimi:

Farewell to gently awakening in the morning!

Rodolfo:

Farewell to my life's dream!

Mimi:

Farewell to reproaches and jealousies!

Rodolfo:

That one smile of yours could dispel.

Mimi:

Farewell to suspicions.

Rodolfo:

Kisses.

Mimi:

Poignant bitterness.

Rodolfo:

Like a true poet, I rhymed it with "caresses"!

Rodolfo and Mimi:

To be alone in winter is like death!

Mimi:

Alone!

Rodolfo and Mimi:

While in springtime, the sun is our friend!

Marcello and Musetta are heard quarrelling in the tavern.

Marcello:

Che facevi? Che dicevi?
Presso il foco a quel signore?

Musetta:

Che vuoi dir?

Marcello:

What were you doing and saying to that
man when you were near the fire?

Musetta:

What do you mean?

Mimi:

Niuno è solo l'april.

Marcello:

Al mio venire hai mutato di colore.

Musetta:

Quel signore mi deceva: "Ama il ballo, signorina?"

Rodolfo:

Si parla coi gigli e le rose.

Mimi:

Esce dai nidi un cinguettio gentile.

Marcello:

Vana, frivola civetta!

Musetta:

Arrossendo rispondevo: "Ballerei sera e mattina."

Marcello:

Quel discorso asconde mire disoneste.

Musetta:

Voglio piena libertà!

Marcello:

Io t'acconcio per le feste se ti colgo a invicettare!

Rodolfo e Mimi:

Al fiorir di primavera c'è compagno il sol.

Musetta:

Che me canti? Che mi gridi?
All'altar non siamo uniti!

Marcello:

Bada, sotto il mio cappello non ci stan certi ornamenti!

Musetta:

Io detesto quegli amanti che la fanno da mariti!

Mimi:

No one is alone in April.

Marcello: *(emerging from the tavern)*

When I came in you suddenly blushed.

Musetta:

The man was asking me: "Miss, do you like dancing?"

Rodolfo:

One can speak with roses and lilies.

Mimi:

The birds twitter gently in their nests.

Marcello:

Vain, frivolous flirt!

Musetta:

I blushed and answered: "I could dance day and night!"

Marcello:

Your talk hides dishonest desires.

Musetta:

I want complete freedom!

Marcello:

I'll give you a severe thrashing if I catch you flirting!

Rodolfo and Mimi:

While in springtime, the sun is our friend.

Musetta:

What are saying? What are you shouting?
We haven't been married at the altar!

Marcello:

Keep in mind, there aren't enough horns under my hat!

Musetta:

I can't stand lovers who act just like they're married!

Rodolfo e Mimì:

Chiacchieran le fontane. La brezza della sera balsami stende sulle doglie umane.

Marcello:

Io non faccio da zimbello ai novizi intraprendenti.
Vana, frivola civetta!
Ve ne andate? Vi ringrazio: or son ricco divenuto.

Musetta:

Fo all'amor con chi mi piace!
Non ti garba?
Musetta se ne va, sì!

Marcello e Musetta:

Vi saluto!

Rodolfo e Mimì:

Vuoi che aspettiam la primavera ancor?

Musetta:

Signor, addio vi dico con piacer!

Marcello:

Son servo a me ne vo!

Musetta:

Pittore da bottega!

Marcello:

Vipera!

Musetta:

Rospo!

Marcello:

Strega!

Mimì:

Sempre tua per la vita!

Rodolfo e Mimì:

Ci lascerem alla stagion dei fior!

Rodolfo and Mimì:

The whisper of fountains and the evening breeze heals human suffering.

Marcello:

I won't be laughed at by some young upstart.
You vain, empty-headed flirt!
Are you leaving? I thank you: I'll feel richer because of it.

Musetta:

I'll make love with whomever I please!
You don't like it?
Yes, Musetta goes her own way!

Marcello and Musetta:

I bid you goodbye!

Rodolfo and Mimì:

Shall we then wait until spring comes!

Musetta:

I bid you, sir, farewell with pleasure!

Marcello:

I obey you and leave!

Musetta: (leaving)

You house-painter!

Musetta:

Viper!

Musetta:

Toad!

Marcello:

Witch!

Mimì:

Always yours for life!

Rodolfo and Mimì:

We'll part when the flowers bloom!

Mimi:

Vorrei che eterno durasse il verno!

Mimi:

I wish that winter would last forever!

Rodolfo e Mimi:

Ci lascerem alla stagion dei fior!

Rodolfo and Mimi:

We'll part when the flowers bloom!

END OF ACT III

Act IV

The garret

Marcello:

In un coupè?

Rodolfo:

Con pariglia e livree.

Mi salutò ridendo.

Tò Musetta! Le dissi:

“E il cuor? Non batte, o non lo sento
grazie al velluto che il copre.”

Marcello:

Ci ho gusto davvero!

Rodolfo:

(Loiola va. Ti rodi e ridi.)

Marcello:

Non batte? Bene! Io pur vidi...

Rodolfo:

Musetta?

Marcello:

Mimì.

Rodolfo:

L’hai vista?

Oh guarda!

Marcello:

Era in carrozza vestita come una regina.

Rodolfo:

Evviva! Ne son contento.

Marcello:

(Bugiardo, si strugge d’amor.)

Rodolfo:

Lavoriam!

Marcello:

In a coupè?

Rodolfo:

With footmen and a pair of horses.

She greeted me laughing.

Why Musetta! I asked her:

“And your heart? I don’t feel your heart
beating, buried so deep in those velvet clothes.”

Marcello:

I’m delighted to hear that!

Rodolfo:

(Hypocrite. You’re laughing outside but
fretting inside.)

Marcello:

Not beating? Well, I also saw...

Rodolfo:

Musetta?

Marcello:

Mimì.

Rodolfo:

You saw her?

(with pretended indifference)

Really!

Marcello:

She was in a carriage dressed like a queen.

Rodolfo:

Great! I’m delighted.

Marcello:

(The liar! He’s consumed by his love for her.)

Rodolfo:

Let’s work!

Marcello:

Lavoriam!

Marcello:

Let's work!!

*They start working, but quickly throw down brush and pen.***Rodolfo:**

Che penna infame!

Rodolfo:

What a terrible pen!

Marcello:

Che infame pennello!

Marcello:

What a terrible brush!

Andantino mosso**RODOLFO****Rodolfo:**

(O Mimì, tu più non torni.

O giorni belli, piccole mani, odorosi
capelli, collo di neve!

Ah! Mimì, mia breve gioventù!)

Rodolfo:

(Oh Mimì, you'll return no more.

Oh what beautiful days: those tiny hands,
fragrant hair, and neck like white snow!

Ah! Mimì! My brief youth!)

Marcello:(Io non so come sia che il mio pennello
lavori e impasti colori contro voglia mia.Se pingere mi piace o cielo o terre o
inverni o primavera,
egli mi traccia due pupille nere e una bocca
procace.E n'esce di Musetta il viso ancor,
tutto vezzi e tutto frode.Musetta intanto gode, e il mio cuor vile la
chiama ed aspetta, il vil mio cuor.)**Marcello:**(I don't understand how my brush works
and mixes colors against my will.Whether I want to paint earth or sky, spring
or winter,
the brush outlines two dark eyes with
inviting lips.And Musetta's face emerges,
all charm and all deceit.Meanwhile, Musette enjoys herself, and my
cowardly hearts calls and waits for her.)**Rodolfo:**(E tu, cuffietta lieve, che sotto il guancial
partendo ascose, tutta sai la nostra felicità.Vien sul mio cor morto, poichè è morto
amor.)**Rodolfo:**(And you, little pink bonnet, hidden under
the pillow as she left, you know all about
our happiness.Come to my heart, and console my lost
love.)**Rodolfo:**

Che ora sia?

Rodolfo:

What time could it be?

Marcello:

L'ora del pranzo, di ieri!

Marcello:

It's time for dinner, yesterday's dinner!

Rodolfo:

E Schaunard non torna?

Rodolfo:

And Schaunard hasn't returned?

*Schaunard arrives with loaves of bread. Colline is with him.***Schaunard:**

Eccoci!

Schaunard:

Here we are!

Rodolfo e Marcello:

Ebbene?

Rodolfo and Marcello:

Well?

Marcello:

Del pan?

Marcello:

Some bread?

Colline:

E un piatto degno di Demostene: un'aringa.

Colline: *(showing a herring)*

A dish worthy of Demosthenes: a herring.

Schaunard:

Salata!

Schaunard:

Salted!

Colline:

Il pranzo è in tavola.

Colline:

Dinner is on the table.

*They sit down at the table, making believe that are attending a sumptuous dinner.***Marcello:**

Questa è cuccagna da Berlingaccio.

Marcello:

This is like a feast fit for pre-Lent.

Schaunard:

Or lo sciampagna mettiamo in ghiaccio.

Schaunard: *(puts a water bottle in Colline's hat)*

Now let's put the champagne on ice.

Rodolfo:

Scelga, o barone, trota o salmone?

Rodolfo: *(to Marcello)*

Your choice, Baron, salmon or trout?

Marcello:

Duca, una lingua di pappagallo?

Marcello: *(to Schaunard)*

Duke, how about some parrot-tongue?

Schaunard:

Grazie, m'impingua.

Stasera ho un ballo.

Schaunard:

No thanks, but it's fattening.

This evening I'm going to a ball.

Rodolfo:

Già sazio?

Rodolfo:

Already finished?

Colline:

Ho fretta. Il Re m'aspetta.

Colline: *(solemnly)*

I'm in a hurry. The king is waiting for me.

Marcello:

C'è qualche trama?

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard:

Qualche mister?

Colline:

Il Re mi chiama al minister.

Marcello, Rodolfo, Schaunard:

Bene!

Colline:

Però vedrò, Guizot!

Schaunard:

Porgimi il nappo!

Marcello:

Sì! Bevi, io pappo.

Schaunard:

Mi sia permesso, al nobile consesso...

Rodolfo:

Basta!

Marcello:

Fiacco!

Colline:

Che decotto!

Marcello:

Leva il tacco!

Colline:

Dammi il gotto!

Schaunard:

M'ispira irresistibile l'estro della romanza!

Gli Altri:

No!

Schaunard:

Azione coreografica allora?

Marcello:

Is there some intrigue?

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard:

Some mystery?

Colline:

The king has asked me to join his ministry.

Marcello, Rodolfo, Schaunard:

Good!

Colline:

But I'll see Guizot!

Schaunard: *(to Marcello)*

Pass me the goblet!

Marcello:

Here! Drink, I'll gulp mine down.

Schaunard:

May I be permitted by this noble company...

Rodolfo:

Enough!

Marcello: *(after tasting the drink)*

Weak!

Colline:

What a concoction!

Marcello:

Stop this nonsense!

Colline:

Give me the goblet!

Schaunard:

I'm irresistibly inspired by romantic expression!

The Others:

No!

Schaunard: *(meekly)*

Then something choreographic?

Gli Altri:

Sì!

Schaunard:

La danza con musica vocale!

Colline:

Si sgombrino le sale! Gavotta.

Marcello:

Minuetto.

Rodolfo:

Pavanella.

Schaunard:

Fandango.

Colline:

Propongo la quadriglia.

Rodolfo:

Mano alle dame!

Colline:

Io detto.

Schaunard:

La lera la lera la!

Rodolfo:

Vezzosa damigella.

Marcello:

Rispetti la modestia. La prego.

Colline:

Balancez!

Schaunard:

Prima c'è il Rond.

Colline:

No! Bestia!

Schaunard:

Che modi da lacchè!

The Others:

Yes!

Schaunard:

The dance, with vocal accompaniment!

Colline:

Let the hall be cleared! A gavotte.

Marcello:

Minuet.

Rodolfo:

Pavane.

Schaunard:

Fandango.

Colline:

I propose a quadrille.

Rodolfo:

Give your hand to the ladies!

Colline:

I'll call the tempo.

Schaunard:

La lera la lera la!

Rodolfo: (*gallantly to Marcello*)

Charming maiden.

Marcello:

Please, sir, respect my modesty.

Colline:

Your balance!

Schaunard:

First the Rondo.

Colline:

No! Animal!

Schaunard:

What boorish manners!

Colline:
Se non erro lei m'oltraggia!
Snudi il ferro!

Colline:
I believe you're insulting me!
Draw you sword!

Schaunard:
Pronti. Assaggia. Il tuo sangue io voglio ber.

Schaunard:
Ready. Take that. I'll drink your blood.

*Colline takes the fire-tongs and Schaunard the poker;
they engage in a mock sword fight.*

Colline:
Un di noi qui si sbudella.

Colline: *(while dueling)*
One of us will be run through.

Schaunard:
Apprestate una barella!

Schaunard:
Have a stretcher ready!

Colline:
Apprestate un cimiter!

Colline:
And a graveyard too!

Rodolfo e Marcello:
Mentre incalza la tenzone gira e balza
Rigodone.

Rodolfo and Marcello:
While the battle rages, we turn and leap in
a Rigadoon.

*The door suddenly opens, and Musetta appears in great agitation.
The Bohemians are stunned and immediately cease their horseplay.*

Marcello:
Musetta!

Marcello:
Musetta!

Musetta:
C'è Mimì che mi segue e che sta male.

Musetta:
Mimì here, and she is very sick.

Rodolfo:
Ov'è?

Rodolfo: *(terrified)*
Where is she?

Musetta:
Nel far le scale più non si resse.

Musetta:
She hadn't the strength to climb all the stairs.

Rodolfo:
Ah!

Rodolfo:
Ah!

Schaunard:
Noi accostiamo quel lettuccio.

Schaunard: *(to Colline)*
Let's move the bed closer.

Rodolfo rushes to help Mimì.

Rodolfo:
Là. Da bere.

Rodolfo:
Bring something to drink.

With Marcello's help, Rodolfo leads Mimì to the bed.

Mimì:
Rodolfo!

Mimì:
Rodolfo!

Rodolfo:
Zitta, riposa.

Rodolfo:
Don't speak, rest now.

Mimì:
O mio Rodolfo! Mi vuoi qui con te?

Mimì:
Oh my Rodolfo! Do you want me here with you?

Rodolfo:
Ah, mia Mimì! Sempre, sempre!

Rodolfo:
Ah! My Mimì! Always, always!

Musetta:
Intesi dire che Mimì fuggita dal Viscontino,
era in fin di vita. Dove stia?
Cerca, la veggio passar per via,
trascinandosi a stento.
Mi dice: "Più non reggo, muoio, lo sento.
Voglio morir con lui!
Forse m'aspetta!"

Musetta: (*aside, to the others*)
I heard that Mimì fled from the Viscount
and was dying. Where could she be?
I sought her, and just now I saw her in the
street stumbling along.
She said; "I can't bear it, I know I'm dying.
But I want to die with him!
Perhaps he's waiting for me!"

Marcello:
Sst!

Marcello:
Sh!

Mimì:
Mi sento assai meglio.

Mimì:
I feel much better.

Musetta:
"M'accompagni, Musetta?"

Musetta:
"Musetta, will you accompany me?"

Mimì:
Lascia ch'io guardi intorno.
Ah, come si sta bene qui!
Si rinasce. Ancor sento la vita qui.
No, tu non mi lasci più!

Mimì:
Let me look around.
How comfortable it is here!
I'll recover. Here, I feel life again.
You won't ever leave me again!

Rodolfo:
Benedetta bocca, te ancor mi parli!

Rodolfo:
Blessed lips, you again speak to me!

Musetta:
Che ci avete in casa?

Musetta: (*to the others*)
What is there in the house?

Marcello:
Nulla!

Marcello:
Nothing!

Musetta:

Non caffè? Non vino?

Marcello:

Nulla! Ah! Miseria!

Schaunard:

Fra mezz'ora è morta!

Mimi:Ho tanto freddo. Se avessi un manicotto!
Queste mie mani riscaldare non si potranno mai?**Rodolfo:**

Qui, Nelle mie! Taci, il parlar ti stanca.

Mimi:Ho un po' di tosse! Ci sono avvezza.
Buon giorno, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline,
buon giorno.
Tutti qui, tutti qui sorridenti a Mimi.**Rodolfo:**

Non parlar, non parlar.

Mimi:Parlo pian, non temere. Marcello date retta:
è assai buona Musetta.**Marcello:**

Lo so.

Musetta:A te, vendi, riporta qualche cordial, manda
un dottore!**Rodolfo:**

Riposa!

Mimi:

Tu non mi lasci?

Rodolfo:

No! No!

Musetta:

No coffee? No wine?

Marcello:

Nothing! Poverty!

Schaunard: (*sadly to Colline*)

She'll be dead in a half hour!

Mimi:I'm so cold. If I only had a muff?
Can these cold hands ever get warm again?**Rodolfo:** (*warming Mimi's hands*)Here. In mine! Don't speak. Talking will
tire you.**Mimi:** (*after coughing*)It's just a little cough! I'm used to it.
Good day, Marcello, Schaunard, Colline,
good day.
All of you are here, smiling at Mimi.**Rodolfo:**

Don't speak. Don't speak.

Mimi:Don't fear, I'll speak softly. Marcello,
believe me, Musetta is so good.**Marcello:** (*holding Musetta's hand*)

I know.

Musetta: (*gives her earrings to Marcello*)Here, sell them, bring back some cordial
and send for a doctor!**Rodolfo:** (*to Mimi*)

Rest now!

Mimi:

Are you leaving me?

Rodolfo:

No! No!

Musetta:

Ascolta! Forse è l'ultima volta che ha espresso un desiderio, poveretta!
Pel manicotto io vo. Con te verrò.

Musetta: (to Marcello)

Listen! Perhaps it's the last time the poor thing will express a desire!
I'll get the muff. I'm going with you.

Marcello:

Sei buona, o mia Musetta.

Marcello: (deeply moved)

Oh my Musetta, how good you are.

Colline removes his great coat.

Allegretto moderato e triste
COLLINE



Vecchia zimarra, senti, io resto al pian, tu ascendere il sacro monte or devi. Le mie grazie ricevi.

Colline:

Vecchia zimarra, senti, io resto al pian,
tu ascendere il sacro monte or devi.
Le mie grazie ricevi.
Mai non curvasti il logoro dorso ai ricchi ed
ai potenti.
Passar nelle tue tasche come in antri
tranquilli filosofi e poeti.
Ora che i giorni lieti fuggir, ti dico addio,
fedele amico mio. Addio.

Colline:

Listen, old venerable coat, I'm staying here,
but you must go off to the pawn shop.
Accept my appreciation.
You never bowed your worn back to the
rich or powerful.
Poets and philosophers passed through
your pockets as if through calm grottoes.
Now that those happy days have fled, I bid
you farewell, faithful friend. Farewell.

Colline places the coat under his arm, and then whispers to Schaunard.

Schaunard, ognuno per diversa via
mettiamo insieme due atti di pietà:
io questo! E tu lasciali soli là!

Schaunard, each of us can accomplish an
act of mercy in a different way:
I, this coat! Let's leave the two of them alone!

Schaunard:

Filosofo, ragioni! È ver. Vo Via!

Schaunard: (deeply moved)

Philosopher, you're right! I'll go.

Schaunard and Colline leave, carefully closing the door behind them.

Andante calmo
MIMI



Sono and - a - ti? Fingevo di dormire perchè volli con te so-la restare.

Mimì:

Sono andati?
Fingevo di dormire perchè volli con te sola
restare.

Mimì:

Have they gone?
I pretended to sleep because I wanted to be
alone with you.

Ho tante cose che ti voglio dire,
o una sola ma grande come il mare,
come il mare profonda ed infinita
Sei il mio amor, e tutta la mia vita.

Rodolfo:

Ah Mimì, mia bella Mimì!

Mimì:

Son bella ancora?

Rodolfo:

Bella come un'aurora.

Mimì:

Hai sbagliato il raffronto.
Volevi dir: bella come un tramonto.
"Mi chiamano Mimì, il perchè non so."

Rodolfo:

Tornò al nido la rondine e cinguetta.

Rodolfo takes Mimì's bonnet, holds it over his heart, and then hands it to her.

Mimì:

La mia cuffietta! La mia cuffietta!
Ah! Te lo rammenti quando sono entrata la
prima volta là?

Rodolfo:

Se lo rammento!

Mimì:

Il lume s'era spento.

Rodolfo:

Eri tanto turbata!
Poi smarristi la chiave.

Mimì:

E a cercarla tastoni ti sei messo.

Rodolfo:

E cerca, cerca.

Mimì:

Mio bel signorino, posso ben dirlo adesso,
lei la trovò assai presto.

I've so many things that I want to say to you,
or just one, that is grand like the sea,
like the infinite and profound sea.
You are my love, and everything in my life.

Rodolfo:

Ah Mimì, my beautiful Mimì!

Mimì:

Am I still beautiful?

Rodolfo:

Beautiful as the dawn.

Mimì:

You've mistaken the metaphor.
You meant to say: beautiful as the sunset.
"They call me Mimì, but I don't know why."

Rodolfo:

The swallow comes back to its nest to twitter.

Mimì:

My bonnet! My bonnet!
Ah! Do you remember when I came in
there the first time?

Rodolfo:

I remember it well!

Mimì:

The light had gone out.

Rodolfo:

You were so upset!
Then you lost your key.

Mimì:

And you began to grope for it.

Rodolfo:

I searched and searched.

Mimì:

My dear sir, you might as well admit it, you
found it and hid it quickly.

Rodolfo:

Aiutavo il destino.

Mimi:

Era buio e il mio rossor non si vedeva.

“Che gelida manina, se la lasci riscaldar.”

Era buio e la man tu mi prendevi.

Rodolfo:

I was helping destiny.

Mimi:

It was dark and you couldn't see me blushing. “How cold your little hand is

Let me warm it for you.” It was dark and you took my hand in yours.

*Marcello and Musetta return. Musetta carries a muff, Marcello a cordial.***Rodolfo:**

Oh Dio! Mimi!

Schaunard:

Che avvien?

Mimi:

Nulla, sto bene.

Rodolfo:

Zitta, per carità.

Mimi:

Sì, sì, perdona, or sarò buona.

Musetta:

Dorme?

Rodolfo:

Riposa.

Marcello:

Ho veduto il dottore. Verrà. Gli ho fatto fretta. Ecco il cordial.

Mimi:

Chi parla?

Musetta:

Io, Musetta.

Mimi:

O come è bello e morbido.

Non più le mani allividite.

Il tepore le abbellirà.

Rodolfo:

Oh God! Mimi!

Schaunard: *(who has just returned)*

What's happening?

Mimi:

Nothing, I'm all right.

Rodolfo:

For pity's sake, don't talk.

Mimi:

Yes, yes forgive me. Now I'll be good.

Musetta:

Is she sleeping?

Rodolfo:

She's resting.

Marcello:

I saw the doctor. He'll come. I told him to hurry. Here's the cordial.

Mimi:

Who's talking?

Musetta: *(handing her the muff)*

It's me, Musetta.

Mimi:

Oh, how lovely and soft it is.

At last, no more pale hands.

The warmth will make them beautiful.

Sei tu che me lo doni?

(to Rodolfo)
Are you giving this to me?

Musetta:
Sì.

Musetta:
Yes, he did.

Mimi:
Tu! Spensierato! Grazie. Ma costerà.
Piangi? Sto bene.
Pianger così perchè?
Qui amor, sempre con te!
Le mani al caldo e dormire...

Mimi:
You spendthrift! Thank you . But it's dear.
You're crying? I'm better.
Why are you crying like that?
Here, my love is always with you!
My hands, in the warmth, and to sleep...

Rodolfo:
Che ha detto il medico?

Rodolfo: (to Marcello)
What did the doctor say?

Marcello:
Verrà.

Marcello:
He'll come.

Musetta:
Madonna benedetta, fate la grazia a questa
poveretta che non debba morire.

Musetta: (praying)
Blessed Mother, be merciful to this poor
girl so that she won't have to die.

Qui ci vuole un riparo perché la fiamma
sventola. Così.

(breaking off, to Marcello)
We need a shade here because the candle
is flickering. Like that.

E che possa guarire. Madonna santa, io
sono indegna di perdono, mentre invece
Mimi è un angelo del cielo.

Let her get well. Holy Mother, I know I'm
unworthy of forgiveness, but instead, Mimi
is an angel from heaven.

Rodolfo:
Io spero ancora. Vi pare che sia grave?

Rodolfo:
I still have hope. You think it's serious?

Musetta:
Non credo.

Musetta:
I don't think so.

Schaunard approaches Mimi's bed.

Schaunard:
Marcello, è spirata.

Schaunard: (softly to Marcello)
Marcello, she's dead.

*Rodolfo realizes that the sun coming from the window is about to fall on Mimi's face.
Musetta gives him her shawl, which he places over the window.
Marcello moves away from the bed in fright. Colline returns.*

Colline:

Musetta, a voi! Come va?

Colline: *(gives money to Musetta)*

Musetta, here! How is she?

Rodolfo:

Vedi? È tranquilla.

Rodolfo:

Do you see? She's resting.

Rodolfo becomes aware of the grave expressions of the others.

Che vuol dire quell'andare a venire?

Quel guardarmi così?

What does this going back and forth mean?

Why are you looking at me like that?

Marcello:

Coraggio!

Marcello: *(embracing Rodolfo)*

Courage!

Rodolfo:

Mimi! Mimi!

Rodolfo: *(rushing to Mimi's bed)*

Mimi! Mimi!

END OF THE OPERA

Tosca

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa
and Luigi Illica**

**based on the play *La Tosca*
by Victorien Sardou (1887)**

**Premiere at the Costanzi Theatre, Rome
January 14, 1900**

Principal Characters in Tosca

Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer	Soprano
Mario Cavaradossi, Tosca's lover, a painter	Tenor
Scarpia, Police Chief of Rome	Baritone
Cesare Angelotti, a former Roman Consul and escaped political prisoner	Bass
The Sacristan	Bass
Spoletta, a police agent	Tenor
Sciarrone, a police agent	Baritone
Jailer	Bass
Shepherd Boy	Boy Soprano

Soldiers, police agents, noblemen and women, townspeople,
artisans, a Cardinal, altar boys and priests, a judge, the executioner, a scribe, an
officer, soldiers, police.

TIME: June, 1800

PLACE: Rome

Story Synopsis

In 1800, the winds of revolution were churning, and the city of Rome was a virtual police state: the ruling Bourbon monarchy was threatened by Republicans who advocated social and democratic reform, ideals that were inspired by the Enlightenment, French Revolution, and Napoleon; Royalists were determined to maintain the status quo and the continuation of the existing monarchy.

Cesare Angelotti, an ardent Republican opposing Royalist tyranny and oppression, has just escaped from the Castel Sant'Angelo prison; he arrives at the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle where his sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, hid women's clothes for a disguise and a key to the Attavanti Chapel where he could hide.

Mario Cavaradossi is painting a Magdalen for the church: his model, the Marchesa Attavanti, whom he captured — unbeknownst to her — while she prayed at the church. Cavaradossi views his painting and praises her beauty, comparing her to his beloved Tosca. Angelotti emerges from the chapel and recognizes Cavaradossi, a friend with shared anti-Royalist political sympathies. When they are interrupted by the approach of Tosca, Cavaradossi gives Angelotti a basket of food, and he returns to hide in the chapel.

Tosca finds the church door locked. She is a woman of profound jealousy, and she immediately accuses Cavaradossi of being with another woman. Cavaradossi eases Tosca's suspicions, and both rapturously declare their profound love for each other. As Tosca departs, they agree to meet that evening at Cavaradossi's villa outside of Rome.

Angelotti again emerges from the chapel. A cannon blast from Castel Sant'Angelo announces that a prisoner has escaped; both quickly leave the church, en route to Cavaradossi's villa where Angelotti can hide safely.

The Sacristan and choirboys prepare for the evening's festivities, a celebration of Napoleon's supposed defeat at Marengo, featuring a new Cantata sung by the diva Floria Tosca. They are interrupted by the sudden arrival of Scarpia and his police agents. Scarpia learned that the Marchesa Attavanti bribed a jailer to facilitate her brother's escape; he suspects that the fugitive is hiding in the family's Attavanti chapel. Scarpia finds the chapel door unlocked, and inside, a fan with the Attavanti coat-of-arms and an empty food basket; he is convinced that Angelotti indeed fled to the chapel, and that the painter Cavaradossi aided him.

Tosca returns to the church to advise Cavaradossi that she must cancel their evening plans to sing at the Royalist victory celebration. She does not find Cavaradossi but Scarpia and his agents. Scarpia will use the Attavanti fan to arouse Tosca's jealousy. Indeed, after Scarpia plants seeds of jealousy, Tosca rushes off to Cavaradossi's villa to confront him and his supposed lover. But she is unaware that Scarpia has ordered his agents to follow her; he is convinced that she will lead them to the fugitive Angelotti.

During the "Te Deum" in the church, Scarpia reveals his passion to possess the beautiful Tosca: he is prepared to forsake God, and execute her lover Cavaradossi.

In Scarpia's apartment in the Palazzo Farnese, Spoletta informs Scarpia that his agents failed to find Angelotti, but they did apprehend the painter Cavaradossi. Cavaradossi is interrogated but reveals nothing about Angelotti's whereabouts.. Tosca arrives, and in her presence, Scarpia has Cavaradossi tortured. She is unable to bear Cavaradossi's suffering and reveals that Angelotti is hiding in the garden well of the villa. The torture ends; Cavaradossi is brought in, bruised and bleeding.

Sciarrone arrives to announce that Napoleon was indeed victorious at Marengo. Cavaradossi erupts in triumph and condemns Scarpia and the Royalists. Scarpia orders Cavaradossi to prison and execution.

Tosca pleads with Scarpia for mercy. Scarpia offers her a bargain: her love in exchange for Cavaradossi's life. Scarpia offers to arrange a mock execution. Tosca yields, but only if they are permitted to leave Rome. While Scarpia writes a safe conduct pass for Tosca and Cavaradossi, Tosca seizes a knife from the table, and then fatally stabs him.

At the prison of Castel Sant'Angelo, Cavaradossi awaits execution. Tosca arrives to inform him that she bears a pass for them to escape from Rome, and that she murdered Scarpia. After they rapturously celebrate their forthcoming freedom, Tosca coaches Cavaradossi to act out his mock execution. Cavaradossi faces the firing squad; the bullets are real and Cavaradossi is shot dead. Spoletta and soldiers rush to arrest Tosca for the murder of Scarpia. Tosca escapes from them, and then leaps from the ramparts of the fortress to her death.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: The Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle in Rome.

Tosca begins without prelude or overture. The curtain rises to the orchestral thundering of three shattering and crashing chords, the indelible musical motive associated with the Royalist Police Chief, Baron Vitello Scarpia, the frightening chords conveying a sense of menace, danger, harshness, cruelty, sinister brutality, and satanic evil.

Scarpia's Motive:



The Scarpia chords are immediately followed by a second motive, a restless, descending syncopated theme that is associated with the pursuit of the fugitive, Cesare Angelotti. Angelotti appears in the church, exhausted and trembling in fear and terror. He seeks refuge in his family's Attavanti chapel.

Angelotti's Fugitive Motive:



Angelotti is a descendant of an aristocratic Roman patrician family, however, he is an activist Republican sympathizer, which led to his imprisonment by the Royalists. His escape was engineered by his sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, who bribed the jailer.

The Marchesa hid the chapel key for her brother, and for his disguise, left woman's clothing in the chapel. Angelotti searches frantically for the key, which he finds concealed at the base of a statue of the Madonna. Relieved, he cautiously approaches the chapel, unlocks the gate, and then disappears inside.

The Sacristan arrives in the church. He complains and grumbles of his burden to wash brushes for the painter, Mario Cavaradossi.

Mario Cavaradossi arrives to continue work on his painting. He removes its curtain,

revealing a portrait of Mary Magdalene slaying a serpent, the symbol of good conquering evil. The Magdalene has blue eyes and blonde hair: the Marchesa was unaware that Cavaradossi captured her image when she presumably came to the church to pray, her prayers camouflaging her real intentions: to hide the chapel key and clothes for her soon-to-be fugitive brother.

Cavaradossi admires his painting and reflects on the differences between his painted Magdalene (the Marchesa) and his beloved Floria Tosca, comparing its blonde and blue-eyed features to the more Mediterranean, dark beauty of Tosca. He praises the magnificence of nature's diversity, concluding with loving sentiment that his beloved Tosca remains the sole possessor of his heart.

"Recondita armonia"

Andante lento
CAVARADOSSI



All the while, the Sacristan has been busy cleaning the painter's brushes, muttering his doubts about the impious artist who speaks simultaneously of the sacred and the profane. The Sacristan leaves, reminding Cavaradossi that he has left a basket of food and wine for his dinner.

Angelotti, believing that the church is empty, emerges from hiding. Cavaradossi catches sight of the anxious Angelotti, recognizes his old friend, and both reminisce about their shared political sympathies.

They are interrupted by the voice of Tosca, who is heard from outside calling "Mario!" Cavaradossi gives Angelotti the basket containing food and wine, and abruptly sends him back into the chapel, assuring him they will resume their conversation as soon as he dispatches with Tosca.

Tosca's Motive:



Tosca possesses profound religiosity, but also obsessive jealousy. She is confounded, because she found the church door locked, and Cavaradossi delayed opening the door. She enters the church, agitated and irritated, her suspicions aroused, because she believes that she heard Cavaradossi talking to a woman.

Tosca, a woman of fierce passions, rages furiously as she interrogates Cavaradossi, demanding to know the identity of the woman she believes he was talking to; she accuses Cavaradossi of betraying their love. But her irrational jealousy and suspicion are further inflamed by Cavaradossi's painting, an image of a beautiful blonde, blue-eyes woman she seems to recognize but is uncertain. She urges Cavaradossi to change the hair and eyes to those of Tosca: dark hair and brown eyes.

Cavaradossi diverts Tosca's obsession with the painting with impassioned reassurances of his profound love for her. Cavaradossi conquers Tosca with his ardor. Hesitantly and meekly, Tosca apologizes for her jealous outburst and begs forgiveness. Cavaradossi urges her to leave, explaining that his work is pressing. The lovers plan to rendezvous at Cavaradossi's villa after Tosca's evening performance.

But the woman in Cavaradossi's painting continues to haunt Tosca. Suddenly she explodes in triumph, recognizing the image as the Marchesa Attavanti. She immediately concludes that the Marchesa was in the church with Cavaradossi, the reason for the whispering and rustling of clothes when she arrived: Is her lover Cavaradossi having an affair with the Marchesa?

Cavaradossi embraces Tosca, again assuring her of his love, and that she has no reason to be jealous. Cavaradossi's ardor seemingly assuages Tosca, but as she departs she stares fixedly at the painting, its eyes taunting her; she urges Cavaradossi to paint the model's eyes dark.

Tosca and Cavaradossi: Love Duet



After Tosca departs, Angelotti emerges from hiding, and Cavaradossi inquires of the fugitive's plans. He reveals that he plans to escape from Rome, disguised by woman's clothes. Cavaradossi vows to risk his life to aid his friend, a champion of democratic ideals. He gives him a key to his villa that is located outside of Rome, and advises him that if there is danger, he should hide in the garden well. A cannon shot from the Castel Sant'Angelo announces that a prisoner has escaped. Fearing the police, Cavaradossi and Angelotti hurriedly leave the church.

The Sacristan returns, breathless and excited with news that Napoleon was defeated by the Austrians at Marengo. (The news is erroneous: in the battle between the French and Austrians, the French general, Melas, lost his life: afterwards, the French rallied and were victorious.)

The Sacristan is surprised to find that Cavaradossi is gone.

The Sacristan and choir boys celebrate the presumed Austrian victory, all equally excited that there will be a celebration for Queen Carolina that evening at the Palazzo

Farnese: a torchlight procession, and the performance of a new Cantata sung by the diva Floria Tosca.

Their rejoicing is suddenly interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Baron Scarpia and his police agents, three crashing chords announce the arrival of the demonic police chief. Afterwards, there is silence, all remaining spellbound.

After Scarpia discovered Angelotti's empty cell at the Castel Sant'Angelo, he tortured the jailer and learned that the Marchesa Attavanti bribed him to enable her brother to escape. Scarpia pursued the fugitive to the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, his ruthless detective instincts convincing him that the fugitive would take refuge in his family's Attavanti Chapel.

Scarpia rebukes the Sacristan and choirboys for boisterously desecrating the sacred ambience of the church: "Un tal baccano in chiesa, bel rispetto" ("What kind of behavior is this in a church? Show some respect!") The turns to dreaded fear and Sacristan apologizes. Scarpia commands everyone to prepare for the "Te Deum," but detains the Sacristan for questioning. The frightened choirboys slip away.

Scarpia advises the trembling Sacristan that a prisoner of state has just escaped from Castel Sant'Angelo, and that he believes that he has taken refuge in the church. Scarpia asks the Sacristan to identify the Attavanti chapel. He then approaches the gate and finds it unlocked.

Scarpia and the Sacristan enter the chapel. Scarpia finds a fan bearing the Marchesa Attavanti's coat-of-arms, part of Angelotti's disguise, which he carelessly left behind. Scarpia is now convinced that Angelotti took refuge in the chapel and regrets firing the Castel Sant'Angelo cannon, a grave mistake that warned the fugitive that he was being pursued, giving him time to disappear. Scarpia also notes with suspicion that the woman in Cavaradossi's Magdalene is the Marchesa Attavanti.

Scarpia's agents emerge from the chapel with new evidence: a basket of provisions. The Sacristan informs him that earlier in the day he had brought the basket for the painter Cavaradossi: it is empty, and it would have been impossible for the painter to place the basket in the chapel because he had no key.

Scarpia pieces together all the evidence he has collected, all of which confirm his suspicions: Angelotti indeed took refuge in the Attavanti chapel; and Tosca's lover, the painter Cavaradossi, not only aided the fugitive, but certainly knows his whereabouts.

Tosca returns to the church, seeking Cavaradossi to cancel their evening plans to rendezvous at his villa, because she must perform in the celebration that evening; but she finds Scarpia and his agents.

Scarpia will manipulate Tosca, arousing her jealousy so that she will betray both Cavaradossi and Angelotti. Like Shakespeare's Iago, using Desdemona's handkerchief to plant the seeds of jealousy in Othello, Scarpia will likewise use the Marchesa's fan to inflame Tosca's jealousy: it will serve to destroy his rival Cavaradossi, and he will possess Tosca.

Scarpia courteously flatters Tosca's noble qualities: a woman whose magical singing redeems man's faith in the Divine. He then inflames Tosca with doubt and suspicion of her lover Cavaradossi. He comments that pious women are rare: Tosca comes to the church to offer sincere prayers, whereas wanton others — he points to the portrait — look like Magdalenes, but come to the church to carry on intrigues with lovers.

Scarpia shows Tosca the fan that he claims he found on the painter's scaffold, cynically inquiring if she believes that it is a painter's tool. He implies that the Marchesa Attavanti is Cavaradossi lover, and that they have escaped together to Cavaradossi's villa. Tosca recognizes the fan's coat-of-arms. She is now convinced that her earlier suspicions were correct: that a woman was indeed with Cavaradossi, and he has betrayed her. Tosca vows that the Marchesa will not possess Cavaradossi. Obsessed and consumed by jealousy and revenge, Tosca rushes off to Cavaradossi's villa to confront the lovers, unaware that Scarpia, in lieu of finding Angelotti, has agents follow her.

The sacred "Te Deum" music surges and swells as people fill the church: humble and devoted worshippers, choristers and priests, a Swiss guard, and the Cardinal and his entourage.

It is a moment in which the sacred conflicts with the profane: the austere pomp of the sacred and religious procession is a stark contrast to Scarpia's lust, lechery, and evil intentions: an example of the uniqueness of the operatic art form; unlike the singularity of drama, opera can effectively express conflicting ideas and ironies simultaneously through its combination of words and music.

As the solemnity of the "Te Deum" intensifies, Scarpia reveals his true soul, gloating menacingly about his imminent success: he will find and execute Angelotti; and he will destroy Cavaradossi: his ultimate victory the conquest of Tosca.

During the final moments of the "Te Deum," Scarpia kneels in prayer, revealing the true passion in his soul: "Tosca, mi fai, dimenticare Iddio" ("Tosca, to possess you, I would forsake God.")

"Te Deum"

Largo Religioso



The first act of *Tosca* concludes with a thundering orchestral explosion of Scarpia's motive: the three crashing chords.

Act II: Scarpia's apartment in the Palazzo Farnese.

The second act of *Tosca* is savage, a relentless buildup of Scarpia's savage intent, his impassioned lust to possess Tosca.

Scarpia dines alone in his apartment, while in the courtyard below, Queen Caroline hosts festivities to celebrate the presumed Austrian victory at Marengo. A new cantata has been composed for the occasion, to be sung by the renowned diva, Floria Tosca.

Scarpia provides a gloating revelation of the villainy in his soul, a prideful admission of his lechery and monstrous depravity: the philosophy of a man consumed by his erotic obsessions. He feverishly awaits his forthcoming victory: by dawn both Angelotti and Cavaradossi will be hanging on the gallows; and tonight, he will lure Tosca to his apartment for news of her lover, confident that ultimately she will surrender to his passion for her.

"Ha più forte sapore"

Andante un poco agitato
SCARPIA



*Ha più for - te sa - po-re la conquista vio-len-ta che il mellifluo consenso,
A willing surrender is more sweeter than a violent conquest.*

Scarpia is tense and anxious. He calls for his agent, Sciarrone, and inquires if Tosca has arrived. He hurriedly writes a letter that he orders Sciarrone to deliver to her. He must await her at the entrance to the Palace and advise her that she is expected at his apartment after the Cantata.

Spoletta reports to Scarpia that their search for Angelotti at Cavaradossi's villa was fruitless; they followed Tosca to the villa, but she emerged alone. Afterwards, they entered the villa, but found no signs of Angelotti. Scarpia erupts into a rage. But Spoletta placates him by informing him that they did find the painter Cavaradossi, apprehended him, and have brought him to the Palazzo Farnese.

Scarpia summons Cavaradossi to his chamber for questioning. While he ferociously interrogates Cavaradossi, Tosca is heard singing the cantata from the courtyard below: a background of holiness that contrasts with the violent cruelty about to unfold. Scarpia informs Cavaradossi that the prisoner Angelotti escaped from Castel Sant'Angelo: that Cavaradossi is suspected of meeting him at the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, providing him with food and clothes, and then guiding him to his suburban villa. Cavaradossi is defiant, angrily denying the charges, and protesting that he has no knowledge of the whereabouts of Angelotti.

Cavaradossi's obstinacy, together with the soaring music of the Cantata unnerves and irritates Scarpia. He rushes to the open window and violently shuts it. He resumes his interrogation of Cavaradossi, and Cavaradossi again obstinately denies any knowledge of Angelotti. Scarpia alters his tactics from violent anger to gentle

persuasion, advising Cavaradossi that it would be in his best interests to make a full confession.

The cantata has concluded. Tosca arrives at Scarpia's apartment, responding to Scarpia's invitation to learn the whereabouts of Cavaradossi. She becomes shocked and confounded when she sees Cavaradossi present. She rushes to embrace him. He whispers that she must say nothing of what she saw at the villa; if she does, they will kill him.

Scarpia solemnly announces that the Judge is in the adjoining room awaiting Cavaradossi's deposition. Scarpia orders Tosca to remain with him. He will torture Cavaradossi until he confesses, but if not, he is convinced that Tosca will be unable to bear her lover's suffering and pain; then she will reveal the whereabouts of Angelotti.

Scarpia attempts to manipulate Tosca to learn about Angelotti. With elegant courtesy and gallantry, he urges her to discuss the situation in a friendly manner. Tosca, like Cavaradossi, denies any knowledge of Angelotti's whereabouts.

Scarpia becomes more forceful, maliciously rekindling Tosca's jealousy by reminding her of the Attavanti fan. Tosca responds with indifference, discounting her outburst as foolish jealousy. She emphatically assures Scarpia that Cavaradossi was alone at the villa: Does he want her to lie?

Scarpia threatens Tosca, sinisterly informing her that in the adjoining room, Cavaradossi is about to be brutally tortured into a confession: that he is bound hand and foot, and there is a steel ring about his head that will be mercilessly tightened each time he refuses to confess.

Torture Motive:

Andante moderato



Cavaradossi's groans of pain are heard from the adjoining room. Scarpia again advises Tosca to save her lover by revealing the truth. She pleads with Scarpia to release Cavaradossi for a moment, but he refuses. Tosca calls to Cavaradossi from the door; he commands her to be courageous and keep silent.

Scarpia becomes angered by Tosca's obstinacy. He orders the torture intensified, opening the door for Tosca to hear her lover's agony; amid the savagery and terror, Spoletta mutters an ancient prayer for the dead. Cavaradossi continues to urge Tosca to be unyielding. Infuriated, Scarpia orders his agents to silence him.

Tosca cannot tolerate her lover's pain. To save him, she betrays Angelotti's hiding place to Scarpia, revealing that he is hiding in the garden well at Cavaradossi's villa. Tosca has betrayed Cavaradossi, but it was an act of love, for she was unable to bear his suffering. Scarpia halts the brutal and sadistic torture.

Cavaradossi is brought into Scarpia's chambers, bruised and bleeding. Tosca,

ashamed and apologetic, consoles her lover with kisses — and tears. Cavaradossi inquires if she revealed anything to Scarpia, at which time Scarpia unveils his most fiendish ploy, shouting in defiance, “In the well in the garden!” He orders Spoletta into immediate pursuit. Cavaradossi explodes in contempt, cursing Tosca for betraying him.

Sciarrone rushes in with news that Napoleon defeated the Austrians at Marengo. Cavaradossi, weak and in excruciating pain from the torture, explodes into a patriotic outburst of victory: “Vittoria! Vittoria!”

“L’alba vindice appar”

Allegro concitato
CAVARADOSSI



f L'al - ba vin - dice appar che fa gli em-pi tre-mar!
The morning has brought vindication because all the tyrants tremble!

Cavaradossi curses Scarpia and all tyrants, the first revelation to Scarpia of his revolutionary, Republican sympathies. Tosca, fearful for his life, pleads with him to be silent. But Cavaradossi has avowed treason, and Scarpia immediately sends him off to jail and execution. Tosca tries to follow him, but Scarpia’s agents brutally thrust her back.

Scarpia is alone with Tosca, sarcastically lamenting his unfinished supper. He senses Tosca’s dilemma to save Cavaradossi and hints that perhaps they can both devise a plan to save him. With gallantry and elegance, he offers the agitated Tosca some Spanish wine, suggesting that it will calm her nerves.

Tosca abruptly challenges Scarpia’s charade. She seats herself before Scarpia, and contemptuously and disdainfully challenges Scarpia to negotiate with her for Cavaradossi’s freedom: “Quanto? Il prezzo?” (“How much?” Your price?”) Scarpia replies mockingly: he has often been accused of being corrupt, but he would never sell his soul to a beautiful woman for money.

Scarpia is unable to restrain his uncontrollable passion to possess Tosca. He admits that he has been consumed by lust: that he has long admired her beauty; and that her rage and hatred of him have made him even more resolute.

Tosca senses terror. She runs to the door, planning to seek help from the Queen. Scarpia makes no attempt to restrain her, sinisterly informing her that the Queen cannot pardon a dead man. Tosca pauses in shock, suddenly aware that she is impotent against the cunning Scarpia. Scarpia approaches her, cynically declaring that he is delighted that she hates him: passions of love and hate are the same.

Scarpia is heedless of Tosca's pleas for mercy. But his attempts to conquer Tosca through persuasion have failed. He begins to assault Tosca physically, a madman intent to realize his lechery through rape. But suddenly, ominous drum rolls are heard in the distance, the signal that gallows are being erected for an execution: it will be Cavaradossi's execution. Scarpia warns Tosca that time is short. Her lover has but one hour to live, and she now has the power to decide his fate.

Tosca's spirits are crushed. She has but one choice to save Cavaradossi: yield to Scarpia. In "Vissi d'arte" ("I lived for art"), Tosca asks, "Why has God forsaken me?", expressing her despair in a touching, Job-like prayer questioning God for punishing a righteous woman of faith who has been unselfish in her compassion for humanity.

"Vissi d'arte"

Andante lento appassionato

TOSCA



Spoletta arrives to announce that Angelotti was apprehended, but he had swallowed poison and died; Scarpia erupts ferociously and orders his corpse hanged on the scaffold. When Spoletta inquires about the other prisoner, Cavaradossi, Scarpia turns to Tosca, who now has power over her lover's destiny. Scarpia is insidious, but Tosca must save her lover Cavaradossi. Tosca nods her consent to Scarpia, a gesture that she will yield to him in exchange for Cavaradossi's life.

Scarpia does not have the power to pardon Cavaradossi, so he contrives a mock execution, a firing squad with blanks in the rifles. Scarpia looks fixedly at his equally cunning agent Spoletta, who indicates his full understanding of Scarpia's sinister and duplicitous intentions. Scarpia directs Spoletta to admit Tosca to the jail at four o'clock to advise Cavaradossi of the change in plans.

His promise fulfilled, Scarpia turns to Tosca, ready and eager to claim his prize. But Tosca has one further demand: that Scarpia provide the lovers with a safe-conduct pass out of Rome. Scarpia agrees. While he writes the safe-conduct pass, Tosca approaches the table, and with a trembling hand takes a glass of wine. As she raises it to her lips, she notices a knife at the corner of Scarpia's desk. When she feels sure that Scarpia is not looking, she cautiously seizes the knife and hides it behind her.

Tosca is in profound inner conflict, overcome by fear and confusion. She is entrapped between the horror of submitting to the lecherous Scarpia, and her profound love for Cavaradossi. The knife that Tosca has just seized represents redemption: the redemption of the world from Scarpia's evil.

Scarpia seals and folds the safe-conduct pass. He rises from his desk and advances

toward Tosca, shouting victoriously, “Tosca finalmente mia!” (“Tosca, you are finally mine!”) As he attempts to embrace her, Tosca plunges the knife into his heart: “This is Tosca’s kiss that you have so passionately longed for.” Scarpia screams in horror, cursing her in his agony. He tries to clutch her as he falls to the ground, but she recoils from him in horror. Tosca expresses her boundless hatred for Scarpia, condemning and insulting him: “Suffocate in your own blood! And a woman has killed you! You have tortured me too much! Can you still hear me? Speak! Look at me! Scarpia, I am Tosca!”

Tosca keeps her eyes fixed on the dead Scarpia as she goes to the table to dip a napkin in water and wash the blood from her hands. Then she stands before a mirror and rearranges her disheveled hair.

She looks feverishly for the safe-conduct pass but cannot find it. Then she notices that the dead Scarpia clutches the pass in his hand. She raises his arm, extracts the pass from his hand, lets the arm fall, and stares at the corpse in horror. With religious solemnity she forgives the dead Scarpia for his sins, reciting an ironic epitaph to him: “E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma” (“And in front of him, all Rome trembled.”)

Before leaving, she reverentially places candlesticks on each side of the corpse. Then she removes a crucifix from the wall and places it at his side. A sudden roll of distant drums scares her momentarily. Tosca departs with great caution, her steps accompanied by the Scarpia motive chords, funereal and somber.

Act III: Castel Sant’Angelo.

It is a serene, starry night. There are hints of early dawn in the Eternal City as sheep bells sound, and morning bells chime from surrounding churches. In the distance, a shepherd sings.

A jailer awaits the condemned Cavaradossi and the firing squad. A group of soldiers deliver Cavaradossi to the jailer, who enters his name in the register. He advises Cavaradossi that he has but one hour to live, and that a priest is available if he so desires. Cavaradossi declines, but asks if he may write a few words to the love that he leaves behind. He offers the jailer his ring after he receives assurance that he will deliver the letter.

Cavaradossi’s farewell to his beloved Tosca contains reminiscences of starlit nights when they shared love’s bliss, a recollection of past ecstasy before the final darkness: “E lucevan le stelle” (“The stars were shining”). Cavaradossi reflects on his despair and melancholy as he faces the end of his life, and the death of love: “E non ho amato mai tanto la vita” (“Never have I loved life so much as at this moment.”); his final words, “Muoiò disperato” (“I die in desperation.”)

“E lucevan le stelle”

Andante lento appassionato molto
CAVARADOSSI

pp Oh! dol - ci ba - ci, o languide ca - rezze, mentr'io fre-
As her beautiful form surrendered to me, I trembled

men - te le bel - le for - me dis - cio gliea dai ve - li!
amid sweet kisses and languid caresses!

Tosca arrives at the jail, accompanied by Spoletta and a sergeant. Spoletta indicates where Tosca can find Cavaradossi. He orders the sentry to watch the pair closely, and then descends the stairs with the jailer and the sergeant.

Tosca rushes exultantly to the weeping Cavaradossi and proudly shows him their safe-conduct pass. Cavaradossi becomes confounded: a first concession from the tyrannical Scarpia? Tosca reveals that it was his last, explaining in triumph — and without contrition — the details of how she murdered Scarpia. Cavaradossi grasps her hands, tenderly praising the hands that have avenged them and changed their destiny.

“O dolci mani”

Andantino sostenuto
TOSCA and CAVARADOSSI

mf O dol - ci ma - ni, mansu - e - te e pu - re,
Gentle hands, humble and pure,

Tosca explains that she has collected her jewels and money, and that a carriage awaits them. But first, he must act out a mock execution, in which the firing squad will shoot blanks. When they fire, he is to fall down immediately and pretend he is dead. The soldiers will retire, and then they will escape.

Both exult in the ecstasy of their forthcoming freedom. But reality intervenes when officers and the firing squad arrive, accompanied by Spoletta and the jailer.

The clock strikes four in the morning. Cavaradossi is ordered before the firing squad. Tosca, anxious yet jubilant, whispers to Cavaradossi, reminding him to fall down immediately. Cavaradossi is led to the wall. The sergeant offers him a bandage for his eyes, but he refuses it.

Tosca watches from the side, anxious yet confident. She covers her ears as the officer lowers his sword, the signal to fire. Cavaradossi falls, Tosca rejoicing with pride that her lover has acted so well, and ironically exclaiming, "Ecco un artiste" ("How well he acts.")

The sergeant approaches the body and is about to fire the usual coup de grâce, but Spoletta stops him, and then leads them down the stairs. Tosca, fearful that Cavaradossi might ruin the charade with an indiscretion, urges him to remain still and silent. She approaches the parapet to assure herself that the soldiers have left. Satisfied, she returns to Cavaradossi, urging him to rise. But she becomes shocked when she realizes the horrible reality: that she is addressing a corpse; "Dead! Dead!" Scarpia betrayed his promise; Cavaradossi has been murdered.

Tosca throws herself on Cavaradossi's corpse and moans in agony and grief. Voices are heard from policemen racing up the stairs. Sciarrone is heard telling others that Scarpia has been found stabbed to death. Spoletta assures them that Tosca was the murderess.

Spoletta rushes to seize Tosca, who thrusts him back violently. She rushes to the edge of the parapet, but before leaping to her death, she addresses the dead Scarpia: "O Scarpia, davanti a Dio" ("Scarpia, God will be our final judge.")

The final music explodes in passionate grandeur, a thunderous recall of the climactic refrain from Cavaradossi's farewell: "E non ho amato mai tanto la vita" ("Never have I loved life so much as at this moment.")

Commentary and Analysis

After *La bohème*, Puccini proceeded to transform Victorien Sardou's play, *La Tosca* (1887), into a powerful, sensational, and thrilling music drama: an ingenious blend of sadism, lechery, jealousy, politics, and religion; supercharged dramatic confrontations that savagely assault the emotions, combined with music that Puccini builds to a feverish pitch as the swift action moves from one ferocious climax to another.

Tosca is quintessential verismo: a blend of the sordid and the sensational, in which death becomes the consummation of desire; and good does not triumph over evil.

Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) was a renowned and prolific French dramatist as well as librettist; he possessed an uncanny genius for inventing absorbing plots, tense stage situations, and vivid characters. Many Sardou plays followed the models of Scribe and Beaumarchais: satirical comedies that scorned contemporary social and political issues.

Sardou was also an astute and meticulous amateur historian; his tragic melodramas usually were set against a background of war or rebellion: *Patrie!* (1869), *La Haine* (1874), *Théodora* (1884) and, of course, *La Tosca* (1887). His dramatic stage works inspired some 25 operas, among the many, Giordano's *Fedora* (1897), *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1915), and Saint-Saëns's *Les Barbares* (1901).

Sardou was a champion of late nineteenth-century literary naturalism, or realism: heightened emotions and passions that the eminent music critic, George Bernard Shaw, writing at the time under the pseudonym *Corno di Bassetto*, called "sardoodledom": a drama in the naturalist sense of intense action rather than an exploration of profound ideas. Other naturalist proponents whose works were adapted for the opera stage were Prosper Mérimée (Bizet's *Carmen*), and Giovanni Verga (Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*.); their realism — verisme in French, verismo in Italian — provided a profound dramatic contrast to Romanticism's sentimentalism and affectation.

Sardou achieved his ultimate theatrical success with *La Tosca*, written for the reigning theater-diva, Sarah Bernhardt — then age 45; the play was an overwhelming theatrical and dramatic success, reputed to have had over 3000 performances in France alone.

In 1895, Puccini saw a performance of *La Tosca* with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role: he immediately became captivated and overwhelmed by the dramatic intensity of the play. The non-French speaking Puccini was reacting to pantomime — its actions and gestures — rather than a translated text, instinctive proof of the story's dramatic power and profound emotionalism, which provided Puccini with an opportunity to further intensify the story with his signature lyricism.

Puccini became impassioned to transform *La Tosca* into an opera; he felt that the

plot cried out for music. Even Verdi was impressed with the play, suggesting that he might consider coming out of retirement to dramatize the subject musically. Unfortunately, Sardou had already granted the rights to a Puccini rival: Alberto Franchetti, a wealthy Baron whose financial resources facilitated productions of his operas under the best possible auspices; but he was also a composer possessing fine lyrical gifts and astute theatrical talents.

Luigi Illica had already written the scenario for Franchetti's *La Tosca*, but it failed to satisfy or inspire him. Ricordi, envisioning a third consecutive Puccini triumph after the phenomenal successes of *Manon Lescaut* and *La bohème*, negotiated the rights to *La Tosca* for his protégé Puccini: a victory for the publisher.

Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, both revelling in their successful collaboration with Puccini for *La Bohème*, proceeded to ingeniously capture the dramatic power of Sardou's play for the lyric stage, reducing its overabundance of plot and five cumbersome acts to three power-packed acts.

Illica drafted the scenario and Giacosa versified the dialogue, converting it into polished verse. The typical conflicts and tensions immediately arose between composer and librettists with respect to dramatic details, Giacosa often melodramatically threatening to withdraw from the collaboration. Nevertheless, the Illica and Giacosa team finally succeeded in completing their second full libretto for Puccini, delivering the text of *Tosca* to the composer in early 1898.

Ricordi arranged the première in the Italian capital because of the opera's Roman setting, the premiere taking place at the Teatro Costanzi on January 14, 1900. The critical reception was guarded and mixed, several reviewers taking exception to the plot's extreme brutality. Nevertheless, the opera ran for 20 performances to packed houses. Two months later, *Tosca* was successfully mounted at La Scala in Milan, where it was conducted by Toscanini, and immediately following, there were performances in Buenos Aires and London's Covent Garden. In 1901, *Tosca* premiered in New York at the Metropolitan Opera.

Tosca, now beyond its centennial birthday, has become a phenomenal operatic success. Sardou himself commented that Puccini's opera possessed more dramatic intensity than his play, acknowledging the inherent power of opera to realize words through the emotive power of music. Puccini certainly improved on the original play, creating a musico-dramatic masterpiece that ultimately endowed Sardou's *La Tosca* with an immortality that the play and its author would have never achieved.

Tosca's story deals with authentic politics and true historical events that occurred in Rome in 1800. Sardou's original play contained a massive amount of historical detail and facts, much of which was impossible to include in Puccini's excised opera version of the story; those details are not revealed in the opera's great lyrical moments when the action stops to facilitate introspective outpourings of emotions, but in rapid conversational episodes that at times do not communicate clearly to the audience. As such, knowledge of the history of the period is essential to fully grasp the essence of the drama.

In 1800, Rome was a paradox: religiosity was pervasive, but political turmoil and violence abounded; sheep grazed in the Forum while blood poured from the executioner's scaffold that stood in the Piazza del Popolo. Heightened passions demanding political and social transformations were on the verge of erupting into revolution.

Eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals awakened Europe to injustices: social, political, and economic: the catalysts for this new sense of humanism were the literary works of Rousseau, Voltaire, Locke, and Jefferson. The French and American Revolutions sprung from Enlightenment ideals.

Philosophically, after centuries of theocratic rule, man — not God — was deemed the center of the universe. The oppression and tyranny of the ruling autocracies and monarchies were condemned as the causes of all human misfortune; there was a great disparity between the dominators and the dominated. Napoleon emerged from the ashes of the French Revolution, and the oppressed masses envisioned him their rescuer: Napoleon was resolved to destroy the monarchies, a crusade that triumphed one hundred years later with the end of World War I. Nevertheless, in 1800, the winds of revolution were churning throughout Europe: the ideals of democracy, freedom, and social reform were poised to undermine monarchical rule.

Italy was a microcosm of Europe's early nineteenth-century political turmoil: a patchwork of city-states not yet unified, and a population yearning for its independence and liberation from the tyrannical rule of the Austrian Hapsburg monarchy, and remnants of the Bourbon French monarchy in Naples. Rome was ruled by the Kingdom of Naples: the Bourbon King Ferdinand IV, and his wife, Maria Carolina, the latter, the sister of Marie Antoinette, who was beheaded in the Reign of Terror; she is the Queen mentioned in the *Tosca* story.

Rome was an arena for impassioned political conflicts between Republicans and Royalists: the Republicans advocated Enlightenment ideals and the liberation of Italy from Austria, and their hopes for democracy and reform resided with Napoleon and the French armies.

The Royalists were determined to maintain the status quo of the European monarchies: democracy was anathema and considered treachery against the state. Under the Bourbon monarchy, Rome was ruled as a tyrannical police state, and the Bourbons were prepared to use any means at their disposal to maintain their power and eliminate opposition: Republicans, liberals, anti Royalists, anti-monarchist, and supporters of Napoleon.

Tosca's cast of characters appear against this political backdrop of autocratic terror and potential revolution: Cesare Angelotti, an arch Republican freedom-fighter; Mario Cavaradosi, a Republican advocate; Baron Scarpia, the Royalist police chief of Rome; and Floria Tosca, a singer who unwittingly — and tragically — becomes trapped in the heated politics of the time.

All the characters in *Tosca* were true personages of history. In real life, Floria Tosca was a noted singer. Her character was paradoxical: she possessed obsessive religiosity, as well as a propensity for extreme — if not explosive — jealousy; a woman whose actions derive from emotions overpowering reason: intense and uncontrollable passions that are an essence of the drama.

Tosca's intense religiosity stemmed from her youth. While she was an orphan she tended goats outside Verona, Benedictine monks took pity on her and took her into their convent: that upbringing explained her intense piety and profound religiosity.

Singing came naturally to Tosca, and at 16, her unusual talent earned her celebrity. After hearing her sing, the renowned composer, Cimarosa, tried to rescue her from the convent so he could foster her singing career, but his wish resulted in a fierce battle with the nuns of the convent. Finally, the Pope agreed to arbitrate Tosca's future at a special Vatican audition: the Pope was so moved by her singing that he declared her free to devote herself to an artistic career. Floria Tosca actually sang at La Scala in Milan, San Carlo in Naples, and La Fenice in Venice. At the time of the drama, Tosca was engaged to sing at the Teatro Argentina in Rome.

In the story, Tosca is in love with the painter, Mario Cavaradossi, a staunch Republican sympathizer.

Mario Cavaradossi's father was Roman, and his mother was French. He was brought up in Paris, where he trained in the studio of the French Revolution's premiere painter, Jacques Louis David. He apparently inherited his liberal, Republican, and revolutionary notions from his father, a frequent visitor to the Parisian salons of Diderot and Voltaire.

Cavaradossi came to Rome to settle legal issues with respect to his recently deceased father's estate. He met the famous diva, Floria Tosca, and remained in Rome to pursue his love affair with her. However, the Roman authorities became aware of his liberal background and naturally presumed his sympathy for Napoleonic France; as such, he was suspect by the Royalists. To counter suspicion, Cavaradossi misled the authorities by offering his artistic services to the Jesuit church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, where he painted the Madonna slaying a serpent: the symbolic representation of the triumph of good over evil. The model for Cavaradossi's painting was the Marchesa Attavanti, the sister of Cesare Angelotti, the fugitive who had just escaped from the Castel Sant'Angelo prison at the beginning of the drama.

Cavaradossi was unaware of the Marchesa's identity, or that her real reason for visiting the church was to hide a key to the Attavanti Chapel, and food and clothing for her soon to be fugitive brother.

Cesare Angelotti was a Republican sympathizer and former Consul, or elected representative, in the short-lived Roman Republic that was established in 1798. He was arrested, because he protected Lady Hamilton during her days of prostitution at Vauxhall Garden. Soon thereafter, Angelotti was outspoken in his condemnation of

the Royalist autocracy. Angelotti had been a long time friend of Cavaradossi, both sharing Republican political ideals. At the very moment the opera story opens, Angelotti is a fugitive, his escape from the Royalist prison of Castel St. Angelo facilitated by his sister's bribe of the jailer.

Baron Vitellio Scarpia, the Royalist Chief of Police, was assigned to Rome by King Ferdinand of Naples to maintain the status quo by applying an iron hand to Napoleonic sympathizers.

Scarpia's first appearance in the opera immediately establishes his fierce and monstrous persona, the incarnation of a Torquemada-style inquisitor. His detective instincts have led him to the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, the Angelotti family's Attavanti Chapel, a likely place for the fugitive to hide.

Scarpia roars to the Sacristan and choirboys, his reproach for their blasphemous celebration in church: "Un tal baccano in chiesa — bel rispetto!" ("What kind of behavior is this in a church? Show respect!"), their celebration of the supposed Austrian defeat of Napoleon at Marengo. With Scarpia's appearance, a sudden hush overcomes the entire scene, as all are seized and frozen by fear.

Scarpia finds the Attavanti chapel door unlocked, a smoking gun that suggests that Angelotti took refuge in the Attavanti Chapel. But more importantly, he discovers a fan bearing the Attavanti coat-of-arms: like Iago's devious use of Desdemona's handkerchief, Scarpia will use the fan for a greater purpose: arousing Tosca's jealousy so that he can possess the beautiful Tosca, his ultimate victory.

Scarpia is the demon of the story, the relentless agent of retribution and political repression: a fanatic, utterly ruthless, ferocious, and violent. He is the forerunner of those twentieth century totalitarian police chiefs like the Soviet NKVD, or the Nazi Gestapo; his torture of Cavaradossi in Act II is a horrifying scene of brazen terror. Scarpia is as loathsome as Shakespeare's Iago, his persona placing him in the company of notorious diabolical characters from Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Bronte, and Bram Stoker.

Scarpia's tyranny descends into lechery and sadism, driving him unconscionably in his obsession to possess the beautiful Tosca: if rape fails, murder of her lover will suffice.

The entire drama revolves around Scarpia's political tyranny, and his lechery to possess Tosca. Puccini describes Scarpia with a leitmotif of three ominous, crashing chords, apt music to convey his demonic character.

Scarpia's lechery and lust, and his sadistic and brutal use of power are the dynamic engines that ignite the drama. His use of terror is the counter-force against the political and social idealism of the lovers, Tosca and Cavaradossi, as well as the fugitive, Angelotti.

The underlying theme of the *Tosca* story portrays man's helplessness and impotence against absolute power and despotism. Giuseppe Verdi, Puccini's predecessor, used his art to express his moral convictions and idealism: the horrible consequences inherent in the use and abuse of power.

Verdi's operas, *Don Carlo* and *Aida*, preached the composer's moral outrage: in *Don Carlo*, the demons are King Philip II and the equally abusive Inquisitors of the Church; in *Aida*, injustice emanates from the awesome power of the Pharaoh, the incarnation of god on earth, and his Priest/Inquisitors. In each of these operas, heroic men confront autocratic power, but in vain.

Puccini was criticized for his treatment of the political elements of the story; in *Tosca*, the ultimate tragedy is the death of love, not the death of political idealism. While Cavaradossi is in prison awaiting execution, he sings his farewell to Tosca and their love: "E lucevan le stelle," an introspective lament that expresses no remorse for the failure of his political ideals: Puccini, the narrator and musical dramatist of this story, was more concerned with the inner pathos of the man's soul as he faced the death of love, not martyrdom in the name of noble idealism.

Puccini always claimed to be politically neutral: he was silent during World War I, rarely offering assistance to the Italian war effort, which led to a temporary breach of friendship with Arturo Toscanini, an impassioned patriot. Puccini was equally silent as he witnessed Fascism slowly replacing Italy's democratic institutions: Puccini did not overtly share the humanitarian and Enlightenment passions of his idol, Giuseppe Verdi, who made those ideals the underlying theme of so many of his operas.

Giulio Ricordi complained that *Tosca* lacked a transcendental love duet forming the climax of the drama, no doubt, having in mind the highly-charged concluding scene of Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (1896). Ricordi found the final dialogue between the lovers intolerably weak dramatically — if not careless: Tosca's acting instructions to Cavaradossi. But Puccini maintained that Tosca would be far too preoccupied with saving her lover than indulging in outpourings of noble political and humanistic ideals.

For Puccini, the essence of the *Tosca* story was love, not politics: a verismo story of love destroyed by Scarpia's terror and betrayal. Cavaradossi and Angelotti sacrificed their lives in vain in their struggle for a new moral conscience; Floria Tosca was ostensibly innocent, but guilty because of her association with her politically motivated lover. But Puccini's focus was the death of love, not politics.

In *Tosca*, the composer's subconscious psychological demons emerged to the fore: his Neronic complex and his propensity for sadism. The *Tosca* audience witnesses a brutal torture scene, an attempted rape, a murder, a supposed mock execution, a double-crossing and betrayal, and eventually, Tosca's suicide. When the curtain falls at the end of Act III, the four principal characters in *Tosca* are dead: Angelotti, Scarpia, Cavaradossi, and Tosca, an unusually high death rate, even for Puccini.

The Tosca role indeed commands genuine dignity, even though Sardou's original literary model was criticized as mildly ridiculous, a characterization conceived specifically as a vehicle for the virtuosity of Sarah Bernhardt in order to guarantee its success. However, in Puccini's music drama, Tosca is a moving and complex personality, vastly improving on his literary source. The title role provides a magnificent opportunity for a fine singing-actress to exhibit her many talents: her explosions of

jealousy in Act I, her fear during Cavaradossi's torture, her terror when Scarpia attempts to rape her, and certainly her murder of Scarpia.

Tosca is a deeply religious woman, who very quickly transforms into a murderess, killing Scarpia in cold blood to avoid submitting to him. Her murder of Scarpia has confounded analysts, some posing that there is a contradiction in Tosca's character. However, the great opera director, Franco Zeffirelli, opined that in killing Scarpia, Tosca destroyed an elemental passion that she subconsciously bore for him. But in contrast, Maria Callas was more basic, commenting that Tosca could only weigh her dilemma in terms of love or hate, and there was nothing in between: to Callas, Scarpia's murder reflected but one passion: her violent hatred of him.

There have been many great — if not legendary — Tosca's in the past: Geraldine Farrar, Maria Jeritza, who fell to the ground while evading Scarpia's assaults, and became the first soprano to complete the aria "Vissi d'arte" while in a prone position, Maria Caniglia, and later, Maria Callas, whose performances with Tito Gobbi as Scarpia have become legendary.

Typically, Puccini was extremely meticulous with the plot's authenticity and its details. For the *Te Deum* of Act I, which takes place in the Church of Sant' Andrea della Valle, Puccini researched music to which *Te Deum*'s were sung in Roman churches, the sequence of the cardinal's procession, and the costumes of the Swiss Guard. For the opening of Act III, to capture the sounds of morning bells in Rome, Puccini went to Rome to measure the sound and pitch of the bells of St. Peter's and surrounding churches as they would be heard from the ramparts of Castel Sant' Angelo.

Puccini's leitmotifs serve to narrate the story, providing recollection, or a recall of ideas: Scarpia's 3-chord leitmotif, the theme associated with Tosca that later becomes integrated into her aria, "Vissi d'arte"; and Angelotti's fugitive music.

Leitmotifs serve to reveal a character's unexpressed thoughts: in Act I, Tosca and Cavaradossi plan their rendezvous that evening, Cavaradossi's thoughts revealed by the music of Angelotti's fugitive motive. Likewise, Scarpia's interrogation of Cavaradossi is punctuated by the motif associated with the well: although Cavaradossi refuses to mention the well, the music reveals that he is thinking about it.

Opera, because it communicates on the two levels of words and music, can provide powerful dramatic emphasis. There is profound irony: the conflict of good versus evil, or the spirit versus the flesh, that is presented in the *Te Deum* scene is a quintessential example of the art form's great capacity to express conflicting ideas: against the solemn, sacred *Te Deum* music, Scarpia blasphemously vows that to possess Tosca, he would forsake God.

Tosca concludes with a thunderous orchestral outburst of the music of Cavaradossi's farewell aria, "E lucevan le stelle": specifically, the music that underscored the words "e non ho amato mai tanto la vita" ("Never have I loved life so much as in this moment."); it was Cavaradossi's impassioned lament that with his death, he will lose his beloved Tosca.

In Puccini's musico-dramatic interpretation of this story, the tragedy was not the failure of political ideals, but the death of love — and the death of lovers, a poignant statement from a composer whose fourth opera proved beyond doubt that he was a supreme master of music drama.

LIBRETTO

Tosca

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Act I

Rome: the interior of the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle.

There is a scaffold erected before a large painting that is in progress.

Various painter's accessories and tools are strewn about.

Angelotti enters the church, a fugitive in prison clothes, who is disheveled, exhausted, and trembling in fear.

**Vivacissimo
con violenza**



Angelotti:

Ah! Finalmente! Nel terror mio stolto vedevo
ceffi di birro in ogni volto.

Angelotti:

Finally! In my panic and fright I was seeing
those pursuers' faces everywhere.

*He sighs in relief when he recognizes a shrine with an image of the Virgin
and a receptacle for Holy Water.*

La pila, la colonna.

A piè della Madonna mi scrisse mia sorella.

The front of the column.

My sister wrote to tell me "At the foot of
the Madonna."

*At first he becomes discouraged when his search for a key is unsuccessful.
In agitation, he searches again, and erupts into excitement when he finds the key.*

Ecco la chiave, ed ecco la Cappella!

Here is the key, and here's the Chapel!

*He glances about in fright, opens the Chapel gate, and locks it behind him.
Just as he disappears, the Sacristan appears carrying a basket of paint brushes.*

Sagrestano:

E sempre lava! Ogni pennello è sozzo
peggio d'un collarin d'uno scagnozzo.

Signor pittore. Tò! Nessuno.

Avrei giurato che fosse ritornato il cavalier
Cavaradossi.

Sacristan:

Always washing them! Every brush is
filthy, worse than a poor priest's collar.
(approaches the scaffold in surprise)

Good morning. What! No one here.

I could have sworn that Cavalier
Cavaradossi had returned.

*He puts down the paint brushes, climbs the scaffold, and looks into the food basket and
notices that it has not been touched.*

No, sbaglio. Il panier è intatto.

I'm mistaken. The basket is untouched.

As bells announce the Angelus, the Sacristan kneels in prayer.

*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae
Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.
Ecce ancilla Domini
Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.
Et Verbum caro factum est
Et habitavit in nobis.*

*The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary
and She conceived of the Holy Spirit.
Behold the handmaid of the Lord
Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.
And the Word was made flesh
And dwelt among us.*

*Cavaradossi enters, ascends the scaffold, and uncovers the painting which represents
Mary Magdalene; the figure has large blue eyes and golden hair.*

Cavaradossi:
Che fai?

Cavaradossi: *(to the kneeling Sacristan)*
What are you doing?

Sagrestano:
Recito l'Angelus.

Sacristan:
I'm reciting the Angelus.

The Sacristan notices the painting and marvels in great astonishment.

Sante ampolle! Il suo ritratto!

Holy cruets! I know that lady!

Cavaradossi:
Di chi?

Cavaradossi:
You do?

Sagrestano:
Di quell'ignota che i dì passati a pregar qui
venia. Tutta devota e pia.

Sacristan:
That unknown woman has come here daily
to pray. She is very devoted and pious.

Cavaradossi:
È vero. E tanto ell'era infervorata nella sua
preghiera ch'io ne pinsi, non visto, il bel
sembiante.

Cavaradossi:
That's right. She was praying so fervently
that she didn't notice that I was painting
her beautiful face.

Sagrestano:
(Fuori, Satana, fuori!)

Sacristan: *(as if scandalized)*
(Get rid of the Devil!)

Cavaradossi:
Dammi i colori!

Cavaradossi:
Give me paints!

*Cavaradossi starts to paint, but hesitates as he scrutinizes his work. He removes
a medallion from his pocket, and he compares the image to his painting.*

Andante lento
CAVARADOSSI



Recondita armonia di bellezze diverse!
È bruna Floria, l'ardente amante mia.

Sagrestano:
(Scherza coi fanti e lascia stare i santi!)

Cavaradossi:
E te, beltade ignota, cinta di chiome bionde!
Tu azzurro hai l'occhio,
Tosca ha l'occhio nero!

Sagrestano:
(Scherza coi fanti e lascia stare i santi!)

Cavaradossi:
L'arte nel suo mistero
le diverse bellezze insiem confonde.
Ma nel ritrar costei il mio solo pensiero, Ah!
Il mio sol pensier sei tu! Tosca, sei tu!

Sagrestano:
Queste diverse gonne che fanno
concorrenza alle Madonne mandan tanfo
d'Inferno.
(Scherza coi fanti e lascia stare i santi!)

Ma con quei cani di volterriani nemici del
santissimo governo non s'ha da metter voce!

Già sono impenitenti tutti quanti!
Facciam piuttosto il segno della croce.

Eccellenza, vado.

Cavaradossi:
Fa il tuo piacere!

Sagrestano:
Pieno è il paniere.
Fa penitenza?

Cavaradossi:
Fame non ho.

The mysterious similarities of different
beauties! My impassioned Floria is dark-haired.

Sacristan:
(Play with the mundane, but leave the
saints alone!)

Cavaradossi:
You, unknown beauty, are wreathed in
golden hair! Your eyes are blue,
and Tosca has dark eyes!

Sacristan:
(Play with the mundane, but leave the
saints alone!)

Cavaradossi:
Art joins the mystery
of these two different women.
But in this painting I have but one thought!
Tosca, my only thought is you! Tosca it is you!

Sacristan:
These different women competing with the
Madonna, emit the stench of damnation.

(Play with the mundane, but leave the
saints alone!)

Like those dogs, those Voltarian enemies,
the voice cannot be raised!

They are all unrepentant sinners!
Rather, let's make the sign of the Cross.

Sir, I'm going.

Cavaradossi:
Do as you please!

Sacristan:
Your food basket is full.
Are you doing penitence?

Cavaradossi:
I'm not hungry.

Sagrestano:

Ah! Mi rincresce!
Badi, quand'esce chiuda.

Cavaradossi:

Va!

Sagrestano:

Vo!

Sacristan:

Oh, I'm so sorry!
Don't forget to lock up.

Cavaradossi:

Go!

Sacristan:

I'm going!

After the Sacristan leaves, Cavaradossi continues to paint, but becomes uneasy when he hears the noise of someone at the gate of the chapel. It is Angelotti, who realizes that he has been discovered and becomes terrified.

Just as he is about to again hide in the chapel, Cavaradossi approaches him.

Cavaradossi:

Gente là dentro!

Cavaradossi:

Someone is in there!

Angelotti:

Voi! Cavaradossi!
Vi manda Iddio!
Non mi ravvisate?
Il carcere m'ha dunque assai mutato?

Angelotti:

You! Cavaradossi!
God has sent you to me!
Don't you recognize me?
Has prison changed me that much?

Cavaradossi:

Angelotti! Il Console della spenta
repubblica romana!

Cavaradossi: *(recognizing Angelotti)*

Angelotti! The Consul of the extinct
Roman Republic!

Angelotti:

Fuggii pur ora da Castel Sant'Angelo.

Angelotti:

I've just escaped from the Castel Sant'Angelo.

Cavaradossi:

Disponete di me!

Cavaradossi:

I am at your disposal!

Voce di Tosca:

Mario!

Voice of Tosca: *(from outside)*

Mario!

Cavaradossi:

Celatevi!
È una donna gelosa.
Un breve istante e la rimando.

Cavaradossi: *(to Angelotti)*

Hide yourself!
She is a jealous woman.
I'll dismiss her in a moment.

Voce di Tosca:

Mario!

Voice of Tosca:

Mario!

Cavaradossi:

Eccomi!

Cavaradossi:

I'm coming!

Angelotti:

Sono stremo di forze, più non reggo.

Angelotti:

I'm exhausted, I can't bear it any longer.

*Cavaradossi gives Angelotti the food basket.***Cavaradossi:**

In questo panier v'è cibo e vino.

Cavaradossi:

There's food and wine in this basket.

Angelotti:

Grazie!

Angelotti:

Thank you!

Cavaradossi:

Presto!

Cavaradossi: (*urging Angelotti to hide*)

Hurry!

Angelotti:

Grazie!

Angelotti:

Thank you!

Cavaradossi:

Hurry!

Cavaradossi:

Hurry!

Voce di Tosca:

Mario! Mario! Mario!

Voice of Tosca:

Mario! Mario! Mario!

Cavaradossi

Son qui!

Cavaradossi:

I'm here!

Andantino sostenuto*Tosca bursts in and immediately looks around anxiously.***Tosca:**

Perchè chiuso?

Tosca:

Why was the door locked?

Cavaradossi:

Lo vuole il Sagrestano.

Cavaradossi:

It was the Sacristan's wish.

Tosca:

A chi parlavi?

Tosca:

Who were you speaking to?

Cavaradossi:

A te!

Tosca:

Altre parole bisbigliavi. Ov'è?

Cavaradossi:

Chi?

Tosca:

Colei! Quella donna!

Ho udito i lesti passi ed un fruscio di vesti.

Cavaradossi:

Sogni!

Tosca:

Lo neghi?

Cavaradossi:

Lo nego e t'amo!

Tosca:

Oh! Innanzi alla Madonna?

No, Mario mio, lascia pria che la preghi,
che l'infiori.Ora stammi a sentir, stasera canto,
ma è spettacolo breve. Tu m'aspetti
sull'uscio della scena e alla tua villa andiam
soli, soletti.**Cavaradossi:.**

Stasera?

Tosca:È luna piena e il notturno effluvio floreale
inebria il cor!

Non sei contento?

Cavaradossi:

Tanto!

Tosca:

Tornalo a dir!

Cavaradossi:

To you!

Tosca:

You were whispering. Where is she?

Cavaradossi:

Who?

Tosca: (*implying it was another woman*)

She! That woman!

I heard hasty footsteps and the rustling of a
woman's dress.**Cavaradossi:**

You're dreaming!

Tosca:

Do you deny it?

Cavaradossi:

I deny it, and I love you!

Tosca: (*he tries to embrace her*)

In front of the Madonna?

No, my Mario, let me first pray to her and
adorn her with flowers.Now listen to me. I'm singing tonight, but
it is a short performance. Wait for me at the
stage entrance, and then we'll go to your
villa and be alone together.**Cavaradossi:**

This evening?

Tosca:It's a full moon, and the fragrant flowers
perfuming the night intoxicate my heart.

Aren't you pleased?

Cavaradossi:

Very much so!

Tosca:

Say it again!

Cavaradossi:

Tanto!

Tosca:

Lo dici male!

Non la sospiri la nostra casetta
che tutta ascosa nel verde ci aspetta?
Nido a noi sacro, ignoto al mondo inter,
pien d'amore e di mister?
Al tuo fianco sentire
per le silenziose stellate ombre,
salir le voci delle cose!
Dai boschi e dai roveti,
dall'arse erbe,
dall'imo dei franti sepolcreti,
odorosi di timo,
la notte escon bisbigli
di minuscoli amori
e perfidi consigli
che ammoliscono i cuori.

Fiorite, o campi immensi, palpitate
aure marine, aurite nel lunare albor.
Ah piovete voluttà, volte stellate!

Cavaradossi:

Ah! M'avvinci ne' tuoi lacci mia sirena.

Tosca:

Arde a Tosca nel sangue il folle amor!

Cavaradossi:

Mia serena, verrò!

Tosca:

O mio amore!

Cavaradossi:

Or lasciami al lavoro.

Tosca:

Mi discacci?

Cavaradossi:

Urge l'opra, lo sai!

Cavaradossi:

Very much so!

Tosca:

You don't really mean it!
Don't you sigh for our little house hidden
amidst the forest greenery?
Isn't it our sacred nest, unknown to the
whole world, and full of love and mystery?
I'll be at your side
in the silent darkness,
hearing all of those mysterious sounds!
From the forest and the briar patches,
from the parched herbs and the
broken tombs
and their aroma of thyme,
the night is whispering
tiny words of love,
and amorous confessions
that soften the heart.

Immense fields of flowers, the sea air
throbbing, and the moon shining.
In the starry whiteness, lust will rain down!

Cavaradossi:

My temptress has defeated me!

Tosca:

In Tosca, a passionate love is burning!

Cavaradossi:

I long for the moment to arrive!

Tosca:

Oh my love!

Cavaradossi:

But now leave me to my work.

Tosca:

Are you chasing me away?

Cavaradossi:

You know that my work is urgent!

Tosca:

Vado!

Tosca:

I'm going!

*As Tosca begins to leave, she notices Cavaradossi's painting.
Agitated, she rushes back to Cavaradossi.*

Chi è quella donna bionda lassù?

Who is that blond woman in the painting
up there?**Cavaradossi:**

La Maddalena. Ti piace?

Cavaradossi:

The Magdalen. Do you like it?

Tosca:

È troppo bella!

Tosca:

She's too beautiful!

Cavaradossi:

Prezioso elogio!

Cavaradossi: *(laughingly)*

That's a flattering compliment!

Tosca:

Ridi?

Quegli occhi cilestrini già li vidi.

Tosca: *(suspicious)*

Why are you laughing?

I've seen those pale blue eyes before.

Cavaradossi:

Ce n'è tanti pel mondo!

Cavaradossi:

There are so many like them in the world!

Tosca:

Aspetta. Aspetta.

E l'Attavanti!

Tosca:

Wait a moment. Wait.

That's the Attavanti woman!

Cavaradossi:

Brava!

Cavaradossi: *(laughing)*

Very good!

Tosca:

La vedi? T'ama?

Tu l'ami?

Tosca: *(blind with jealousy)*

Have you seen her? Does she love you?

Do you love her?

Cavaradossi:

Fu puro caso.

Cavaradossi: *(trying to calm her)*

It was by chance.

Tosca:

Quei passi e quel bisbiglio.

Ah! Qui stava pur ora!

Tosca: *(raging with jealousy)*

Those footsteps and the whispering.

She was just here!

Cavaradossi:

Vien via!

Cavaradossi:

Come away!

Tosca:

Ah, la civetta!
A me, a me!

Cavaradossi:

La vidi ieri, ma fu puro caso.
A pregar qui venne non visto la ritrassi.

Tosca:

Giura!

Cavaradossi:

Giuro!

Tosca:

Come mi guarda fiso!

Cavaradossi:

Vien via!

Tosca:

Di me beffarda, ride.

Cavaradossi:

Follia!

Tosca:

Ah, quegli occhi!

Cavaradossi:

Quale occhio al mondo
può star di paro
all'ardente occhio tuo nero?
È qui che l'esser mio s'affisa intero.
Occhio all'amor soave, all'ira fiero!
Qual altro al mondo può star di paro
all'occhio tuo nero!

Tosca:

Oh, come la sai bene
l'arte di farti amare!

Ma falle gli occhi neri!

Tosca:

Ah, that coquette!
Leave her to me!

Cavaradossi:

I saw her yesterday, but by pure chance.
She prayed here but didn't see me paint her.

Tosca:

Swear it!

Cavaradossi:

I swear it!

Tosca: (*staring at the painting*)

How she stares at me!

Cavaradossi:

Come away!

Tosca:

She's mocking and laughing at me.

Cavaradossi:

Nonsense!

Tosca:

Those eyes!

Cavaradossi:

What eyes in the world
can rival
your impassioned dark eyes?
Those gazing eyes have conquered me:
eyes of gentle love and fiery passion!
No other eyes in the world can rival your
impassioned dark eyes!

Tosca:

How well you know the art of making
yourself loved!

But paint her eyes dark!

**Cavaradossi:**

Mia gelosa!

Cavaradossi:

My jealous love!

Tosca:Sì, lo sento, ti tormento
senza posa.**Tosca:**Yes, I feel it, and I torment you without
relenting.**Cavaradossi:**

Mia gelosa!

Cavaradossi:

My jealous love!

Tosca:Certa sono del perdono, se tu guardi al mio
dolor!**Tosca:**I'm sure that you would forgive me if you
understood my suffering!**Cavaradossi:**Mia Tosca idolatrata,
ogni cosa in te mi piace;
l'ira audace
e lo spasimo d'amor!**Cavaradossi:**My adored Tosca,
I love everything about you,
your bold anger
and your yearning for love!**Tosca:**Dilla ancora la parola che consola.
Dilla ancora!**Tosca:**Say those consoling words again.
Say them again!**Cavaradossi:**Mia vita, amante inquieta,
dirò sempre: "Floria, t'amo!"
Ah! L'alma acquieta,
sempre "t'amo!" ti dirò!**Cavaradossi:**My darling, my restless lover,
I will always say: "I love you Floria!"
Calm your soul, for I will always tell you
that "I love you!"**Tosca:**Dio! Quante peccata!
M'hai tutta spettinata!**Tosca:** (*drawing from his embrace*)God! Nothing is sacred!
You have completely messed my hair!**Cavaradossi:**

Or va, lasciami!

Cavaradossi:

Now go, and leave me to my work!

Tosca:

Tu fino a stassera stai fermo al lavoro. E mi prometti: sia caso o fortuna, sia treccia bionda o bruna, a pregar non verrà donna nessuna?

Cavaradossi:

Lo giuro, amore! Va!

Tosca:

Quanto m' affretti!

Cavaradossi:

Ancora?

Tosca:

No, perdona!

Cavaradossi:

Davanti alla Madonna?

Tosca:

È tanto buona!

Ma falle gli occhi neri!

Tosca:

You'll be working here all day. Promise me that you will not look at another woman, whether blond or brunette, even if she comes to pray?

Cavaradossi:

I swear it, my love! But please go!

Tosca:

How you are rushing me!

Cavaradossi: (reproachfully)

Again?

Tosca: (embracing him)

No, forgive me!

Cavaradossi: (jokingly)

In front of the Madonna?

Tosca: (as she departs)

She is so good!

(gazing at the painting)

But do make her eyes dark!

As soon as Tosca has left, Cavaradossi rushes to the chapel. Angelotti appears, and they greet each other affectionately.

Cavaradossi:

È buona la mia Tosca, ma credente al confessor nulla tiene celato, ond'io mi tacqui.

È cosa più prudente.

Angelotti:

Siam soli?

Cavaradossi:

Sì. Qual è il vostro disegno?

Angelotti:

A norma degli eventi, uscir di Stato o star celato in Roma. Mia sorella...

Cavaradossi:

Tosca is a good woman, but because of her profound faith, she will never keep a secret from her confessor, and that's why I didn't tell her about you. I think it was a wise decision.

Angelotti:

Are we alone?

Cavaradossi:

Yes. What is your plan?

Angelotti:

Depending on events, I'll either leave the State or remain hidden in Rome. My sister...

Cavaradossi:

L'Attavanti?

Angelotti:

Sì, ascose un muliebree abbigliamento là sotto l'altare, vesti, velo, ventaglio. Appena imbruni indosserò quei panni.

Cavaradossi:

Or comprendo!

Quel fare circospetto e il pregante fervore in giovin donna e bella m'avean messo in sospetto di qualche occulto amor!

Or comprendo!

Era amor di sorella!

Angelotti:

Tutto ella ha osato onde sottrarmi a Scarpia, scellerato!

Cavaradossi:

Scarpia?! Bigotto satiro che affina colle devote pratiche la foia libertina e strumento al lascivo talento fa il confessore e il boia!

La vita mi costasse, vi salverò!

Ma indugiar fino a notte è mal sicuro.

Angelotti:

Temo del sole!

Cavaradossi:

La cappella mette a un orto mal chiuso, poi c'è un canneto che va lungi pei campi a una mia villa.

Angelotti:

M'è nota.

Cavaradossi:

Ecco la chiave, innanzi sera io vi raggiungo, portate con voi le vesti femminili.

Angelotti:

Ch'io le indossi?

Cavaradossi:

The Attavanti woman?

Angelotti:

Yes, she's hidden a lady's wardrobe under the altar: a dress, a veil, and a fan.

After dark, I'll put on the clothes as a disguise.

Cavaradossi:

Now I understand!

That young, beautiful woman was praying fervently as a precaution to avoid arousing suspicion about her secret purpose!

Now I understand!

It was a sister's love!

Angelotti:

She has dared everything to rescue me from the clutches of that villainous Scarpia!

Cavaradossi:

Scarpia?! That lecher and bigot uses the power of the state to destroy freedom and serve his lust; he is both confessor and executioner!

I will save you even if it costs me my life!

But to delay until night is imprudent.

Angelotti:

I fear being seen in daylight!

Cavaradossi: (*pointing to the chapel*)

From the chapel garden, take the path through the suburbs and cane-fields that leads to my villa.

Angelotti:

I know about it.

Cavaradossi:

Here's the key. Before evening I'll join you. Take the woman's clothes with you.

Angelotti:

Should I put them on?

Cavaradossi:

Per or non monta, il sentier è deserto.

Cavaradossi:

It's not necessary, the path is deserted.

Angelotti:

Addio!

Angelotti:

Farewell!

Cavaradossi:

Se urgesse il periglio, correte
al pozzo del giardin.
L'acqua è nel fondo, ma a mezzo della
canna, un picciol varco guida ad un antro
oscuro, rifugio impenetrabile e sicuro!

Cavaradossi:

If there's any danger, take shelter in the
well in the garden.
Water is at the bottom, but half way down,
there's a small passage that leads to a dark
cave; it's impenetrable and safe!

A cannon shot booms in the distance.

Angelotti:

Il cannon del castello!

Angelotti:

The cannon from the castle!

Cavaradossi:

Fu scoperta la fuga!
Or Scarpia i suoi sbirri sguinzaglia!

Cavaradossi:

Your escape was discovered!
Now Scarpia has his henchmen in pursuit!

Angelotti:

Addio!

Angelotti:

Farewell!

Cavaradossi:

Con voi verrò! Staremo all'erta!

Cavaradossi: (resolutely)

I'll come with you! We must be careful!

Angelotti:

Odo qualcun!

Angelotti:

I hear someone!

Cavaradossi:

Se ci assalgon, battaglia!

Cavaradossi:

If we're assaulted, we'll fight!

*As Cavaradossi and Angelotti escape from the chapel,
the Sacristan arrives, excited by the news he brings.*

Sagrestano:

Sommo giubilo, Eccellenza!
Non c'è più! Ne son dolente!
Chi contrista un miscredente
si guadagna un'indulgenza!

Sacristan:

Excellency, what jubilation!
He's not here anymore! What a pity!
If I saddened a non-believer
I deserve a small indulgence!

Choir boys rush into the chapel.

Tutta qui la cantoria!
Presto !

All the choir over here!
Quickly!

Ragazzi:

Dove?

Sagrestano:

In sagrestia.

Ragazzi:

Ma che avvenne?

Sagrestano:

Nol sapete?

Bonaparte, scellerato, Bonaparte...

Ragazzi:

Ebben? Che fu?

Sagrestano:

Fu spennato, sfracellato, è piombato a Belzebù!

Ragazzi:

Chi lo dice?

È sogno! È fola!

Sagrestano:

È veridica parola or ne giunse la notizia!

Ragazzi:

Si festeggi la vittoria!

Sagrestano:

E questa sera gran fiaccolata
veglia di gala a Palazzo Farnese,
ed un'apposita nuova cantata
con Floria Tosca!

E nelle chiese inni al Signore!
Or via a vestirvi, non più clamor!
Via, via in sagrestia!

Tutti:

Ah! Doppio soldo. Te Deum. Gloria!
Viva il Re! Si festeggi la vittoria!

Boys:

Where?

Sacristan:

To the sacristy.

Boys:

But what happened?

Sacristan:

You don't know yet?

That scoundrel Bonaparte...

Boys:

Well? What was it?

Sacristan:

He was plucked, crushed, and fell to
Beelzebub!

Boys:

Who said so?

That's a dream! That's a fable!

Sacristan:

It is the truth. The news will soon arrived!

Boys:

Then there'll be a victory celebration!

Sacristan:

This evening there will be a torchlight
celebration at the Farnese Palace,
and a specially composed new cantata will
be sung by Floria Tosca!
In the church there will be hymns to the
Lord! Now go and dress, no more
commotion! Go, go off to the sacristy!

All:

Oh, double wages. Te Deum. Gloria!
Long live the King! Let's celebrate the victory!

*The door opens and Scarpia and his agents appear unexpectedly.
With great emphasis, Scarpia reproaches the choir boys and the Sacristan
for making such a commotion in the church.*

Scarpia:

Un tal baccano in chiesa!
Bel rispetto!

Sagrestano:

Eccellenza, il gran giubilo.

Scarpia:

Apprestate per il Te Deum.

Scarpia:

Such commotion in church!
What fine respect!

Sacristan:

Your Excellency, the great jubilation.

Scarpia:

Get ready for the Te Deum.

The choir boys quietly leave, but Scarpia orders the Sacristan to remain.

Tu resta!

You, stay here!

Sagrestano:

Non mi muovo!

Sacristan: (*stuttering in fear*)

I'm not moving!

Scarpia:

E tu va, fruga ogni angolo,
raccogli ogni traccia!

Scarpia: (*to his agent Spoletta*)

And you, go search every corner and gather
every clue!

Spoletta:

Sta bene!

Spoletta:

Very well!

Scarpia:

Occhio alle porte, senza dar sospetti!

Scarpia:

Watch the doorways without arousing
suspicion!

(*to the Sacristan*)

Ora a te! Pesa le tue risposte.

As for you, answer carefully!

Un prigionier di Stato fuggì pur ora da
Castel Sant'Angelo, S'è rifugiato qui.

A prisoner of the State just escaped from
Castel Sant'Angelo and took refuge here.

Sagrestano:

Misericordia!

Sacristan:

Mercy!

Scarpia:

Forse c'è ancora.

Dov'è la Cappella degli Attavanti?

Scarpia:

Maybe he's still here.

Where is the Attavanti Chapel?

Sagrestano:

Eccola! Aperta! Arcangeli!

E un'altra chiave!

Sacristan: (*going to the chapel door*)

Here it is! It's open! Archangels!

And there's another key!

Scarpia:

Buon indizio. Entriamo.

Scarpia:

That's suspicious. Let's go in.

They enter the Chapel and return immediately. Scarpia holds a fan in his hands.

Fu grave sbaglio quel colpo di cannone! Il
mariolo spiccato ha il volo, ma lasciò una
preda preziosa, un ventaglio.

The cannon shot was a grave mistake!
The rogue has taken flight, but he left me
a precious clue: a fan.

Qual complice il misfatto preparò?

What sort of accomplice helped him?

Scarpia closely scrutinizes the fan and recognizes its coat-of-arms.

La marchesa Attavanti!
Il suo stemma!

The Marquess Attavanti!
Her coat-of-arms!

Scarpia surveys the church. His eyes move to the painter's scaffold where he notices the well-known face of the Marquess Attavanti in Cavaradossi's painting.

Il suo ritratto!
Chi fe' quelle pitture?

It's her portrait!
Who did that painting?

Sagrestano:

Il cavalier Cavaradossi.

Sacristan:

The Cavalier Cavaradossi.

Scarpia

Lui!

Scarpia:

He!

*An agent emerges from the Attavanti Chapel with an empty basket.***Sagrestano:**

Numi! Il paniere!

Sacristan:

Gods! The bread basket!

Scarpia:

Lui! L'amante di Tosca!
Un uom sospetto! Un volterrian!

Scarpia:

He! Tosca's lover!
He's a man to suspect! He's a Voltairian!

Sagrestano:

Vuoto? Vuoto!

Sacristan:

Is it empty? Empty!

Scarpia:

Che hai detto? Che fu?

Scarpia:

What did you say? What was that?

Sagrestano:

Si ritrovò nella Cappella questo panier.

Sacristan:

This basket was found in the Chapel.

Scarpia:

Tu lo conosci?

Sagrestano:

Certo!

È il cesto del pittor, ma nondimeno...

Scarpia:

Sputa quello che sai!

Sagrestano:

Io lo lasciai ripieno di cibo prelibato.

Il pranzo del pittor!

Scarpia:

Avrà pranzato!

Sagrestano:

Nella Cappella?

Non ne avea la chiave

nè contava pranzar, disse egli stesso.

Onde l'avea già messo al riparo.

(Libera me Domine!)

Scarpia:(Or tutto è chiaro. La provvista del sacrista
d'Angelotti fu la preda!)**Scarpia:**

Do you recognize it?

Sacristan:

Certainly!

It's the painter's basket, but nonetheless...

Scarpia:

Spit out what you know!

Sacristan:

I left it filled with choice food.

It was the painter's dinner!

Scarpia:

He must have dined!

Sacristan:

There in the Chapel?

He didn't have a key to it. Besides, he told
me himself that he didn't want to dine.

I left it over there, in a safe place.

(God help me!)

Scarpia:(Now it's all clear to me. The Sacristan's
provisions became Angelotti's reward!)

Tosca returns in a state of great agitation. She approaches the scaffold and does not find Cavaradossi. As she begins to search the church, Scarpia hides behind the column near the Holy Water basin.

Tosca? Che non mi veda.

(Per ridurre un geloso allo sbaraglio

Jago ebbe un fazzoletto, ed io un ventaglio!)

Tosca? She must not see me.

(To manipulate the dangers of jealousy,

Iago had a handkerchief, and I have a fan!)

Tosca:

Mario? Mario?

Tosca:

Mario? Mario?

Sagrestano:

Il pittor Cavaradossi?

Chi sa dove sia?

Svanì, sgattaiolò per sua stregoneria.

Sacristan:

The painter Cavaradossi?

Who knows where he is?

He vanished, slipped away by his witchcraft.

Tosca:

Ingannata? No, no!
Tradirmi egli non può!

Tosca:

Did he deceive me? No, no!
He couldn't have betrayed me!

*Scarpia emerges from behind the column and surprises Tosca by his sudden presence.
He offers her Holy Water. Outside, bells are heard inviting people to church.*

Scarpia:

Tosca divina la mano mia la vostra aspetta,
piccola manina, non per galanteria ma per
offrirvi l'acqua benedetta.

Scarpia:

Divine Tosca, my hand awaits your tiny
hand, not because I want to be gallant, but
to offer you some holy water.

Tosca:

Grazie, signor!

Tosca:

Thank you, Sir!

Scarpia:

Un nobile esempio è il vostro. Al cielo
piena di santo zelo attingete dell'arte il
magistero che la fede ravviva!

Scarpia:

You are a noble example. Heaven is full of
zealous saints, but you draw a majesty from
your art that revives faith!

Tosca:

Bontà vostra.

Tosca:

You are very kind.

Scarpia:

Le pie donne son rare.
Voi calcate la scena.
E in chiesa ci venite per pregar.

Scarpia:

Pious women are rare.
You tread the stage.
And in church you come to pray.

Tosca:

Che intendete?

Tosca:

What do you mean?

Scarpia:

E non fate come certe sfrontate che han di
Maddalena viso e costumi, e vi trescan
d'amore!

Scarpia: (as he points to the painting)

You are not like certain shameless women
with the aura of a Magdalen, who come to
church to indulge in the intrigues of love!

Tosca:

Che? D'amore? Le prove!

Tosca:

What? Of love? Prove it!

Scarpia:

È arnese da pittore questo?

Scarpia: (showing her the fan)

Is this a painter's implement?

Tosca:

Un ventaglio? Dove stava?

Tosca:

A fan? Where was it?

Scarpia:

Là su quel palco. Qualcun venne
certo a sturbar gli amanti
ed essa nel fuggir perdé le penne!

Tosca:

La corona! Lo stemma! È l'Attavanti!
Presago sospetto!

Scarpia:

(Ho sortito l'effetto!)

Tosca:

Ed io venivo a lui tutta dogliosa
per dirgli: invan stassera,
il ciel s'infosca, l'innamorata Tosca
è prigioniera dei regali tripudi.

Scarpia:

(Già il veleno l'ha rosa!)

O che v'offende, dolce signora?
Una ribelle lagrima scende
sovra le belle guancie e le irrorà;
dolce signora, che mai v'accorà?

Tosca:

Nulla!

Scarpia:

Darei la vita per asciugare quel pianto.

Tosca:

Io qui mi struggo e intanto
d'altra in braccio le mie smanie deride!

Scarpia:

(Morde il veleno!)

Tosca:

Dove son? Potessi coglierli, i traditori!
Oh qual sospetto!
Ai doppi amori è la villa ricetto!
Traditor!
Oh mio bel nido insozzato di fango!
Vi piomberò inattesa!

Scarpia:

There, on the scaffold. Someone must have
certainly surprised the lovers, making her lose
her feathers as she escaped!

Tosca: (examining the fan)

The coronet! The coat-of-arms!
It's Attavanti's! Just as I suspected!

Scarpia:

(I've achieved the effect!)

Tosca:

And I came here full of sorrow to tell him
that the heavens have not been kind to us;
his loving Tosca is a prisoner of royal
celebrations and must desert him tonight.

Scarpia:

(My poison is already working!)

What has offended you, sweet lady,
that a rebellious tear has descended and
bathes your beautiful cheek? Tell me,
sweet lady, what is distressing you?

Tosca:

Nothing!

Scarpia: (insinuating)

I would give my life to dry those tears.

Tosca:

I suffer here while he mocks me in the
arms of another!

Scarpia:

(The poison is biting!)

Tosca: (with great bitterness)

Where are they? If I could catch the traitors!
Oh what suspicion!
The villa is a refuge for both lovers!
Traitor!
Our beautiful nest soiled with slime!
I'll surprise you and bury you!

Tosca turns toward the painting.

Tu non l'avrai stasera. Giuro!

I swear, you won't have his love tonight!

Scarpia:

In chiesa!

Scarpia:

In church!

Tosca

Dio mi perdona.

Egli vede ch'io piango!

Tosca:

God forgives me.

He sees that I am crying!

Scarpia pretends to comfort Tosca: he offers her his arm, and accompanies her to the door. After Tosca's departure, people stream into the church.

Scarpia returns and commands Spoletta.

Scarpia:

Tre sbirri. Una carrozza.

Presto, seguila dovunque vada, non visto, provvedi!

Scarpia:

Take three agents and a carriage.

Quickly, follow her wherever she goes, but be careful and don't arouse suspicion!

Spoletta:

Sta bene! Il convegno?

Spoletta:

Very well. Where will I find you?

Scarpia:

Palazzo Farnese!

Scarpia:

At the Farnese Palace!

Va, Tosca!

Nel tuo cuor s'annida Scarpia!

È Scarpia che scioglie a volo
il falco della tua gelosia.

Go, Tosca!

The name Scarpia is etched in your heart!
Scarpia has released the falcon and
inflamed your jealousy.

Quanta promessa nel tuo pronto sospetto!

Your suspicions offer me infinite promise!

The crowd in the church amasses for the Te Deum.

Scarpia kneels as the Cardinal enters.

Largo Religioso



Capitolo:

Adjutorum nostrum in nomine Domini

The Chapter:

My help is in the name of the Lord

Folla:

Qui fecit coelum et terram

Folla:

who made Heaven and earth.

Capitolo:

Sit nomen Domini benedictum

Folla:

Et hoc nunc et usquem in saeculum.

Scarpia:

A doppia mira tendo il voler,
né il capo del ribelle è la più preziosa.
Ah di quegli occhi vittoriosi veder la
fiamma illanguidir con spasimo d'amor,
fra le mie braccia.

L'uno al capestro,
l'altra fra le mie braccia.

Folla:

*Te Deum laudamus,
Te Dominum confitemur!*

Scarpia:

Tosca, mi fai dimenticare Iddio!

Tutti:

*Te aeternum Patrem
omnis terra veneratur!*

The Chapter:

May the name of the Lord be blessed

Folla:

from here and unto all eternity.

Scarpia:

I hold two desires, and the head of the
traitor is by no means my most precious
one. Victory is to behold the fiery passion of
those eyes, and in my arms hold her languid
body, throbbing with love.

One to the gallows,
the other in my arms.

Crowd:

*Thee Lord, we laud,
and profess that thou art our Lord!*

Scarpia:

Tosca, you make me forget God!

All:

*Thou, eternal Father
all earth venerates!*

END OF ACT I

Act II

*Scarpia's apartment in the Palazzo Farnese. It is evening.
Scarpia is seated at a table having dinner.*

Scarpia:

Tosca è un buon falco!
Certo a quest'ora i miei segugi le due prede
azzannano!
Doman sul palco vedrà l'aurora
Angelotti e il bel Mario al laccio
pendere.

Scarpia:

Tosca is a good falcon!
Certainly, by this time she has led my
hunters to seize my double prize!
Tomorrow, at dawn, Angelotti and
handsome Mario will be hanging side by
side on my gallows.

Tosca è a palazzo?

(Sciarrone enters)

Is Tosca in the palace?

Sciarrone:

Un ciambellan ne uscì pur ora in traccia.

Sciarrone:

One of your officers has gone to fetch her.

Scarpia:

Apri!

Scarpia: *(pointing to the window)*

Open it!

*An orchestra is heard from outside, where the Queen
hosts a party celebrating Melas's victory over Bonaparte.*

Tarda è la notte. Alla cantata ancor manca
la Diva, e strimpellan gavotte.

It is late. They're strumming the gavotte
because the cantata cannot begin without
the Diva.

Tu attenderai la Tosca in sull'entrata;
le dirai ch'io l'aspetto finita la cantata.

Wait for Tosca at the entrance. Tell her I
want to see her as soon as she has finished
the cantata.

O meglio, le darai questo biglietto.
Ella verrà, per amor del suo Mario!
Per amor del suo Mario, al piacer mio
s'arrenderà.
Tal dei profondi amori, è la profonda
miseria.

Or better, give her this note.
She will come because of her love for Mario!
It is because of her intense love for Mario
that she will surrender to my pleasure.
Such a profound love produces profound
misery.

Andante un poco agitato
SCARPIA



Ha più forte sapore la conquista violenta
che il mellifluo consenso.

Io di sospiri e di lattiginose albe lunari
poco mi appago.

Non so trarre accordi di chitarra, nè
oroscopo di fior nè far l'occhio di pesce,
o tubar come tortora!

Bramo. La cosa bramata perseguo, me ne
sazio e via la getto, volto a nuova esca.
Dio creò diverse beltà e vini diversi.
Io vo' gustar quanto più posso dell'opra
divina!

Sciarrone:

Spoletta è giunto.

Scarpia:

Entri. In buon punto!

O galantuomo, come andò la caccia?

Spoletta:

(Sant'Ignazio m'aiuta!)

Della signora seguimmo la traccia.

Giunti a un'erma villetta tra le fratte
perduta, ella v'entrò.

N'escì sola ben presto.

Allor scavalco lesto il muro del giardin coi
miei cagnotti e piombo in casa.

Scarpia:

Quel bravo Spoletta!

Spoletta:

Fiuto! Razzolo! Frugo!

Scarpia:

Ah! L'Angelotti?

Spoletta:

Non s'è trovato.

A willing surrender is sweeter than a
violent conquest.

I am not gratified by timid sighs under the
moonlight.

I know not how to strum a guitar, pluck
petals from flowers, or make the illusions
of romanticism!

I yearn for the elusive prey, and after the
conquest, I discard it for new challenges.
God created diverse beauty and different
wines. I want to enjoy His divine work as
much as I can!

Sciarrone:

Spoletta has arrived.

Scarpia:

Let him in. He's right on time!

(anxiously interrogating Spoletta)

Well my good man, how was the hunt?

Spoletta:

(Help me St. Ignacius!)

We followed the lady's trail.

She arrived at a villa hidden in a pine-grove
and went inside.

She came out alone, right away.

Then I swiftly jumped over the garden wall
with my agents and entered the villa.

Scarpia:

Well done, Spoletta!

Spoletta:

I searched! I sniffed! I rummaged!

Scarpia:

And Angelotti?

Spoletta:

He wasn't found.

Scarpia:

Ah cane! Ah traditore!
Ceffo di basilisco, alle forche!

Spoletta:

Gesù!
C'era il pittor.

Scarpia:

Cavaradossi?

Spoletta:

Ei sa dove l'altro s'asconde.
Ogni suo gesto, ogni accento tradia
tal beffarda ironia, ch'io lo trassi in arresto.

Scarpia:

Meno male!

Spoletta:

Egli è là.

Scarpia:

Ah dog! Ah traitor!
Son of the devil, to the gallows!

Spoletta:

Jesus!
But the painter was there.

Scarpia:

Cavaradossi?

Spoletta:

He knows where the fugitive is hiding.
His every gesture and word was defiant, so
I had him arrested.

Scarpia:

That's better!

Spoletta: (*pointing to an anteroom*)

He's there.

Scarpia paces the room while in deep thought.

Through the open window he hears the Cantata being performed by Tosca.

Tosca e Coro interno:

Sale, ascende l'uman cantico,
varca spazi, varca cieli,
per ignoti soli empirei,
Profetati dai Vangeli,
a te giunge o re dei re!
Questo canto voli a te.
A te quest'inno voli.
Sommo Iddio della vittoria.
Dio che fosti innanzi ai secoli.
Alle cantiche degli angeli
quest'inno di gloria or voli a te!
Sale, ascende l'uman cantico,
Varca spazi, varca cieli,
A te giunge o re dei re!

Scarpia:

Introducete il Cavaliere.

A me Roberti e il Giudice del Fisco.

Tosca and Chorus:

The hymn of man rises and ascends,
through the vast firmament to the heavens,
to the unknown eternity.
As the Gospel prophecies foretold,
it reaches Him, the King of Kings!
May this hymn rise to Thee.
Our hymn of glory rises to Him.
Great God of victory.
God who was here before the world began.
This hymn of glory rise to Thee,
and to the songs of the angels!
The hymn of man rises and ascends,
through the vast firmament to the heavens,
reaching Him, oh King of Kings!

Scarpia: (*to Spoletta*)

Bring the gentleman in here.

(*to Sciarrone*)

Send in Roberti and the Fiscal Judge.

Spoletta and three agents bring in Cavaradossi, followed by Roberti, the torturer, a judge, a clerk, and Sciarrone.

Cavaradossi:
Tal violenza!

Cavaradossi:
Such violence!

Scarpia:
Cavalier, vi piaccia accomodarvi.

Scarpia:
Cavalier, please sit down.

Cavaradossi:
Vo' saper...

Cavaradossi:
I want to know...

Scarpia:
Sedete.

Scarpia:
Sit down.

Cavaradossi:
Aspetto.

Cavaradossi:
I'm waiting.

Scarpia:
E sia!
V'è noto che un prigioniero...

Scarpia:
So be it!
You must have heard that a prisoner...

Upon hearing Tosca singing the Cantata, Cavaradossi interrupts Scarpia.

Cavaradossi:
La sua voce!

Cavaradossi:
Her voice!

Scarpia:
...v'è noto che un prigioniero oggi è fuggito da
Castel Sant'Angelo?

Scarpia: *(continuing the interrogation)*
...you must have heard that today a prisoner
escaped from Castel Sant'Angelo?

Cavaradossi:
Ignoro.

Cavaradossi:
I know nothing about it.

Scarpia:
Eppur, si pretende che voi l'abbiate accolto
in Sant'Andrea, provvisto
di cibo e di vesti.

Scarpia:
Yet I am told that you saw him at
Sant'Andrea and provided him with food
and clothing.

Cavaradossi:
Menzogna!

Cavaradossi:
A lie!

Scarpia:
...e guidato ad un vostro podere suburbano.

Scarpia:
...and you guided him to your suburban
villa.

Cavaradossi:

Nego. Le prove?

Scarpia:

Un suddito fedele.

Cavaradossi:

Al fatto. Chi mi accusa?

I vostri sbirri invan frugar la villa.

Scarpia:

Segno che è ben celato.

Cavaradossi:

Sospetti di spia!

Spoletta:

Alle nostre ricerche egli rideva.

Cavaradossi:

E rido ancor!

Scarpia:

Questo è luogo di lacrime!

Badate!

Or basta! Rispondete!

Cavaradossi:

I deny it. Where's your proof?

Scarpia:

A loyal subject.

Cavaradossi:

The facts. Who accuses me?

Your agents searched my villa in vain.

Scarpia:

A sign that he is well hidden.

Cavaradossi:

Suspicious of a spy!

Spoletta:

He laughed at us as we searched.

Cavaradossi:

And I still laugh!

Scarpia:

This is a place for tears!

Be careful!

Enough! Answer!

Scarpia, irritated by the singing of the Cantata, brusquely closes the window.

Ov'è Angelotti?

Where is Angelotti?

Cavaradossi:

Non lo so.

Cavaradossi:

I don't know.

Scarpia:

Negate avergli dato cibo?

Scarpia:

Do you deny that you gave him food?

Cavaradossi:

Nego!

Cavaradossi:

I deny it!

Scarpia:

E vesti?

Scarpia:

And clothing?

Cavaradossi:

Nego!

Cavaradossi:

I deny it!

Scarpia:

E asilo nella villa?
E che là sia nascosto?

Cavaradossi:

Nego! Nego!

Scarpia:

Via, Cavaliere, riflettete: saggia
non è cotesta ostinatezza vostra.
Angoscia grande, pronta confessione
eviterà! Io vi consiglio, dite:
dov'è dunque Angelotti?

Cavaradossi:

Non lo so.

Scarpia:

Ancor, l'ultima volta: dov'è?

Cavaradossi:

No! so!

Spoletta

(O bei tratti di corda!)

Scarpia:

And refuge in your villa?
And isn't he hiding there now?

Cavaradossi:

I deny it!

Scarpia:

Come now, Cavalier, think about it;
your obstinacy is not so wise.
A quick confession will avoid extensive
anguish! I advise you, tell me:
where is Angelotti?

Cavaradossi:

I don't know.

Scarpia:

Again, for the last time, where is he?

Cavaradossi:

I don't know!

Spoletta:

(He's inviting a whipping!)

*Tosca enters. She is surprised to find Cavaradossi in Scarpia's apartment,
and rushes to embrace him.*

Scarpia:

(Eccola!)

Tosca:

Mario? Tu qui?

Cavaradossi:

(Di quanto là vedesti, taci, o m'uccidi!)

Scarpia:

Mario Cavaradossi,
qual testimone il Giudice vi aspetta.

Pria le forme ordinarie. Indi ai miei cenni.

Scarpia:

(Here she is!)

Tosca:

Mario? Why are you here?

Cavaradossi: (*whispering to Tosca*)

(Don't tell them what you have seen at my
villa, or I'll be killed!)

Scarpia:

Mario Cavaradossi, the judge is waiting for
your testimony.
(*to Roberti*)

First, the usual procedures. Watch for my
signals.

Tosca and Scarpia remain while Cavaradossi is taken into an adjoining room to be tortured into a confession.

Scarpia:

Ed or fra noi parliam da buoni amici.
Via quell'aria sgomentata.

Tosca:

Sgomento alcun non ho.

Scarpia:

La storia del ventaglio?

Tosca:

Fu sciocca gelosia.

Scarpia:

L'Attavanti non era dunque alla villa?

Tosca:

No: egli era solo.

Scarpia:

Solo?
Ne siete ben sicura?

Tosca:

Nulla sfugge ai gelosi. Solo! solo!

Scarpia:

Davver?

Tosca:

Solo! Sì!

Scarpia:

Quanto fuoco!
Par che abbiate paura di tradirvi.
Sciarrone, che dice il Cavalier?

Sciarrone:

Nega.

Scarpia:

Insistiamo.

Scarpia:

Now let's talk like good friends.
You have nothing to fear.

Tosca:

I am not frightened.

Scarpia:

What about your reaction to the fan?

Tosca:

That was just foolish jealousy.

Scarpia:

So Attavanti was not at the villa?

Tosca:

No, he was alone.

Scarpia:

Alone?
How can you be so sure?

Tosca:

Nothing escapes jealousy. He was alone!

Scarpia:

Really?

Tosca:

Alone! Yes!

Scarpia:

What passion!
You must be afraid to betray him.
Sciarrone, what has the Cavalier said?

Sciarrone: *(appearing at the door)*

He denies everything.

Scarpia:

Let's insist.

Tosca:

Oh, è inutile!

Scarpia:

Lo vedremo, signora.

Tosca:

Dunque, per compiacervi, si dovrebbe mentir?

Scarpia:

No, ma il vero potrebbe abbreviargli
un'ora assai penosa.

Tosca:

Un'ora penosa? Che vuol dir?
Che avviene in quella stanza?

Scarpia:

È forza che si adempia la legge.

Tosca:

Oh! Dio! Che avvien?

Tosca:

Oh, it's useless!

Scarpia:

We'll see, Madam.

Tosca:

So, to please you, would you prefer that I lie?

Scarpia:

No, but if you tell the truth he may be spared a very painful hour.

Tosca:

A painful hour? What does it mean?
What's happening in that room?

Scarpia:

I am using force to fulfill the law.

Tosca:

Oh God, what is happening?



Scarpia:

Legato mani e piè il vostro amante ha un
cerchio uncinato alle tempia,
che ad ogni niego ne sprizza sangue
senza mercè!

Tosca:

Non è ver, non è ver!
Sogghigno di demone.

La voce di Cavaradossi:

Ahimè!

Tosca:

Un gemito? Pietà, pietà!

Scarpia:

Your lover is bound hand and foot with a
steel ring clamped to his head.
For every denial, we make his blood spurt
unmercifully!

Tosca:

It can't be true!
You fiendish demon.

Cavaradossi's voice:

Alas!

Tosca:

A moan? Have mercy!

Scarpia:

Sta in voi di salvarlo.

Tosca:

Ebben, ma cessate!

Scarpia:

Sciarrone, sciogliete!

Sciarrone:

Tutto?

Scarpia:

Tutto.

Ed or la verità.

Tosca:

Ch'io lo veda!

Scarpia:

No!

Tosca:

Mario!

Cavaradossi:

Tosca!

Tosca:

Ti straziano ancora?

Cavaradossi:

No, coraggio! Taci!

Sprezzo il dolor!

Scarpia:

Orsù, Tosca, parlate.

Tosca:

Non so nulla!

Scarpia:

Non vale quella prova?

Roberti, ripigliamo.

Scarpia:

It's up to you to save him.

Tosca:

All right, but stop the torture!

Scarpia:

Sciarrone, untie him!

Sciarrone:

Completely?

Scarpia:

Completely.

And now tell me the truth.

Tosca:

Let me see him!

Scarpia:

No!

Tosca: (*hearing Cavaradossi groan*)

Mario!

Cavaradossi:

Tosca!

Tosca:

Are they still torturing you?

Cavaradossi:

No, have courage! Keep silent!

I scorn the pain!

Scarpia:

Now then, Tosca, talk.

Tosca:

I don't know anything!

Scarpia:

The torture was not enough?

Roberti, let's start over.

Tosca:

No! Fermate!

Scarpia:

Voi parlerete?

Tosca:

No! No! Ah! Mostro!

Lo strazi, l'uccidi!

Scarpia:

Lo strazia quel vostro silenzio assai più.

Tosca:

Tu ridi all'orrida pena?

Scarpia:

Mai Tosca alla scena più tragica fu!

Aprite le porte che n'oda i lamenti!

Cavaradossi:

Vi sfido!

Scarpia:

Più forte! Più forte!

Cavaradossi:

Vi sfido!

Scarpia:

Parlate!

Tosca:

Che dire?

Scarpia:

Su, via!

Tosca:

Ah! Non so nulla!

Ah! Dovrei mentir?

Scarpia:

Dite dov'è Angelotti?

Parlate su, via, dove celato sta?

Tosca:

No! Stop it!

Scarpia:

You will talk?

Tosca:

No! Monster!

Your torture will kill him!

Scarpia:

Your silence tortures him much more.

Tosca:

Are you laughing at this horrid suffering?

Scarpia:

Tosca was never more convincing on the stage!

(to Spoletta)

Open the door so we can hear the moans!

Cavaradossi:

I defy you!

Scarpia:

Harder! Harder!

Cavaradossi:

I defy you!

Scarpia: *(to Tosca)*

Talk!

Tosca:

What can I say?

Scarpia:

Then leave!

Tosca:

I know nothing!

Should I lie?

Scarpia:

Tell me where Angelotti is?

Come on, talk. Where is he hidden?

Tosca:

No! Ah! Più non posso! Che orror!
Cessate il martir! È troppo il soffrir!

Cavaradossi:

Ahimè!

Tosca:

No! I can't bear his suffering anymore!
What a horror! Stop it! It is too much suffering!

Cavaradossi:

Ah!

Tosca begs Scarpia to let her approach the door and speak with Cavaradossi.

Tosca:

Mario, consenti ch'io parli?

Tosca:

Mario, can I tell them?

Cavaradossi:

No! No!

Cavaradossi:

No! No!

Tosca:

Ascolta, non posso più.

Tosca:

Listen, I can't bear it anymore.

Cavaradossi:

Stolta, che sai?
Che puoi dir?

Cavaradossi:

Foolish woman, what do you know?
What can you tell us?

Scarpia becomes irritated, fearing that Cavaradossi might encourage Tosca to keep silent. In an outburst, he yells to Spoletta.

Scarpia

Ma fatelo tacere!

Scarpia:

Make him shut up!

Tosca:

Che v'ho fatto in vita mia?
Son io che così torturate!
Torturate l'anima.
Sì, l'anima mi torturate!

Tosca:

What have I done to you in my lifetime?
I am also being tortured!
I am being tortured within my soul.
Yes, my soul is being tortured!

Scarpia, taking advantage of Tosca's despair, goes to the door and signals for the torture to be continued. Spoletta recites a prayer.

Spoletta:

*Judex ergo, cum sedebit,
Quid quid latet apparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.*

Spoletta:

*Therefore, when the judge will sit,
whatever is hidden will be apparent
and will remain forever.*

Tosca hears Cavaradossi's painful outcries, and whispers to Scarpia.

Tosca:
Nel pozzo nel giardino.

Scarpia:
Là è Angelotti?

Tosca:
Sì.

Scarpia:
Basta, Roberti.

Sciarrone:
E svenuto!

Tosca:
Assassino! Voglio vederlo.

Scarpia:
Portatelo qui!

Tosca:
In the well in the garden.

Scarpia:
Is Angelotti there?

Tosca:
Yes.

Scarpia: (*toward the torture room*)
Roberti, that's enough.

Sciarrone: (*opening the door*)
He has fainted!

Tosca:
Murderer! I want to see him!

Scarpia:
Bring him here!

Cavaradossi, bleeding profusely, is brought in by the agents and placed on a sofa.

Cavaradossi:
Floria!

Tosca:
Amore.

Cavaradossi:
Sei tu?

Tosca:
Quanto hai penato anima mia!
Ma il giusto Iddio lo punirà!

Cavaradossi:
Tosca, hai parlato?

Tosca:
No, amor, no.

Cavaradossi:
Davvero?

Cavaradossi:
Floria!

Tosca:
My love.

Cavaradossi:
Is it you?

Tosca:
My beloved, how much you have suffered!
But the just God will punish him!

Cavaradossi:
Tosca, did you tell them?

Tosca:
No, beloved, no.

Cavaradossi:
Really?

Scarpia:

Nel pozzo del giardino. Va, Spoletta!

Scarpia: (*shouting in triumph*)

In the well in the garden. Go, Spoletta!

*Cavaradossi rises menacingly and threatens Tosca.***Cavaradossi:**

M'hai tradito!

Cavaradossi:

You've betrayed me!

Tosca:

Mario!

Tosca:

Mario!

Cavaradossi:

Maledetta!

Cavaradossi:

Cursed one!

*Sciarrone enters in alarm.***Sciarrone:**

Eccellenza, quali nuove!

Sciarrone:

Excellency, what news!

Scarpia:

Che vuol dir quell'aria afflitta?

Scarpia:

Why do you look so worried?

Sciarrone:

Un messaggio di sconfitta.

Sciarrone:

There is news of defeat.

Scarpia:

Che sconfitta? Come? Dove?

Scarpia:

What defeat? How? Where?

Sciarrone:

A Marengo.

Sciarrone:

At Marengo.

Scarpia:

A Marengo?

Scarpia:

At Marengo?

Sciarrone:

Bonaparte è vincitore!

Sciarrone:

Bonaparte has been victorious!

Scarpia:

Melas.

Scarpia:

And Melas.

Sciarrone:

No! Melas è in fuga!

Sciarrone:

Melas has escaped!

*Cavaradossi's anxiety increases when he hears the news.
He finds the strength to rise, and then threatens Scarpia menacingly.*

Cavaradossi:
Vittoria! Vittoria!

Cavaradossi:
Victory! Victory!

Allegro concitato
CAVARADOSSI



L'alba vindice appar
che fa gli empi tremar!
Libertà sorge, crollan tirannidi!
Del sofferto martir
me vedrai qui gioir.
Il tuo cor trema, o Scarpia, carnefice!

The morning has brought vindication and
all the wicked tremble!
Liberty rises, tyrannies collapse!
From the suffering of torture
you now see my exultation.
Scarpia, you hangman, your heart trembles!

Tosca:
Mario, taci, pietà di me!

Tosca:
Mario, quiet, have pity on me!

Scarpia:
Braveggia, urla! T'affretta a palesarmi il
fondo dell'alma ria!
Va! Moribondo, il capestro t'aspetta!
Portatemelo via!

Scarpia:
Courageous ranting! You've hurried to
reveal the guilt in the depths of your soul!
Go! Death awaits you at the scaffold!
Take him away!

*Sciarrone and agents take the resisting Cavaradossi away.
Tosca tries to hold him but is brutally thrust back.*

Tosca:
Mario, con te!

Tosca:
Mario, I want to go with you!

Scarpia:
Voi no!

Scarpia:
You remain here!

Tosca:
Salvatelo!

Tosca:
Save him!

Scarpia:
Io? Voi!

Scarpia:
I? You?

Scarpia looks at his interrupted dinner on the table and smiles sarcastically.

La povera mia cena fu interrotta.
Così accasciata?
Via, mia bella signora, sedete qui.
Volete che cerchiamo insieme il modo di
salvarlo?

My poor supper was interrupted.
Why are you so crushed?
Come, my lovely lady, sit down here.
Shall we both look for a way in which we
can save him?

E allor, sedete, e favelliamo.
E intanto un sorso.
È vin di Spagna.
Un sorso per rincorarvi.

Sit down here and let's talk about it.
In the meantime have a taste.
It's wine from Spain.
A drink will raise your spirits.

Tosca stares contemptuously at Scarpia and then inquires.

Tosca:
Quanto?

Tosca:
How much?

Scarpia:
Quanto?

Scarpia:
How much?

Tosca:
Il prezzo!

Tosca:
What's your price!

Scarpia:
Già. Mi dicon venal, ma a donna bella
non mi vendo a prezzo di moneta.
Se la giurata fede devo tradir ne voglio altra
mercede.

Scarpia: *(laughing)*
That's right. They say I am corrupt, but I
don't sell myself to a woman for money.
If I must betray my sworn oath, then I want
a greater reward.

Quest' ora io l'attendevo!
Già mi struggea l'amor della diva!
Ma poc' anzi ti mirai qual non ti vidi mai!

How I have longed for this moment!
Indeed, my love for the Diva has consumed me!
But a little while ago, I saw you as I never
saw you before!

Quel tuo pianto era lava ai sensi miei e il
tuo sguardo che odio in me dardeggiava,
mie brame inferociva!
Agil qual leopardo ti avvinghiasti
all'amante;
Ah! In quell'istante t'ho giurata mia! Mia!

Your tears have cleansed my senses, and
your hatred toward me has inflamed my
yearning for you!
At that moment when you clung to your
lover like a nimble leopard,
I vowed you would be mine! Mine!

Scarpia attempts to embrace Tosca. Horrified and shrieking, she runs from him.

Tosca:
Ah!

Tosca:
Ah!

Scarpia:
Sì, t'avrò!

Scarpia:
Yes, I will have you!

Tosca:
Ah! Piuttosto giù mi avvento!

Tosca: *(pointing to the window)*
I'd rather jump from the window!

Scarpia:
In pegno il Mario tuo mi resta!

Scarpia:
Your Mario's fate is in my hands!

Tosca:

Ah! Miserabile l'orribile mercato!

Tosca:

You wretch. You've made a horrible bargain!

With the idea of appealing to the Queen, Tosca rushes to the door intending to leave.

Scarpia:

Violenza non ti farò. Sei liberai.
Va pure.

Scarpia:

I will not force you. If you want to leave,
you're free to go.

Ma è fallace speranza la Regina
farebbe grazia ad un cadavere!

But it's a false hope. Your Queen cannot
pardon a dead man!

*Tosca draws back in horror at Scarpia's pronouncement,
gesturing toward him with contempt and hatred.*

Come tu m'odii!

How you hate me!

Tosca:

Ah! Dio!

Tosca:

Oh God I do!

Scarpia:

Così ti voglio!

Scarpia: (*approaching Tosca*)

That is the way I want you!

Tosca:

Non toccarmi, demonio!
T'odio, t'odio, abbietto, vile!

Tosca: (*exasperated*)

Don't touch me, you demon!
I hate you, you are vile and despicable!

Scarpia:

Che importa?!
Spasimi d'ira, spasimi d'amore!

Scarpia:

What does it matter?!
Passions of hate, or passions of love!

Tosca:

Vile!

Tosca:

Coward!

Scarpia:

Mia!

Scarpia: (*pursuing Tosca*)

You're mine!

Tosca:

Vile!

Tosca:

Coward!

Scarpia:

Mia!

Scarpia:

You're mine!

Tosca:

Aiuto!

Tosca:

Help!

At the sound of drums in the distance, both stand motionless.

Scarpia:

Odi?
È il tamburo. S'avvia. Guida la scorta
ultima ai condannati.
Il tempo passa!
Sai quale oscura opra laggiù si
compia?
Là si drizza un patibolo!

Al tuo Mario, per tuo voler, non resta che
un'ora di vita.

Scarpia:

Do you hear that?
It's the drums approaching, leading the
escort for the doomed men.
Time is passing quickly!
Do you realize what dark events are about
to happen here?
Over there, they're erecting the gallows!

By your will, there remains only one hour
of life for your Mario.

Tosca is overcome with grief and despair.

Andante lento appassionato

TOSCA



Tosca:

Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore,
non feci mai male ad anima viva!
Con man furtiva
quante miserie conobbi, aiutai.
Sempre con fe' sincera,
la mia preghiera ai santi tabernacoli salì.
Sempre con fe' sincera
diedi fiori agli altar.

Nell'ora del dolore perchè, perchè Signore,
perchè me ne rimunerì così?
Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,
e diedi il canto agli astri,
al ciel, che ne ridean più belli.
Nell'ora del dolore, perchè, perchè Signore,
perchè me ne rimunerì così?

Scarpia:

Risolvi?

Tosca:

I lived for art, I lived for love,
I never harmed a living soul!
With a stealthy hand, I brought consolation
and help to the poor and depraved.
My prayers to the saints above were always
with sincere faith.
I always placed flowers at the altar with
sincere faith.

Why, why God, in this hour of grief,
do You repay me this way?
In tribute to Your beautiful creation, I gave
jewels for the Madonna's mantle,
and offered my song to the stars and Heaven.
Why, why God, in this hour of grief,
do You repay me this way?

Scarpia:

Have you made up your mind?

Tosca:

Mi vuoi supplice ai tuoi piedi!
Vedi, le man giunte io stendo a te!
Ecco, vedi, e mercè d'un tuo detto,
vinta, aspetto.

Scarpia:

Sei troppo bella, Tosca, e troppo amante.
Cedo. A misero prezzo tu, a me una vita, io,
a te chieggo un istante!

Tosca:

Va! Va! Mi fai ribrezzo!

Tosca: (*kneels before Scarpia*)

Must I kneel at your feet and beg for mercy!
Look, I extend my hand to you!
There, I wait for you to grant a merciful
word to one who has been defeated.

Scarpia:

Tosca, you are too beautiful, and too loving.
I give in. I can't resist you. You win Mario's
life, if I get a moment of your embraces!

Tosca: (*showing her contempt*)

Go! Go! You disgust me!

Spoletta knocks at the door.

Scarpia:

Chi è là?

Scarpia:

Who is there?

Spoletta:

Eccellenza, l'Angelotti al nostro
giungere si uccise.

Spoletta:

Excellency, Angelotti killed himself before
we reached him.

Scarpia:

Ebbene, lo si appenda
morto alle forche! E l'altro prigionier?

Scarpia:

All right, let them hang his corpse on the
gallows! And how about the other prisoner?

Spoletta:

Il Cavalier Cavaradossi?
È tutto pronto, Eccellenza!

Spoletta:

Cavalier Cavaradossi?
Everything is ready, Excellency!

Tosca:

(Dio m'assisti!)

Tosca:

(God help me!)

Scarpia:

Aspetta.
Ebbene?

Scarpia: (*to Spoletta*)

Wait.
(*to Tosca*) Well?

Tosca nods her assent to Scarpia.

Odi.

(*to Spoletta*) Listen.

Tosca:

Ma libero all'istante lo voglio!

Tosca: (*interrupting to Scarpia*)

But I want him freed immediately!

Scarpia:

Occorre simular. Non posso
far grazia aperta. Bisogna che tutti
abbian per morto il cavalier.

Quest'uomo fido provvederà.

Tosca:

Chi mi assicura?

Scarpia

L'ordin ch'io gli darò voi qui presente.

Spoletta, chiudi.

Ho mutato d'avviso.
Il prigionier sia fucilato.
Attendi.
Come facemmo col Conte Palmieri.

Spoletta:

Un'uccisione.

Scarpia:

Simulata! Come avvenne del Palmieri!
Hai ben compreso?

Spoletta:

Ho ben compreso.

Scarpia:

Va.

Tosca:

Voglio avvertirlo io stessa.

Scarpia:

E sia.

Le darai passo.
Bada: all'ora quarta.

Spoletta:

Sì. Come Palmieri.

Scarpia:

We need to pretend. I can't openly release
him. We must make everyone believe that
the Cavalier is dead.

(indicating Spoletta)

This trustworthy man will see to it.

Tosca:

Who guarantees that to me?

Scarpia:

I'll give him the order in your presence.

(to Spoletta)

Spoletta, close the door.

I have changed my mind.
The prisoner must be shot.
Wait.
Just as we did with Count Palmieri.

Spoletta:

An execution.

Scarpia:

Simulated! As it happened with Pamieri!
Have you clearly understood?

Spoletta:

I understand well.

Scarpia:

Go.

Tosca:

I want to let him know myself.

Scarpia:

So be it.

(to Spoletta, pointing to Tosca)

You'll let her through.
Remember, at four this morning.

Spoletta:

Yes. Just like Palmieri.

Scarpia:

Io tenni la promessa.

Tosca:

Non ancora.

Voglio un salva condotto onde fuggir
dallo Stato con lui.**Scarpia:**

Partir dunque volete?

Tosca:

Sì, per sempre!

Scarpia:Sì adempia il voler vostro.
E qual via scegliete?**Tosca:**

La più breve!

Scarpia:

Civitavecchia?

Tosca:

Sì.

Scarpia:

I've kept my promise.

Tosca:

Not yet.

I want a safe conduct pass so I can leave
the State with him.**Scarpia:**

Then you want to leave?

Tosca:

Yes, forever!

Scarpia:Let your wish be granted.
And what route do you choose?**Tosca:**

The shortest one!

Scarpia:

Civitavecchia?

Tosca:

Yes.

While Scarpia writes the safe-conduct pass, Tosca approaches the table, and with trembling hands she takes a sip of the Spanish wine. She sees a knife, seizes it, and hides it behind her back. After Scarpia finishes writing the pass, he approaches Tosca to embrace her.

Scarpia:

Tosca, finalmente mia!

Scarpia:

Tosca, at last you are mine!

Tosca stabs Scarpia with the knife.

Maledetta!

Cursed woman!

Tosca:

Questo è il bacio di Tosca!

Tosca:

This is the kiss of Tosca!

Scarpia:Aiuto! Muoio!
Soccorso! Muoio!**Scarpia:**Help! I'm dying!
Help me! I'm dying!

Tosca:

Ti soffoca il sangue?
E ucciso da una donna!
M'hai assai torturata!
Odi tu ancora? Parla! Guardami!
Son Tosca! O Scarpia!

Scarpia:

Soccorso, aiuto! Muoio!

Tosca:

Muori dannato! Muori, muori!

Tosca:

Are you being choked by your own blood?
And killed by a woman!
You have tortured me too much!
Can you still hear? Speak! Look at me!
I am Tosca! Oh Scarpia!

Scarpia:

Help, help! I'm dying!

Tosca:

Die, damn you! Die, die!

Scarpia is motionless.

È morto! Or gli perdono!

He's dead! Now I forgive him!

Tosca takes water from the pitcher and cleans the blood from her hands. Then she arranges her hair in front of a mirror. She panics as she remembers the safe-conduct pass. She searches the desk for it and notices it clutched in the dead Scarpia's hand. She takes the pass from his hand, hides it in her bodice, and looks at the dead Scarpia.

E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

And before him all Rome trembled!

*Just before leaving, Tosca removes two candlesticks from the table, extinguishes them, and places them on each side of the dead Scarpia. She removes a crucifix from the wall and places it on Scarpia's chest. Drums are heard in the distance.
Tosca leaves the room, cautiously closing the door behind her.*

END OF ACT II

Act III

*Castel Sant'Angelo on a starry night. It is just before dawn.
In the distance, sheepbells are heard and the song of a shepherd.*

Pastore:

Io de' sospiri
te ne rimanno tanti.
Pe' quante foje
ne smoveno li venti.

Tu me disprezzi,
io me ci accoro,
Lampene d'oro
me fai morir!

Shepherd:

I send you
so many sighs.
As many as the leaves
moved by the winds.

You scorn me,
and I suffer.
Golden light of my life
you make me die!

*A jailer, carrying a lantern, climbs the stairs to a prison cell, and lights the lamp before
the crucifix. He looks into the courtyard to see whether the firing squad and the
condemned man have arrived. He meets a sentry, exchanges words with him,
and then sits down and waits.*

*A group of soldiers arrive, escorting Cavaradossi. A sergeant leads Cavaradossi to the
prison cell. The jailer rises, salutes the sergeant, and receives a paper.
The jailer enters Cavaradossi's name in the prison register.*

Carceriere:

Mario Cavaradossi? A voi.
Vi resta un'ora.
Un sacerdote i vostri cenni attende.

Cavaradossi:

No! Ma un'ultima grazia io vi richiedo.

Carceriere:

Se posso.

Cavaradossi:

Io lascio al mondo una persona cara.
Consentite ch'io le scriva un sol motto.

Unico resto di mia ricchezza è questo anel.
Se promettete di consegnarle il mio
ultimo addio, esso è vostro.

Jailer:

Mario Cavaradossi? Sign here.
You have one hour left.
If you like, there is a priest available.

Cavaradossi:

No, but I have one last favor to ask of you.

Jailer:

What is it?

Cavaradossi:

I leave behind someone I love and cherish.
Allow me to write her a farewell letter.
(He gives the jailer a ring)
This ring is all I have left of my possessions.
If you promise me that you will deliver this
last farewell, it is yours.

Carceriere:

Scrivete.

Jailer: (*nodding agreement*)

Then write your letter.

Cavaradossi:

E lucevan le stelle,
ed olezzava la terra,
stridea l'uscio dell'orto,
e un passo sfiorava la rena,
Entrava ella, fragrante,
mi cadea fra le braccia.

Cavaradossi:

And the stars were shining,
and a fragrance filled the land.
She strode through the garden gate,
her steps grazed the sand,
and when her perfumed presence arrived,
I fell into her arms.

Andante lento appassionato molto
CAVARADOSSI

The musical score is for Cavaradossi's aria. It is written for a single voice in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo and mood are 'Andante lento appassionato molto'. The score consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics 'Oh! Dol - ci ba - ci, o languide ca - rezze, mentr'io fre-' are written below the first staff. The second staff continues the melody with a mix of eighth, sixteenth, and quarter notes. The lyrics 'men - te le bel - le for - me dis - cio gliea dai ve - li!' are written below the second staff. The music ends with a final cadence.

Oh! Dolci baci, o languide carezze,
mentr'io fremente
le belle forme disciogliea dai veli!
Svanì per sempre il sogno mio d'amore.
L'ora è fuggita,
e muoio disperato!
E non ho amato mai tanto la vita!

Oh! Sweet kisses, oh languid caresses,
while I trembled and
removed the veils from her lovely body!
My dream of love has vanished forever.
Time has fled,
and I die in despair!
And I have never loved life so much!

Spoletta arrives with the sergeant and Tosca. Spoletta indicates where Tosca can find Cavaradossi, and then calls the jailer. Tosca observes Cavaradossi in tears. With great excitement, she rushes to him, and immediately shows him the safe-conduct pass.

Cavaradossi:

Franchigia a Floria Tosca...

Cavaradossi: (*reading the pass*)

Ah! "Safe-conduct" for Floria Tosca...

Tosca e Cavaradossi:

...e al cavaliere che l'accompagna.

Tosca and Cavaradossi:

... and the gentleman who accompanies her.

Tosca:

Sei libero!

Tosca:

You are free!

Cavaradossi:

Scarpia!
Scarpia che cede?
La prima sua grazia è questa.

Cavaradossi: (*noting the signature*)

Scarpia!
Scarpia has granted a pardon?
This is surely his first reprieve.

Tosca:

E l'ultima!

Cavaradossi:

Che dici?

Tosca:

Il tuo sangue o il mio amore volea.
 Fur vani scongiuri e pianti.
 Invan, pazza d'orror,
 alla Madonna mi volsi e ai Santi.
 L'empio mostro dicea:
 già nei cieli il patibol le braccia leva!
 Rullavano i tamburi.
 Rideva, l'empio mostro rideva.
 già la sua preda pronto a ghermir!
 "Sei mia!"
 Sì. Alla sua brama mi promisi.
 Lì presso luccicava una lama.
 Ei scrisse il foglio liberator,
 venne all'orrendo amplesso,
 io quella lama gli piantai nel cor.

Cavaradossi:

Tu!? Di tua man l'uccidesti?
 Tu pia, tu benigna, e per me!

Tosca:

N'ebbi le man tutte lorde di sangue!

Tosca:

And the last!

Cavaradossi:

What are you saying?

Tosca:

He wanted your blood or my love.
 My pleas and tears were in vain.
 In vain, I was maddened by fear,
 and prayed to the Madonna and the Saints.
 The wicked monster said:
 the gallows are ready to take him!
 The drums were rolling.
 The wicked monster was laughing.
 waiting to snatch his prey!
 "You are mine!"
 Yes. I promised to yield to him.
 Then I saw a gleaming knife nearby.
 He wrote the safe-conduct pass,
 and when he came for the horrid embrace,
 I plunged that blade into his heart.

Cavaradossi:

You? You killed him by your own hand?
 You, so kind and pious, and for me!

Tosca:

That is why my hands were bloodstained!

Andantino sostenuto**TOSCA and CAVARADOSSI****Cavaradossi:**

O dolci mani mansuete e pure,
 o mani elette a bell'opre e pietose,
 a carezzar fanciulli, a coglier rose,
 a pregar, giunte per le sventure.

Dunque in voi, fatte dall'amor secure,
 giustizia le sue sacre armi depose?
 Voi deste morte, o man vittoriose,
 o dolci mani mansuete e pure!

Cavaradossi: (taking Tosca's hands)

Oh sweet hands, so kind and pure, hands
 destined for merciful and beautiful deeds:
 to caress children, to gather roses, and to be
 clasped in prayer for the unfortunate of the
 world.

Did justice place its sacred weapons in
 your hands made secure by love?
 You awakened death, victorious hands,
 oh sweet, kind, and pure hands!

Tosca:

Senti, l'ora è vicina; io già raccolsi oro e gioielli, una vettura è pronta. Ma prima, ridi amor, prima sarai fucilato, per finta, ad armi scariche. Simulato supplizio. Al colpo, cadi. I soldati sen vanno. e noi siam salvi! Poscia a Civitavecchia, una tartana, e via pel mar!

Cavaradossi:

Liberi!

Tosca:

Chi si duole in terra più?
Senti effluvi di rose?
Non ti par che le cose aspettan tutte innamorate il sole?

Cavaradossi

Amaro sol per te m'era morire,
da te la vita prende ogni splendore,
all'esser mio la gioia ed il desire,
nascon di te, come di fiamma ardore.
Io folgorare i cieli e scolorire
vedrò nell'occhio tuo rivelatore,
e la beltà delle cose più mire
avrà sol da te voce e colore.

Tosca:

Amor che seppe a te vita serbare, ci sarà guida in terra, e in mar nocchier, e vago farà il mondo riguardare.

Finchè congiunti alle celesti sfere
dileguerem, siccome alte sul mare
a sol cadente, nuvole leggere!

Tosca looks around nervously.

E non giungono.
Bada! Al colpo egli è mestiere
che tu subito cada.

Cavaradossi:

Non temere che cadrò sul momento, e al naturale.

Tosca:

Listen, the hour approaches. I gathered gold and jewelry, and a carriage awaits us. But first, laugh my beloved because first you will be shot, but by fake bullets and empty guns. A simulated execution. At the shot, you fall. The soldiers leave, and we will be saved! Then in Civitavecchia, with a boat, we'll be away over the sea!

Cavaradossi:

Free!

Tosca:

Who would want the grief that is here?
Do you smell the fragrance of roses?
Doesn't it seem that the sun is waiting the lovers?

Cavaradossi:

Because of you, dying was bitter;
you brought splendor into my life,
joy and desire,
and inflamed my fiery passion.
In your revealing eyes I see the glittering stars and the fading heavens,
and their beauty is consecrated by your voice and countenance.

Tosca:

The love that saved your life
will serve to guide us on land and sea
and bring us to new horizons.

As long as we are together
we will disappear from the world,
like the clouds above the seas at sunset!

They haven't arrived yet.
Remember, that at the shot, you must fall immediately.

Cavaradossi:

Don't worry. I'll fall immediately, and it will be natural.

Tosca:

Ma stammi attento di non farti male!
Con scenica scienza io saprei la movenza.

Cavaradossi:

Parlami ancora come dianzi parlavi,
è così dolce il suon della tua voce!

Tosca:

Uniti ed esulanti diffonderem pel mondo i
nostri amori, armonie di colori.

Cavaradossi:

Armonie di canti diffonderem!

Tosca e Cavaradossi:

Trionfal, di nova speme l'anima freme in
celestial crescente ardor.
Ed in armonico vol già l'anima va
all'estasi d'amor.

Tosca:

Gli occhi ti chiuderò con mille baci
e mille ti dirò nomi d'amor.

Tosca:

But be careful not to hurt yourself!
It's like good acting, I wish I could show you.

Cavaradossi:

Speak to me again about love. It sounds so
sweet coming from your voice!

Tosca:

United and exiled, we will spread the
harmony of our love throughout the world.

Cavaradossi:

We will spread the harmony of our songs!

Tosca and Cavaradossi:

Triumphantly, the soul throbs with new
hope, while its passion intensifies.
In harmonious flight the soul is redeemed
by the ecstasies of love.

Tosca:

I will close your eyes with a thousand
kisses, and I will call you a thousand
loving names.

The clock strikes four.

Carceriere:

L'ora!

Cavaradossi:

Son pronto.

Tosca:

(Tieni a mente, al primo colpo, giù.)

Cavaradossi:

(Giù.)

Tosca:

(Nè rialzarti innanzi ch'io ti chiami.)

Cavaradossi:

(No, amore!)

Jailer:

It is time!

Cavaradossi:

I'm ready.

Tosca:

(Keep in mind, down on the first shot.)

Cavaradossi:

(Down.)

Tosca:

(Don't get up until I call you.)

Cavaradossi:

(No, my love!)

Tosca:
(E cadi bene.)

Cavaradossi:
(Come la Tosca in teatro.)

Tosca:
(Non ridere.)

Cavaradossi:
(Così?)

Tosca:
Così.

Tosca:
(And fall well.)

Cavaradossi:
(Like Tosca in the theater.)

Tosca: (*seeing him smile*)
(Don't laugh.)

Cavaradossi: (*gravely*)
(Like this?)

Tosca:
(Like this.)

Cavaradossi bids farewell to Tosca, and is led away by an officer. Tosca remains aside where she is able to see what is happening. She watches as Cavaradossi is led to a wall. Cavaradossi refuses a blindfold. Tosca comments impatiently.

Tosca:
Com'è lunga l'attesa!
Perchè indugiano ancor?
Già sorge il sole.
Perchè indugiano ancora?
È una commedia, lo so, ma questa angoscia
eterna pare!

Tosca:
The wait is so long!
Why this terrible delay?
The sun is already rising.
Why do they still delay?
I know it's playacting, I know, but this
waiting seems like an eternal anguish!

The firing squad is ordered into position.

Ecco! Apprestano l'armi.
Com'è bello il mio Mario!

There! They're readying their weapons.
How handsome my Mario is!

The officer's sabre is ready to fall. Tosca covers her ears as she beckons Cavaradossi to fall. Then the shots ring out.

Là! Muori!
Ecco un artista!

There! Die!
There's an artist!

The sergeant approaches Cavaradossi and scrutinizes his body. Spoletta stops the sergeant from giving Cavaradossi the coup de grace. The officer orders the soldiers to fall in line. Spoletta and the soldiers exit to the stairs.

Tosca, in great agitation, fears that Cavaradossi might become impatient and move.

O Mario, non ti muovere, s'avviano, taci!
Vanno, scendono.
Ancora non ti muovere.

Oh Mario, don't move yet. They're
leaving. Be still! They're going down,
leaving now. Just don't move yet.

*Tosca rushes to the parapet and assures herself that the soldiers have left.
She then rushes to Cavaradossi.*

Presto, su! Mario! Mario! Su presto!
Andiam! Su, su! Mario! Mario!

Quickly up! Mario! Up quick!
Let's go! Up, up! Mario! Mario!

*Disturbed that Cavaradossi does not respond,
Tosca touches him and discovers that he is dead.*

Ah! Morto! Morto! Morto!
O Mario, morto?
Tu? Così?
Finire così? Finire così!
Tu, morto, morto?
Mario, povera Floria tua!

Ah! Dead! Dead! Dead!
Mario, dead?
You? Like this?
To die like this? To die like this!
You, dead?
Mario, your poor Tosca!

Sciarrone, Spoletta, and soldiers are heard ascending the stairs.

Sciarrone:
Vi dico pugnalato!

Sciarrone:
I tell you he was stabbed to death!

Voci:
Scarpia?

Voices:
Scarpia?

Sciarrone:
Scarpia.

Sciarrone:
Scarpia.

Spoletta:
La donna è Tosca!

Spoletta:
It was Tosca who killed him!

Voci:
Che non sfugga!

Voices:
Don't let her escape!

Spoletta e Sciarrone:
Attenti agli sbocchi delle scale!

Spoletta and Sciarrone:
Watch the foot of the stairs!

Spoletta and Sciarrone appear at the top of the stairs and point to Tosca.

Sciarrone:
È lei!

Sciarrone:
There she is!

Spoletta:

Ah! Tosca, pagherai ben cara la sua vita!

Spoletta;

Tosca, you'll pay dearly for his life!

Tosca:

Colla mia!

Tosca:

With my own!

When Spoletta tries to seize Tosca, she runs to the parapet.

O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!

Scarpia, God will be our judge!

Tosca jumps from the parapet to her death.

END OF OPERA

Madama Butterfly

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa,

based on the original story

by John Luther Long,

and the theatrical play adapted by

John Luther Long and David Belasco

Premiere at La Scala, Milan

February 17, 1904

Principal Characters in Madama Butterfly

Cio-Cio-San (Madama Butterfly)	Soprano
Suzuki, her maid	Soprano
Pinkerton, Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy	Tenor
Sharpless, United States Consul	Baritone
Goro, a marriage broker	Tenor
Prince Yamadori, a Japanese suitor	Tenor
The Bonze, an uncle and priest	Bass
Imperial Commissioner	Bass
Official Registrar	Bass
Cio-Cio-San's mother	Soprano
An Aunt	Soprano
A Cousin	Soprano
Yakasude, an uncle	Tenor
Kate Pinkerton	Soprano

Dolore ("Pain" or "Trouble") Cio-Cio-San's child,
relations, friends, servants

TIME: Beginning of the 20th century

PLACE: Nagasaki, Japan

Story Synopsis

The *Madama Butterfly* story highlights a cultural collision between East and West, its incompatibility the cause of a poignant tragedy.

As the story unfolds, Goro, a marriage broker, has arranged for Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, an American naval lieutenant, to marry the 15-year old Japanese ex-geisha, Cio-Cio-San, or Madama Butterfly. Pinkerton brags to the American Consul Sharpless that his marriage will be governed by Japanese law: he has the right to dissolve the marriage at anytime, but Butterfly will be bound forever. Sharpless cautions Pinkerton that his carefree attitude toward his marriage could lead to tragic consequences, but Pinkerton is heedless.

Butterfly arrives for the wedding accompanied by friends and relatives. After polite exchanges, Butterfly and Pinkerton enter the house, where she shows him her various possessions. She reveals that she has converted to Christianity, her act of boundless faith in her new husband.

The Imperial Commissioner performs the wedding ceremony. The festivities are suddenly interrupted by Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze, or Buddhist priest; he is enraged because Butterfly abandoned her ancestral religion. The Bonze, together with family and friends, denounce Butterfly.

Butterfly weeps, Pinkerton's expressions of love her only consolation.

After the wedding, Pinkerton returned to naval duty. It is three years later, and he has not returned. Nevertheless, Butterfly remains steadfast in her faith that he has not abandoned her.

Sharpless arrives to read Butterfly a letter from Pinkerton. The letter reveals that Pinkerton is returning to Japan with his new American wife, but Sharpless is unable to bare such heartbreak to Butterfly. Butterfly introduces Sharpless to her son, Pinkerton's son who was conceived on their wedding night. Goro urges her to marry the wealthy Prince Yamadori, but Butterfly refuses, remaining convinced that she is still Pinkerton's wife and that he will return to her.

A cannon blast from the harbor announces the arrival of the Abraham Lincoln, Pinkerton's ship. Butterfly and Suzuki decorate the house with flowers to welcome Pinkerton. Butterfly, Suzuki, and the child maintain a vigil throughout the night awaiting Pinkerton's arrival.

At dawn, while Butterfly and the child sleep, Pinkerton, Sharpless, and Kate Pinkerton, Pinkerton's new American wife, arrive to enlist Suzuki's help in persuading Butterfly to give them the child. Pinkerton leaves, unable to cope with his guilt and remorse.

Butterfly becomes horrified when she learns that Pinkerton betrayed her. She agrees to give up the child to Pinkerton, but he must return to retrieve him personally. During the course of the drama, Butterfly develops from childlike innocence to adult understanding. She becomes a genuine tragic heroine when she accepts her destiny, the pathetic reality that Pinkerton betrayed her, and that she must give up her child. In Butterfly's culture, her only recourse to redeem her honor is ritual suicide, the noble death of hara kiri.

As Pinkerton appears, calling out Butterfly's name, Butterfly dies.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: Nagasaki, a house overlooking the harbor.

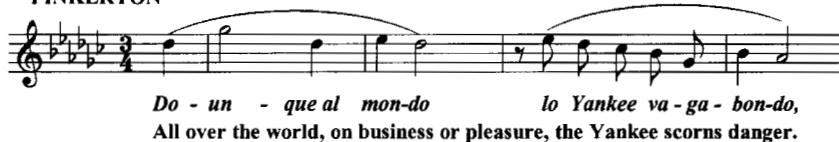
There is bustling activity as Goro, a marriage broker and real-estate agent, leads Lieutenant Pinkerton about his newly rented house while demonstrating its various fragile appurtenances. He presents Pinkerton's domestic staff: a cook, a servant, and his future wife's maid, Suzuki. Pinkerton becomes bored with their respectful chatter and dismisses them.

After Goro reels off the list of wedding guests, the American Consul Sharpless arrives. At Goro's bidding, servants bring drinks for Sharpless and Pinkerton. Pinkerton proudly explains that he has secured the house and his new bride according to Japanese law: a 999-year lease, which he may terminate at a month's notice, but Butterfly is bound to the contract for life.

Pinkerton is a cad, an antihero of unconscionable character. The aria, "Dovunque al mondo" is musically framed by the opening strains of "The Star Spangled Banner," underscoring his carefree philosophy of a "Yankee" adventurer reaping pleasure in every port.

“Dovunque al mondo”

Allegro sostenuto
PINKERTON



Pinkerton reveals to Sharpless that he has become captivated and infatuated by Butterfly's mysterious charm. Sharpless recalls seeing her at the consulate, her simple sincerity touching him deeply. He expresses his hope that Pinkerton's carefree attitude will not lead to heartbreak. Pinkerton scoffs at Sharpless's scruples, contemptuously condemning him as a typical, unadventurous middle-aged man. Both drink a toast to America, Pinkerton adding an additional toast to the day when he will consummate a real marriage to an American woman.

In the distance, female voices are heard. Goro announces the arrival of Butterfly, her friends, and family. Butterfly's entrance is magical, a poignant transition that contrasts with Pinkerton's insensitive revelations. She climbs the hill with her wedding entourage and praises the glory of her wedding day, a day in which she is "the happiest girl in all Japan and all the world" because she has "arrived to answer the call of love."

Butterfly's entrance music — the "Happiness motive" — is elegant, simple, and pulsating, a four-note phrase that ascends and rises chromatically, climaxing in a magnificently arching, lush, and sensuous musical finale. It is the signature music of the opera, a leitmotif identifying Butterfly's bliss.

Butterfly's Entrance: "Happiness Motive"

Largo
BUTTERFLY



Butterfly and her entourage bow politely to Pinkerton and Sharpless. Sharpless inquires of her background. Butterfly explains that her family was once wealthy, but after a tsunami devastated their home, and her father's death, hard times befell them, and Butterfly was forced to earn her living as a geisha.

Butterfly reveals that she is 15-years old, astonishing Sharpless and prompting him to repeat his caution to Pinkerton. More guests arrive, including Butterfly's mother, a Cousin, an Aunt, and Uncle Yakuside, whose immediate concern is wine and refreshment. Meanwhile, the women exchange impressions of the bridegroom, some expressing jealousy and envy, and Butterfly's mother defending Pinkerton with zealous pride. At a signal from Butterfly, all bow to Pinkerton, and then disperse.

Alone with Pinkerton, Butterfly unveils her treasured possessions, which she had concealed in the voluminous sleeves of her obi: a clasp, a clay pipe, a girdle, a pot of rouge, and a narrow sheath. Goro intervenes to explain that the sheath holds the dagger with which Butterfly's father committed hara kiri, the redemption of his honor by order of the emperor. Butterfly produces puppets that represent the spirits of her ancestors. Pinkerton crassly ridicules them.

Butterfly has unbounded faith in Pinkerton. When she is sure that her relations cannot hear, she reveals that she visited the American mission to abandon her ancestral religion and embrace Christianity, her husband's religion.

Conversion aria:

Andante

BUTTERFLY



Io se - guo il mio de - sti - no e pie - na d'u - mil - tà,
 I humbly follow my fate and will kneel before Pinkerton's God.

Goro calls for silence, and the Imperial Commissioner quickly performs the wedding ceremony. Afterwards, all toast the couple's happiness.

The wedding festivities are interrupted by Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze (a Buddhist priest), who has learned of Butterfly's conversion to Christianity. He denounces Butterfly for having foresworn her faith, the relatives joining him in condemning Butterfly. All depart, cursing Butterfly's heresy.

Renunciation Motive:



As evening falls, Pinkerton comforts Butterfly, who is in tears and trembling after being denounced and ostracized from her family and friends.

Love Duet: "Viene la sera"

Andantino calmo

PINKERTON



Vie - ne - la se - ra,
 Evening is falling,

Butterfly and Pinkerton rejoice in their overflowing love. Two musical themes alternate and collide: the “Renunciation Motive” that underscored the Bonze’s renunciation of Butterfly, and triumphant renderings of Butterfly’s “Happiness Motive”: fear and happiness are the haunting ironies of this blissful moment.

Butterfly fears to speak of her love for Pinkerton, but Pinkerton assures her of the life-giving vitality of love. The “Love Duet” expresses their ecstasy and rapture, Butterfly invokes nature’s beauty as the supreme blessing of their love.

“È notte serena”

Andante mosso appassionato
BUTTERFLY and PINKERTON

È not - te se - re - na! Guarda: dorme ogni co - sa!
It is a serene evening! Look: everything sleeps!

Butterfly’s final note of the duet is tonically unresolved, Puccini’s music suggesting the forthcoming tragedy.

Act II: The interior of Butterfly’s house.

After the wedding, Pinkerton rejoined his ship. Three years have passed, and Butterfly has not heard from him. Their funds are nearly exhausted. Suzuki prays to the Japanese gods to end her mistress’s suffering, but Butterfly condemns the Japanese gods as lazy; Pinkerton’s god will soon come to her aid, if only he knew where to find her. Suzuki infuriates Butterfly by reminding her that foreign husbands never return after they have rejoined their ships. But Butterfly is convinced that Pinkerton will return: after all, he arranged for the Consul to pay the rent; he placed special locks on the soshi screens to protect her from her family; and he indeed promised to return “when the robins build their nests.”

Butterfly becomes inspired with a vision of Pinkerton returning, a fantasy in which she describes her joy and ecstasy as she watches him climb the hill for their reunion. Butterfly’s “Un bel dì” affirms her faith, but also her despair.

“Un bel dì”

Andante molto calmo
BUTTERFLY



Un bel dì ve - dre-mo le var - si un fil di fu - mo,
One beautiful day, we will see a thread of smoke arising on the sea..

Goro arrives with Sharpless. The Consul has not seen Butterfly since the wedding three years ago. Butterfly cordially welcomes him, immediately inquiring how often the robins build their nests in America. Sharpless is evasive, but duly perplexed by her naivete.

The wealthy Prince Yamadori arrives to pursue his marriage offer to Butterfly. She mockingly rejects him, proudly announcing that she is an American's wife, married according to American law in which divorce is a punishable offense. Yamadori departs in frustration, confounded because Butterfly has spurned him.

The purpose of Sharpless's visit is to deliver Pinkerton's letter to Butterfly. Sharpless tries to read the letter, but becomes frustrated by Butterfly's childish interruptions. Each time he starts reading, Butterfly hears only what she wants to hear, believing that the letter announces Pinkerton's imminent return.

Sharpless is unable to confront Butterfly with the letter's devastating content: that Pinkerton is indeed returning to Nagasaki, but with his new American wife. He tries to subtly suggest that Butterfly embark on a new life without Pinkerton, perhaps Yamadori's offer of marriage or a return to geisha life.

Enraged, Butterfly rushes into the adjoining room and fetches her son, persuading Sharpless that he is indeed Pinkerton's son because of his Caucasian features. Butterfly pours out her agony to her son: she would rather die by her own hand than return to geisha life.

"Che tua madre"

Andante molto mosso
BUTTERFLY



Che tua ma - dre do - vrà pren-der - ti in brac - cio,
That your mother should take you in her arms...

Sharpless leaves, profoundly moved by Butterfly's dilemma. He promises Butterfly that he will inform Pinkerton of their son.

Suzuki drags in Goro, whom she accuses of spreading slanderous rumors that Butterfly has been abandoned. Butterfly threatens to kill him, but then dismisses him with contempt.

A cannon blast is heard from the harbor, the traditional announcement of the arrival of an American warship. The background music reechoes Butterfly's "Un bel di," her fantasy of Pinkerton's return. Butterfly takes a telescope in hand and trembles with excitement as she identifies the flag and colors of the warship Abraham Lincoln, Pinkerton's ship.

For Butterfly, the agony of waiting has ended. She exults in triumph, the underscoring music a combination of the “Happiness motive,” “Love Duet” music, and the opening phrase of the “Star Spangled Banner.”

It is Butterfly’s triumphal moment: her victorious vindication. Everyone told her that all hope had vanished, but her love and faith prevailed, and Pinkerton is indeed returning to her. She expresses her contempt and disdain for those people who renounced her, scorn at the presumptive and arrogant Yamadori and Goro for spreading scandalous lies.

Butterfly and Suzuki celebrate this euphoric and ecstatic moment, an event Butterfly anticipated for three years. They adorn the house with flowers so that Pinkerton will see “springtime glory.” After all, as Butterfly comments, they were her tears that made those flowers grow.

Butterfly and Suzuki: “Flower Duet”

Allegretto moderato
BUTTERFLY and SUZUKI



Ge - tia - mo a ma - ni pie - ne mambole e tu - be - ro - se,
 We throw handfuls of violets and white roses,

As the sun begins to set, Butterfly dresses herself in her wedding obi, so she may greet Pinkerton as he remembered her on their wedding day. She looks into a mirror and laments how time and her longing have changed her; her smile is now saddened, and she has aged.

Butterfly, Suzuki, and the boy maintain a vigil throughout the night, Butterfly punching three little holes in the soshi screen so that each can watch for Pinkerton. They face the harbor, rigid, statuesque, and motionless. The boy and Suzuki fall asleep, but Butterfly remains awake throughout the night.

During the vigil, the orchestra ironically repeats the music that underscored the earlier “Letter Scene,” seemingly a lullaby, but injected with variations of the “Renunciation Motive,” an ominous reminder of Butterfly’s pathetic futility and utter isolation. There is a host of musical imagery as day dawns: birds chirp, and the sounds of morning activity are heard from the harbor.

Act III: Butterfly's house.

Sharpless told Pinkerton that he fathered a son with Butterfly. Act III deals with Pinkerton and Kate, his new American wife, and their determination to rescue the child from the perceived squalor of Japanese life; their intention is to bring him to America.

The sun rises to reveal Butterfly, Suzuki and the boy before the soshi screen overlooking the harbor. Butterfly sings a lullaby, and then takes the boy to another room where both quickly fall asleep.

Pinkerton and Sharpless arrive, greeted by Suzuki. Suzuki catches sight of a woman in the garden and is informed by Sharpless that she is Pinkerton's wife, Kate. Their concern, he tells her, is to rescue the child and ensure that he receives a good American upbringing.

Pinkerton's return becomes a traumatic moment of soul-searching. He reflects on the faded flowers, a symbol of the death of love. But he has awakened to his callousness and selfishness, and begs forgiveness. Overcome with emotion, he cannot bear his own guilt and admits his remorse. Sharpless reminds him that he prophesied that his heartlessness would lead to tragedy, but Pinkerton was deaf and unheeding to his warnings.

Pinkerton's aria, "Addio fiorito asil" ("Farewell, sanctuary of flowers and home of love"), is a stunning operatic moment of introspection and transformation, in which Pinkerton realizes his grave and fatal errors. He concludes that peace will never return to him: that he will always be haunted and tormented by guilt. He leaves abruptly, unable to face the woman he has betrayed.

"Addio fiorito asil"

Allegro moderato
PINKERTON



Ad - di - o fiorito a - sil, di le - ti - zia e d'a - mor.
Farewell, sanctuary of flowers and home of love.

Butterfly awakens to confront Suzuki and Sharpless. She seeks Pinkerton, but only sees an American woman in the garden. She inquires of Suzuki if Pinkerton is alive; Suzuki confirms that he is. She asks if they told her that Pinkerton will not return, Suzuki's silence confirming the horrible truth to Butterfly: intuitively, Butterfly realizes that Pinkerton has betrayed her. Suzuki defends the blonde lady in the garden as the innocent cause of Butterfly's grief and misfortune.

Butterfly concludes to herself that her situation is hopeless and that they will take everything from her. Sharpless tries to reason with her that by giving the child to Pinkerton, the boy would have a brighter future, but Butterfly indignantly protests that a mother cannot be asked to give up her child.

Nevertheless, Butterfly accepts her defeat. With obedient resignation, and a pathetic sense of dignity, she decides to obey their wishes and yield her son. She bids them to leave, adding that Pinkerton himself must come for the boy in a half hour.

Suzuki escorts Kate and Sharpless out. Butterfly, emotionally destroyed and at the point of collapse, asks Suzuki to make the room darker, and remove all the brightness associated with joy and springtime. Afterwards, she commands Suzuki to go out and play with the boy.

While Suzuki's sobs are heard in the background, Butterfly kneels before the Buddha. In conclusive moves, she removes her father's dagger from the shrine, kisses the blade, and reads its inscribed words, words that represent the essence of her culture:

"Con onor muore chi non puo serbar vita con onore."

"One shall die with honor who no longer can live his life with honor."

A door opens and Suzuki pushes the boy towards Butterfly. Butterfly drops the dagger, and hugs and kisses him, Puccini indicating her heartfelt surrender in his score: "con grande sentimento affanosamente agitato" ("With great and agitated feeling.")

Butterfly sings a heartrending farewell to her son, urging him to look at her face and remember her features: the loving mother who was forced to abandon her adored child.

Butterfly's farewell:



Butterfly bandages his eyes, gives him an American flag and a doll, and then ushers him outside.

Butterfly's culture taught her how to die, yet Pinkerton taught her that love was the essence of life; but that love has died. In Butterfly's culture, the dagger she holds is a redeeming force; it will redeem the honor that Pinkerton so callously destroyed. Butterfly seizes the dagger and goes behind the screen. The dagger is heard falling. Butterfly emerges from behind the screen, tottering and smiling feebly.

Pinkerton is heard anxiously calling: "Butterfly, Butterfly, Butterfly." Butterfly falls, and dies. The piercing dissonance of Puccini's "Suicide Motive" thunders in the orchestra: a sense of outrage, pity, sympathy, compassion, and indignation for a fragile victim of inhumanity.

Commentary and Analysis

Puccini once described himself as a passionate hunter: of wildfowl, attractive women, and good librettos. After the success of *Tosca*, his pursuit of an inspiring libretto that would fire his musical imagination was resolved when he discovered the David Belasco-John Luther Long play, *Madame Butterfly*.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, David Belasco was a theatrical icon, a master of the theatrical arts at the height of his fame: playwright, producer, and scenic designer. His particular forte was a unique ability to create illusion and atmosphere through cunning manipulation of lighting and scenery. The exotic ambience of the *Madame Butterfly* story was perfectly suited to his stage flamboyance: a great opportunity for colorful and innovative sets, costumes, and special effects.

He demonstrated brilliant theatrical ingenuity in the first scene of the play: the curtain rose to a succession of illuminated screens that depicted a rice-field, a garden of cherry blossoms, a snow-capped volcano, and a sunset, effects that might appear naive or excessively ornate to the theatergoer of today, but at that time, they were hailed as the dawn of modern stage techniques. Most of his innovations would later become incorporated into the nascent film industry.

Another great theatrical coup in *Madame Butterfly* earned Belasco the sobriquet “wizard of the stage”: the geisha heroine anticipates her husband’s return in the “Vigil,” a 14-minute scene without spoken words in which changing stage effects portray evening falling, stars appearing, dawn accompanied by chirping birds, and finally sunrise. Belasco considered it “my most successful effort in appealing to the imagination of those who have sat before my stage.”

Madame Butterfly was a raging success in both New York and London. In 1900, Puccini attended a London performance featuring the noted American actress, Blanche Bates. He understood no English, but immediately became absorbed by Belasco’s visual effects, and the pathetic plight of the Japanese heroine, his emotional response to mime: excellent proof of the dramatic effectiveness of the plot. He had similarly responded to Sardou’s *La Tosca*, which he heard in French, a language he did not understand.

Belasco ingeniously modified the original story that was written by John Luther Long. In the original, Pinkerton deserts Butterfly and never returns; she and the child simply disappear at the conclusion, the tragedy becoming the failure of her love and her blind faith in Pinkerton. But Belasco heightened the drama’s pathos by transforming the conclusion into a grave tragedy: Pinkerton returns with his American wife to rescue the child, causing Butterfly to rise to a true tragic heroine status by courageously resolving her conflict through self-annihilation.

Butterfly’s suicide struck deep chords in Puccini, the dramatic conclusion fitting perfectly into his subconscious image of a tragic heroine: Butterfly, like her predecessors — Anna, Fidelia, Manon Lescaut, Mimì, and Tosca — becomes a victim of failed love, her agonizing and pitiful death kindling Puccini’s musical imagination.

After the London performance of *Madam Butterfly*, Puccini met Belasco and Long backstage, passionately begging them for the rights to transform the play into an opera. Belasco agreed, but he would later cynically comment that it was rather difficult to negotiate with an impulsive and tearful Italian, who also had his arms threateningly around his neck.

Puccini succeeded in winning the rights to *Madam Butterfly*. He proceeded to gather his favorite librettists, Illica and Giacosa, both relishing their three earlier successes with Puccini: *Manon Lescaut*, *La bohème*, and *Tosca*. Puccini plunged into his mysterious fascination with the title character, the next entry into his gallery of tragic heroines: Cio-Cio-San, or Madama Butterfly.

In the nineteenth century, Western and European colonialism was thriving: the colonial powers considered it their manifest destiny to bring civilization to what they perceived as the uncultivated world; in exchange they benefitted from huge natural resources to fuel their industrial economies.

The West became fascinated with the exoticism and culture of the Far East, showcased in Europe at expositions in Paris and London. Opera and operetta composers found creative inspirations from these newly discovered exoticisms: Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1865), Delibes's *Lakme* (1883), Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885), Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1893), Jones's *The Geisha* (1896), Mascagni's *Iris* (1898).

At the core of the *Madame Butterfly* story is the tragic plight of its geisha heroine. But the story also illuminates an unresolved cultural collision between East and West: an incompatibility resulting from Caucasian racial arrogance, superiority, and its failure to recognize, understand, or absorb the essence of these foreign cultures. In most of these late nineteenth century dramas about the Far East, the Oriental heroines fall in love with a Caucasian, an offense to their own racial customs and traditions; and all of their lovers desert them to return to their native lands.

John Luther Long's *Madame Butterfly* had become a sensation that had appeared serialized in the *American Century Magazine* in 1897. Long claimed that he was relating a true episode about a Japanese geisha who married an American naval officer under Japanese law, bore him a child, and was later abandoned by the American.

But Long's *Madame Butterfly* story owes much of its provenance to Pierre Loti, a French naval officer whose 1887 autobiographical novel *Madame Chrysanthème* set the fashion for Oriental subjects in Western literature. Loti's heroine was O-kikusan, meaning chrysanthemum; Long changed it to Cio-Cio-San, and then incongruously "Englished" the title to *Madame Butterfly*.

In *Madame Chrysanthème*, Loti abounded in exotic poetic descriptions and impressions of Japan: its aromas and moods, and its Oriental atmosphere and ambience. From Loti's European lens, he depicted a delicate and fragile world of tiny objects, and a people preoccupied with minute details that were cast against a background of an exotic land of cherry blossoms, chrysanthemums, geishas, and the samurai. Loti commented that "in describing this land, its culture, and its people, one is tempted to use the word 'tiny' six times a line."

Likewise, Long's *Madame Butterfly* convincingly and realistically captured the exotic atmosphere of Japan at the turn of the nineteenth century. His heroine, Cio-Cio-San, was a bit crude, a silly lovesick girl who speaks "pidgin" English, tries to "go all American" by insisting that "no one shall speak anytin' but dose Uni'd Sta'es languages in dis Lef-ten-ant Pik-ker-ton's house," and that her marriage to an American officer "make me mos' bes' happy female woman in Japan – mebbly in that whole worl' – w'at you thing?"

Long modeled the American naval officer's characterization after Loti himself. Pinkerton is offensive and arrogant, a callous and fatuous practical joker, a cynic and racist adventurer with a devil-may-care attitude, and one who fancies himself a modern Pygmalion: the self-proclaimed lord and master over his geisha.

In Long's story, the American counsel Sharpless makes the most profound — if not revealing — comment about Pinkerton's character: "It was exactly in his line to take this dainty, vivid, eager and formless material, Cio-Cio-San, and mould it to his most wantonly whimsical wish." Sharpless wryly adds that "it was perhaps fortunate for Butterfly that his country had need of him so soon after his marriage."

In Long's version, the abandoned geisha fails at *hara-kiri*; her wounds are treated by her maid, and both disappear with the child just before Pinkerton's arrival.

During the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States likewise flexed its colonial muscles: it seized the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands, and then joined the European powers in their colonial adventures in Asia. In 1898, the Americans declared the Open Door Policy, in effect, a declaration that the European and Western powers each had equal opportunities in their colonial endeavors: a convenient excuse to rape and plunder untapped resources that would fuel their industrial economies.

China was an easy target for exploitation, because it was internally poor, weak and impotent, and disorganized; its bureaucratic autocracy was heedless of its millions of peasants, who, in turn, were oppressed by the landowners. China expressed its opposition to the exploiting colonialists through the Righteous Harmonious Fists Movement, their resistance to foreign intervention that became known as the Boxer Rebellion.

Japan also looked to China for resources to fuel its newly industrialized economy, justifying its exploitation by condemning the Chinese as an inferior race. Ultimately, Europeans and Americans — and the Japanese — became allies in the exploitation of China's natural resources.

The *Madama Butterfly* story takes place during Japan's Meiji dynasty (1868-1912). Japan had been secluded for centuries, but after Commodore Perry entered Japan by force in 1853, it decided that they did not want to become humbled by "barbarian" foreigners, the fate of its neighbor, China. Japan awakened, determined to fight Western encroachment by modernizing its society and building its economy and military. Under the Meiji's, Japan reorganized its privileged society and sold silk to provide resources to build western style industry: the military-industrial complex

that emerged would lead to its twentieth century adventures in empire building. As Japan progressed and modernized, it embraced everything Western: from trains to clothes, haircut styles, literature, and music, which explains so much of its love of the West and America that is portrayed throughout the *Madama Butterfly* story.

As an American ally, Japan lowered its cultural, economic, and military barriers for its new partners. An American naval presence was permitted in Japan: the American warship in the *Madama Butterfly* story, the Abraham Lincoln, was assigned to intelligence surveillance off the Chinese coast, keeping a watchful eye on the other Western colonial powers; and Japan made the port of Nagasaki available to their American allies for rendezvous and fueling, the explanation for the presence of the American Consulate and Sharpless, as well as the story's setting in Nagasaki.

Japan further encouraged their European and American allies by granting foreigners the same marital rights accorded Japanese men: those foreigners could enter into temporary marriages with Japanese women and conveniently terminate the marriages when the husbands' leaves expired, by modern standards, perhaps an inhuman policy, if not anathema. Nevertheless, those laws allowed Westerners to marry Japanese women with the singular option that the men could annul the marriage contract at any time: the wives, of course, were bound for life. (999 years in the *Madama Butterfly* story.)

Both parties would enter a marriage in the spirit of *carpe diem*; there was no tragedy, regret or remorse after the husband departed and rejoined his ship. In Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthemum*, the naval officer's farewell is simply dismissed with money, the somewhat crass heroine meticulously counting coins that represented her husband's farewell present, and testing each and every coin with a hammer and the competence and dexterity of an expert moneylender.

The *Madama Butterfly* story is about Japanese and Americans that is set in Japan, but in the magic of this opera, it is related in Italian. Its Far Eastern ambience provided Puccini with an opportunity to musically characterize Oriental exoticisms, ethnicity and atmosphere, as well as American and Western characteristics.

Puccini relished the opportunity to invent impressionistic music, collages of exotic melodies with Oriental color and ambience: music identified by its pentatonic scale mode, the five-note scale particular to Oriental music. The wife of the Japanese minister in Rome gave him Japanese records and folk music. He researched books on Japanese customs, religious ceremonies, and architecture; ultimately, he became expert in Oriental ethnography.

Some of the Oriental music in the score is authentic; some are Puccini's own Oriental-style inventions. Nevertheless, his intent was not to plagiarize Japanese ethnic music, but to use it for effect. There are many authentic Japanese songs and fragments from songs in the score: the Japanese national anthem, "Kimi-ga-yo," that announces the arrival at the wedding of the Imperial Commissioner and the Official Registrar; a cherry blossom song, "sakura," that is the musical background when Butterfly shows Pinkerton her various knickknacks and possessions; the song "Oedo-Nihonbashi"

that is heard after the wedding ceremony when Butterfly's friends offer their congratulations; the authentic Japanese prayer melody that underscores Suzuki's prayer opening Act II; and the Japanese popular song "My Prince" that underscores Prince Yamadori's music, broad, expansive, and almost "Tristanesque" music that appropriately describes a wealthy pensioned Prince of Japan.

But Puccini's score is primarily Western-style music that bears the composer's unique musical signature: the opera became a sublime operatic tone poem because of its subtle blend of western and oriental music.

There is no overture or prelude to *Madama Butterfly*: the action begins immediately with the rising curtain. Puccini's music conveys the excitement and anticipation of a Japanese wedding event and suggestions of western stereotypes of oriental culture: the patter of small feet, and the quaint, fussy, doll-like characters of the Orient.

Pinkerton's opening aria, "Dovunque al mondo," is a masterpiece of exotic punctuation: Puccini injected strains from the "Star Spangled Banner" to truly endow it with an "American" character, the aria a portrait of Pinkerton's chauvinism, as well as the arrogance of Western colonialists and imperialists.

Butterfly's entrance is magical, but a moment of profound irony: Pinkerton toasts: "...to the day of my real marriage to an American wife," which is suddenly interrupted by Butterfly's music: the "Happiness" motive. Butterfly climbs the hill, accompanied by friends, family, and her wedding entourage, and her words exalt the profound spiritual essence of her forthcoming marriage: "I am the happiest girl in Japan and all the world," and "I have arrived to answer the call of love."

The "Happiness" music is the signature music of the opera, a simple but elegant four-note phrase that ascends chromatically, climaxing in a magnificently arching and lush finale: it is Butterfly's leitmotif associated with happiness that is recalled in the climax of the "Love Duet" ending Act I; in a thunderous rendering in Act II when Butterfly presents her child to Sharpless, his temporary name "dolore," trouble, pain or sorrow that will be changed to "gioia," his joy when his father returns; it underscores Butterfly's explosion of triumph in Act II after the canon shot announces the arrival of the Abraham Lincoln into the harbor; and it is heard throughout the opera in a host of musical variations and transformations that are intended to capture Butterfly's nostalgia and yearning for her past happiness.

Butterfly converted to Christianity, her supreme act of love and unbounded faith in her new American husband. She reveals her secret to Pinkerton in the "Conversion" aria: "Io seguo il mio destin" ("I have followed my destiny.") Butterfly concludes the aria with a fortissimo declaration of her love for Pinkerton: "Amore mio" ("My only love"), but she cuts herself short, fearful of being overheard by her relatives. Puccini underscores her fright, the last measures a thundering orchestral rendering of the "Suicide" motive, the pentatonic theme heard earlier when Goro related that Butterfly's father obeyed the Mikado and honorably committed hara kiri; it is the central theme of Butterfly's Act II aria, "Che tua madre" ("That your mother"), a somber lament that Butterfly addresses to her son, explaining that death would be greater than the

dishonor and shame of being deserted, or forced to return to a geisha life of singing and dancing. Appropriately, the “Suicide” motive concludes the opera.

The wedding is noisily interrupted by the violently raging Bonze, Butterfly’s uncle, a Buddhist priest, outraged because he has learned that Butterfly converted to Christianity and abandoned her sacred ancestral religion. He renounces Butterfly for heresy and blasphemy, his shouting underscored by the “Renunciation” motive, a short chromatic theme that echoes throughout the opera; a leitmotif that becomes a musical reminder of Butterfly’s guilt.

In the love duet, Butterfly and Pinkerton rejoice in their overflowing love, the underlying music alternating between the “Renunciation” motive that expresses Butterfly’s fear and guilt, and the “Happiness” motive that expresses the lovers’ bliss. But their final music is tonally unresolved: it is in F Major, and Pinkerton’s final note is F, but Butterfly’s final note is an unresolved C, Puccini’s musical statement that for Butterfly, blissful love appears to be consummated, but it is not resolved. (In Long’s original story, Pinkerton and Butterfly marry and live in New York for several months. In the opera, after the wedding night, Pinkerton leaves for intelligence service on the China coast.)

The signature aria of the opera is Butterfly’s “Un bel dì” (“One beautiful day”), her vision of the day of Pinkerton’s return. She fantasizes a scenario that describes her joy and ecstasy as she sees Pinkerton climbing the hill, “s’avvia per la collina” (“in the distance a tiny speck will climb the hill”), pentatonic music that ironically reappears in the closing moments of the opera when Butterfly tells Sharpless that Pinkerton should return for the child in a half hour. In Act II, the “Un del di” is appropriately the music underscoring Butterfly’s excitement and expectation after she hears the cannon shot in the harbor that announces a returning warship.

In Act II, Sharpless arrives to read Butterfly a letter he has received from Pinkerton: Pinkerton’s revelation that he has married an American wife. The music underscoring the “Letter” scene returns during Butterfly’s “Night Vigil”: an irony because Butterfly waits in triumph for Pinkerton’s return, but she is unaware that he is returning with his new American wife. The “Night Vigil” music is almost a lullaby, a “Humming Chorus” that is fused with ominous appearances and variations of the “Renunciation” motive, further emphasizing Butterfly’s pathetic dilemma. In this transition from night into day, inspired by Belasco’s dazzling stage effects, Puccini’s symphonic genius creates a host of musical imagery: day dawning, birds chirping, and the sounds of morning activity echoing from the harbor.

Pinkerton indeed returns in Act III: he sees the flowers that Butterfly and Suzuki had adorned the house with to welcome him: their sumptuous “Flower Duet” after the cannon shot was heard. But Pinkerton cannot bear his shame: “Addio fiorito asil” (“Farewell sanctuary of flowers”), an aria that Puccini added after *Madama Butterfly*’s failed premiere. Pinkerton is remorseful, condemning himself for his heartlessness; he concludes that peace will never return to him, and that he will always be haunted

and tormented by guilt. He leaves abruptly, unable to face the woman he has betrayed — and destroyed: his final words, “Son vil” (“I am vile.”)

Goro is the first character to appear in the opera, a Japanese factotum like the notorious Figaro: a rare combination of interpreter, busybody, matchmaker, producer of the bride, and real estate agent for the rental of Pinkerton’s house. Pinkerton wanted to keep Butterfly isolated and far away from the prying eyes of her family, who, in his arrogance, he hated and despised: he specifically ordered Goro to rent a house that was remote and specially fitted with screen locks.

Goro arranged Pinkerton’s purchase of his bride for 100 yen. According to Japanese law, Pinkerton can cancel the marriage contract at anytime, however, Butterfly is bound for life. In Act I, Butterfly comments that she will be very frugal, because she knows how expensive Pinkerton’s purchase had been.

Sharpless, the American Consul in Nagasaki and Pinkerton’s friend, is a diverse character: Puccini’s music portrays his good natured and gentle attributes as well as his arrogance: he is grave when he cautions Pinkerton that his hedonistic philosophy of pleasure could bring damage and despair to a tender heart, gentle and compassionate in his attempt to read Pinkerton’s letter to Butterfly, but somewhat pompous in the final act when he insists that Suzuki aid them in their attempt to rescue the child.

Pinkerton’s revelations in Act I fuel the drama and set the tragedy in motion: a rare tenor anti-hero who is a heartless, arrogant, repugnant, and a callous scoundrel of dubious integrity. Pinkerton defines the epithet “ugly American”: an awestruck adventurer representing the West’s arguably immoral preoccupation with imperialism and colonialism during the nineteenth century. Pinkerton’s Act I aria, “Dovunque al mondo lo Yankee vagabondo” (“All over the world, on business or pleasure, the Yankee scorns danger”), speaks of male chauvinism: a world of macho American males who travel the world picking, choosing, and conquering foreign women. If anything, Pinkerton certainly does not endear himself to modern day feminists or to anti-colonialists.

Pinkerton raves to Sharpless about his child bride, a momentary, trivial and irrelevant pursuit, rather than sacred and holy matrimony. He has developed an irrational physical attraction to Butterfly, an addiction to her mysterious and exotic oriental charm that has captivated, intoxicated, and fascinated him.

According to the original Long story, Pinkerton deceived and deluded Butterfly with fabrications about himself, Western life and its culture. As such, Butterfly believed that Pinkerton occupied an important position in America’s affairs, being, as she said, “under special patronage to the President and the Goddess of Liberty.” She withheld telling Pinkerton about their child because she believed it would cause him to desert his country and “be in big trouble with the President of the United States.”

Butterfly idolized Pinkerton; in her mind, he was a divine creature, the replacement of her ancestral gods.

Butterfly is at the center of the drama's action; after her entrance in Act I, she is on stage until the opera's conclusion, with the exception of the brief confrontation of Act III with Sharpless, Pinkerton, Suzuki, and Kate Pinkerton.

Butterfly's character grows in a continuous and consistent line from an ostensibly innocent teenage bride to the full realization of her agonizing defeat. Until the very end of the opera, Butterfly is in denial, a woman of invincible will and blind faith that Pinkerton did not abandon her. At the conclusion of the opera, she is transformed into a tragic heroine as she faces the horrible reality that she has been betrayed and abandoned by Pinkerton.

Butterfly is a fifteen year-old teenager. By profession, she is a singing and dancing geisha, what she calls an honorable profession in Japan. She arrives at her wedding bearing many past sorrows and misfortunes: the destruction of her family's home by a tsunami, or typhoon; and her father's suicide to preserve his honor. In Long's original story, Butterfly's mother ordered her to marry Pinkerton as a means to contribute money, food, and clothes to her near-destitute family. But Butterfly's marriage to an American naval officer also represents status and security: an upward mobility or higher rung on the social ladder. In that sense, Butterfly has arrived; as Pinkerton's wife, she is now a lady who is no longer obligated to work as a geisha.

Puccini's tragic muse was kindled by the final moments of *Madama Butterfly*: it is quintessential music drama, a moment when the impact of words is truly realized through music, and one feels a sense of heightened poignancy through the inherent emotive power of the music.

Butterfly kneels before the Buddha while Suzuki's sobs are heard in the background. In conclusive moves, Butterfly removes her father's dagger from the shrine, kisses the blade, and reads its inscribed words, words that represent the essence and soul of her culture: "Con onor muore chi non puo serbar vita con onore" ("One shall die with honor who no longer can live his life with honor.")

A door opens and Suzuki pushes the child towards Butterfly. Butterfly drops the dagger and hugs and kisses him. Puccini's music directions in the score clearly indicated his intentions for heightened emotionalism as Butterfly surrenders to her agony: "Con grande sentimento affanosamente agitato" ("With great and agitated feeling.")

Butterfly delivers a mother's heartrending farewell to her son, telling him that she is sending him far away to a better life, but he must always remember his mother: her oriental features: "Tu, tu, amore tu.")

Butterfly's culture taught her how to die, but Pinkerton taught her that love was the essence of life. But love died because Pinkerton betrayed that love: an honorable death by suicide remains Butterfly's only alternative. In Butterfly's culture, her father's dagger represents redemption: Cio-Cio-San surrendered her soul to a faithless American naval officer; she will be redeemed by her father's dagger, her return to her Japanese culture.

Butterfly seats the boy on a stool, bandages his eyes, gives him an American flag and a doll, and then ushers him outside. She seizes the dagger and goes behind the screen. The dagger is heard falling. Butterfly emerges from behind the screen, tottering and smiling feebly.

Pinkerton is heard anxiously calling: “Butterfly, Butterfly, Butterfly.” Butterfly falls, and dies. The orchestra thunders the “Suicide” motive, followed by a piercing, dissonant final chord: Puccini’s musical statement of pity, sympathy, compassion, and certainly outrage and indignation.

The pathos of the *Madama Butterfly* has inspired many theatrical productions that highlight the cultural clash of East and West. The Broadway musical *Miss Saigon*, updates the *Madama Butterfly* story to Vietnam where Cio-Cio-San is Kim, a Vietnamese mother of a child fathered by an American soldier who later abandons her. In 1988, David Henry Hwang wrote the play *M. Butterfly*, where in an unusual twist of the underlying story, Cio-Cio-San becomes Liling Song: a man.

Puccini’s masterpiece received an unfavorable reception at its La Scala premiere. Much of the legendary fiasco is attributed to jealousies and rivalries among Puccini’s contemporaries: envy because his publisher, Ricordi, was always providing his pet composer with the best librettos and librettists. Puccini anticipated the fiasco, commenting that he would be facing a lynch mob and a “Dantean inferno.”

Many believed that in the *Madama Butterfly* score Puccini had recycled music from *Manon Lescaut* and *La Bohème*, complaining about his self-plagiarizing and his lack of original musical ideas. It has also been suggested that the tense political atmosphere emanating from the Russo-Japanese War conflicted with *Madama Butterfly*’s sympathetic representation of the Japanese people.

But it was the length of *Madama Butterfly*’s second act that the public was unable to cope with. Giacosa had warned Puccini that the lengthy second act would spell disaster for the opera. Puccini resisted his advice. Puccini’s original *Madama Butterfly* was structured in two acts: the present Act I, and the balance of the opera, just like the Belasco-Long play, in a long second act of 1 hour and 20 minutes. Puccini feared that if he divided the second act he would destroy dramatic continuity, particularly in the “Vigil” of night turning into day.

After the premiere, Puccini quickly resurrected the opera and made appropriate revisions and additions to the score: he divided the second act, and *Madama Butterfly* became a three-act opera, the format Giacosa had argued for from its very conception, but advice that Puccini resisted; and, he added the third act tenor aria, “Addio fiorito asil.” Afterwards, *Madama Butterfly* became a colossal success.

The fragile geisha heroine of *Madama Butterfly* seduces her audiences as she seduced Pinkerton, and, of course, Giacomo Puccini. Butterfly remained Puccini’s favorite tragic heroine: an innocent soul led to despair and destruction by a callous and heartless man for whom she had unbounded love and faith.

Madama Butterfly is a singular theatrical experience. It is unquestionably one of

the greatest operas Puccini ever composed, an operatic tone poem with musical inventions of unrivalled beauty and poignancy. It may very well be the greatest opera in the entire operatic canon.

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Act I

*A Japanese house with a terrace that overlooks the harbor and town of Nagasaki.
Goro shows Pinkerton details of the house he has rented.*

Pinkerton:

E soffitto, e pareti.

Goro:

Vanno e vengono a prova a norma che vi
giova nello stesso locale alternar nuovi
aspetti ai consueti.

Pinkerton:

Il nido nuzial dov'è?

Goro:

Qui, o là, secondo.

Pinkerton:

Anch'esso a doppio fondo!
La sala?

Goro:

Ecco!

Pinkerton:

All'aperto?

Goro:

Un fianco scorre.

Pinkerton:

Capisco! Capisco! Un altro.

Goro:

Scivola!

Pinkerton:

E la dimora frivola.

Goro:

Salda come una torre da terra, fino al tetto.

Pinkerton:

And the walls and the ceiling.

Goro:

They move in and out to suit your fancy,
varying the interior and the exterior in the
same surroundings.

Pinkerton:

Where is the marriage chamber?

Goro:

Here, or there, according to your whims.

Pinkerton:

A wonderful contrivance!
The hall?

Goro: *(showing the terrace)*

There!

Pinkerton: *(displaying amazement)*

In the open?

Goro: *(sliding the partitions)*

A wall slides outward.

Pinkerton:

I see now! I see it! Another.

Goro:

It slides!

Pinkerton:

It is a fairy-tale dwelling.

Goro:

It rises like a tower from the ground to the
roof.

Pinkerton:

È una casa a soffietto.

Pinkerton

It's a house to be puffed down.

Goro claps his hands. Two men and a woman appear and kneel before Pinkerton.

Goro:

Questa è la cameriera che della vostra sposa
fu già serva amorosa.

Il cuoco, il servitor. Son confusi del grande
onore.

Goro:

This is the maid who has served your wife
with devotion.

The cook, the houseboy. They're overcome
by such a great honor.

Pinkerton:

I nomi?

Pinkerton:

Their names?

Goro:

Miss Nuvola Leggera.

Raggio di Sol Nascente.

Esala Aromi.

Goro:

Miss "Light Cloud."

"Ray-of-the-Rising-Sun."

"Aromatic Exhalation."

Suzuki:

Sorride Vostro Onore?

Il riso è frutto e fiore.

Disse il savio Ocunama:

dei crucci la trama smaglia il sorriso.

Suzuki:

Does Your Honor smile?

Laughter is fruit and flower.

Thus spake the sage Ocunama:

a smile conquers all and defies all troubles.

Schiude alla perla il guscio,
apre all'uomo l'uscio del Paradiso.
Profumo degli Dei, fontana della vita.
Disse il savio Ocunama:
dei crucci la trama smaglia il sorriso.

A smile opens the shell to reveal a pearl,
or opens the portals of Paradise.
It is the perfume of the Gods, and the
fountain of life. Thus spake the sage Ocunama:
a smile conquers all and defies all troubles.

Goro notices that Pinkerton seems bored so he dismisses the three servants.

Pinkerton:

A chiacchiere costei mi par cosmopolita.

Che guardi?

Pinkerton:

They babble just like women.

(Goro looks toward Nagasaki)

What are you looking at?

Goro:

Se non giunge ancor la sposa.

Goro:

To see if the bride is arriving.

Pinkerton:

Tutto è pronto?

Pinkerton:

Is everything ready?

Goro:

Ogni cosa.

Goro: *(bowing accommodatingly)*

Every detail.

Pinkerton:

Gran perla di sensale!

Goro:

Qui verranno: l'Ufficiale del Registro, i parenti, il vostro Console, la fidanzata. Qui si firma l'atto e il matrimonio è fatto.

Pinkerton:

E son molti i parenti?

Goro:

La suocera, la nonna, lo zio Bonzo (che non ci degnerà di sua presenza) e cugini, e le cugine. Mettiam fra gli ascendenti ed i collaterali, un due dozzine. Quanto alla discendenza provvederanno assai Vostra Grazia e la bella Butterfly.

Pinkerton:

Gran perla di sensale!

Sharpless:

E suda e arrampica, sbuffa, inciampica!

Goro:

Il Consol sale.

Sharpless:

Ah! Quei ciottoli mi hanno sfacciato!

Pinkerton:

Bene arrivato!

Goro:

Bene arrivato!

Sharpless:

Ouff!

Pinkerton:

Presto Goro qualche ristoro.

Sharpless:

Alto!

Pinkerton:

You're a superb broker!

Goro:

The Official Registrar will come here, the relatives, your country's Consul, your future wife. Here you'll sign the contract and then the marriage is complete.

Pinkerton:

Are there many relatives?

Goro:

Her mother, the grandmother, and the uncle Bonze (he'll not honor us with his presence) and male and female cousins. Let's say, between ancestors and other blood relations, around two dozen. As for descendants, Your Honor and the lovely Butterfly will provide those.

Pinkerton:

You're a superb broker!

Sharpless: (*from the distance*)

Climbing, sweating, puffing and stumbling!

Goro:

Here comes the Consul.

Sharpless:

Ah! Those pebbled paths have exhausted me!

Pinkerton:

Welcome!

Goro:

Welcome!

Sharpless:

Ough!

Pinkerton:

Quickly Goro, some refreshments.

Sharpless: (*panting as he looks around*)

Quite a view!

Pinkerton:

Ma bello!

Pinkerton: (*pointing to the view*)

But beautiful!

Sharpless:

Nagasaki, il mare, il porto.

Sharpless:

Nagasaki, the sea, the harbor.

Pinkerton:

E una casetta che obbedisce a bacchetta.

Pinkerton:

It is a house that obeys a magic wand.

Goro returns from the house with two servants who bring glasses and bottles, which they place on a table.

Sharpless:

Vostra?

Sharpless: (*referring to the house*)

Yours?

Pinkerton:

La comperai per novecento novantanove anni, con facoltà, ogni mese, di rescindere i patti.

Sono in questo paese elastici del par, casa e contratti.

Pinkerton:

I bought this house for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, but with the right to cancel the contract every month.

In this country the houses and the contracts are elastic!

Sharpless:

E l'uomo esperto ne profitta.

Sharpless:

An expert can profit from it.

Pinkerton:

Certo.

Pinkerton:

Certainly.

Allegro sostenuto

PINKERTON



Pinkerton:

Dovunque al mondo lo Yankee vagabondo si gode e traffica sprezzando i rischi.

Affonda l'ancora alla ventura.

Pinkerton:

All over the world, for business or for pleasure, the Yankee scorns danger. He drops anchor for random adventure.

Milk-Punch, o Whisky?

Affonda l'ancora alla ventura finchè una raffica scompigli nave e ormeggi, alberatura.

La vita ei non appaga se non fa suo tesoro i fiori d'ogni plaga.

(Pinkerton interrupts himself)

Milk-Punch, or Whisky?

He drops anchor for adventure until a squall upsets his ship, rigging and mooring. And life is not worth living until he makes the flowers of every region his treasures.

Sharpless:

È un facile vangelo.

Pinkerton:

...d'ogni bella gli amor.

Sharpless:

È un facile vangelo che fa la vita vaga
ma che intristisce il cor.

Pinkerton:

Vinto si tuffa, la sorte racchiuffa.
Il suo talento fa in ogni dove.
Così mi sposo all'uso giapponese
per novecento novantanove anni.
Salvo a prosciogliermi ogni mese.

Sharpless:

È un facile vangelo.

Pinkerton:

"America forever!"

Sharpless:

"America forever!"

Sharpless:

Ed è bella la sposa?

Goro:

Una ghirlanda di fiori freschi,
una stella dai raggi d'oro.
E per nulla: sol cento yen.

Se Vostra Grazia mi comanda ce n'ho un
assortimento.

Pinkerton:

Va, conducila, Goro.

Sharpless:

Quale smania vi prende!
Sareste addirittura cotto?

Sharpless:

That's an easygoing gospel.

Pinkerton:

...and the love of every beautiful woman.

Sharpless:

A very easy gospel that makes life pleasant,
but brings sadness to another's heart.

Pinkerton:

He is undaunted, and fate cannot crush
him. His talent succeeds everywhere.
And so I'm marrying the Japanese way:
for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, and
free to annul the marriage every month.

Sharpless:

That's an easy going gospel.

Pinkerton (*toasts with Sharpless*)

"America forever!"

Sharpless:

"America forever!"

Sharpless:

Is the bride very pretty?

Goro: (*interrupting*)

Fair as a garland of fresh flowers,
and brighter than a star with rays of gold.
And for nothing: only one hundred yen.

(*to the Consul*)

If Your Grace commands me, I have a fine
selection of girls.

(*The Consul laughingly declines.*)

Pinkerton: (*impatiently*)

Goro, go and fetch her.

Sharpless:

What frenzy has seized you!
Can you really be infatuated?

Pinkerton:

Non so!
Dipende dal grado di cottura!
Amore o grillo, dir non saprei.
Certo costei m'ha coll'ingenue arti
invescato.
Lieve qual tenue vetro soffiato alla statura,
al portamento sembra figura da paravento.
Ma dal suo lucido fondo di lacca come con
subito moto si stacca,
qual farfalla svolazza e posa con tal
grazietta silenziosa
che di rincorrerla furor m'assale
se pure infrangerne dovessi l'ale.

Sharpless:

Ier l'altro, il Consolato sen venne a visitar:
io non la vidi ma l'udii parlar.
Di sua voce il mistero l'anima mi colpì.
Certo quando è sincer l'amor parla così.
Sarebbe gran peccato le lievi ali strappar
e desolar forse un credulo cuor.

Pinkerton:

Console mio garbato, quetatevi!
Si sa la vostra età è di flebile umor.
Non c'è gran male s'io vo' quell'ale
drizzare ai dolci voli dell'amor!

Sharpless:

Sarebbe gran peccato.
Quella divina mite vocina non dovrebbe dar
note di dolor!

Pinkerton:

Whisky?

Sharpless:

Un'altro bicchiere.

Sharpless:

Bevo alla vostra famiglia lontana.

Pinkerton:

E al giorno in cui mi sposerò con vere
nozze a una vera sposa americana.

Pinkerton:

I don't know!
It depends on the degree of infatuation!
I cannot tell you if it is love or a whim.
All I know is that her naive charm has
ensnared me.
She's fragile and slender, dainty in stature,
and like a figure from a painted screen.
But she can suddenly detach herself from
her shining lacquer,
like a butterfly fluttering and resting with
such silent gracefulness
that I'm assailed by a furor to pursue her
even if I should break her wings.

Sharpless:

The other day, she came to the Consulate!
I did not see her, but I heard her speak.
Her mysterious voice struck my very soul.
Surely, sincere love speaks so sincerely,
it would be a great pity to break those
wings and torture a trusting heart.

Pinkerton:

Dear Consul, calm yourself!
We know men of your age worry too much.
It is no great harm if I guide those wings to
tender flights of love!

Sharpless:

It would be a great shame.
That divine and mild little voice should not
have to sing about grief!

Pinkerton:

Whiskey?

Sharpless:

Yes, another glass.

Sharpless: (toasting)

I drink to your family far away.

Pinkerton:

And to the day of my real marriage to a
real American wife.

Goro:

Ecco! Son giunte al sommo del pendio.
Già del femmineo sciamè qual di vento in
fogliame s'ode il brusio.

Le Amiche di Butterfly:

Ah! Quanto cielo! Quanto mar!

Butterfly:

Ancora un passo or via.

Le Amiche:

Come sei tarda!

Butterfly:

Aspetta.

Le Amiche:

Ecco la vetta.
Guarda, guarda quanti fior!

Goro: (*reappearing and breathless*)

There! They've arrived at the top of the hill!
You already hear the women bustling like
rustling branches in the wind.

Butterfly's Friends: (*from the distance*)

Ah! So much sky! So much sea!

Butterfly:

Yet another step to climb.

Girl Friends:

How slow you are!

Butterfly:

One moment.

Girl Friends:

Here is the peak.
Look, look, so many flowers!

Largo**BUTTERFLY****Butterfly:**

Spira sul mare e sulla terra un primaveril
soffio giocondo.

Sharpless:

O allegro cinguettar di gioventù!

Butterfly:

Io sono la fanciulla più lieta del Giappone,
anzi del mondo.
Amiche, io son venuta al richiamo d'amor.
D'amor venni alle soglie ove s'accoglie
il bene di chi vive e di chi muor.

Le Amiche:

Quanti fior! Quanto mar!
Gioia a te, gioia a te sia dolce amica!

Butterfly:

A balmy spring-like breeze blows across the
sea and over the land.

Sharpless:

Oh the happy chattering of youth!

Butterfly:

I am the happiest girl in Japan, and in all
the world!
Friends, I have arrived to answer the call
of love. I come to love's threshold, where
the good of those who live and those who
die is gathered.

Girl Friends:

So many flowers! So much sea!
Joy to you, joy to our sweet friend!

Ma pria di varcar la soglia che t'attira
volgiti e mira quanto cielo, quanti fiori,
quanto mar!

Guarda le cose che ti son sì care!

Butterfly:

Siam giunte.

F. B. Pinkerton. Giù!

Le Amiche:

Giù!

Butterfly:

Gran ventura.

Le Amiche:

Riverenza.

Pinkerton:

È un po' dura la scalata?

Butterfly:

A una sposa costumata più penosa è
l'impazienza.

Pinkerton:

Molto raro complimento!

Butterfly:

Dei più belli ancor ne so.

Pinkerton:

Dei gioielli!

Butterfly:

Se vi è caro sul momento...

Pinkerton:

Grazie, no.

Sharpless:

Miss Butterfly.

Bel nome, vi sta a meraviglia.

Siete di Nagasaki?

Butterfly:

Signor sì. Di famiglia assai prospera un
tempo.

But before crossing the threshold,
turn and look at the full sky, so many
flowers, and so much sea!

Look at nature, which you hold so dear!

Butterfly:

We've arrived.

B. F. Pinkerton. Down!

Girl Friends: (*all kneel*)

Down!

Butterfly:

Great fortune.

Girl Friends:

Our respect.

Pinkerton: (*smiling*)

Was the climb difficult?

Butterfly:

To a well-bred bride, impatience is more
painful.

Pinkerton:

What a rare compliment!

Butterfly:

I know better ones than that.

Pinkerton:

Gems, no doubt!

Butterfly:

If you care for some right now...

Pinkerton:

No, thank you.

Sharpless:

Miss Butterfly.

Your name suits you so marvelously.

Are you from Nagasaki?

Butterfly:

Sir, I am. My family was once prosperous.

Verità?

Le Amiche:

Verità!

Butterfly:

Nessuno si confessa mai nato in povertà,
non c'è vagabondo che a sentirlo non sia
di gran prosapia.

Eppur conobbi la ricchezza.

Ma il turbine rovescia le quercie più
robuste, e abbiám fatto la gheschia per
sostentarci.

Vero?

Le Amiche:

Vero!

Butterfly:

Non lo nascondo, nè m'adonto.

Ridete? Perchè?

Cose del mondo.

Pinkerton:

(Con quel fare di bambola quando parla
m'infiamma.)

Sharpless:

E ci avete sorelle?

Butterfly:

Non signore. Ho la mamma.

Goro:

Una nobile dama.

Butterfly:

Ma senza farle torto povera molto
anch'essa.

Sharpless:

E vostro padre?

Butterfly:

Morto.

(turning to her friends)

Isn't that true?

Girl Friends:

It is true!

Butterfly:

No one admits to be born in poverty;
there isn't a vagrant who doesn't say he's
of ancient lineage.

And yet I have indeed known riches.

But the hurricane uprooted the sturdiest
oaks, and we had to become geishas to
support ourselves. *(to her friends)*

True?

Girl Friends:

True!

Butterfly:

I don't hide it, and I'm not ashamed of it.

(Butterfly notices Sharpless smiling.)

You're laughing? Why?

That's the way of the world.

Pinkerton: *(aside to Sharpless)*

*(When she speaks, she sets my heart
afloat with her doll-like manner.)*

Sharpless: *(continues his questioning)*

Do you have any sisters?

Butterfly:

None, Sir. I have my mother.

Goro:

A most noble lady.

Butterfly:

But it is not her fault that she is also so
dreadfully poor.

Sharpless:

And your father?

Butterfly *(tersely)*

Dead.

*The girl friends lower their heads. Goro seems embarrassed.
The girls fan themselves nervously.*

Sharpless:
Quant'anni avete?

Sharpless:
How old are you?

Butterfly:
Indovinate.

Butterfly: (*childishly*)
Now try to guess!

Sharpless:
Dieci.

Sharpless:
Ten years.

Butterfly:
Crescete.

Butterfly
Guess higher.

Sharpless:
Venti.

Sharpless:
Twenty.

Butterfly:
Calate.
Quindici netti, netti; sono vecchia diggià!

Butterfly:
Guess lower.
Fifteen, exactly, fifteen! I'm already old!

Sharpless:
Quindici anni!

Sharpless:
Fifteen years old!

Pinkerton:
Quindici anni!

Pinkerton:
Fifteen years old!

Sharpless:
L'età dei giuochi.

Sharpless:
The age of playthings.

Pinkerton:
E dei confetti.

Pinkerton:
And of sweets!

Goro:
L'Imperial Commissario, l'Ufficiale
del Registro, i congiunti.

Goro: (*Goro announces new arrivals*)
The Imperial Commissioner, the Official
Registrar, the relatives.

Pinkerton:
Fate presto.

Pinkerton: (*to Goro*)
Hurry up now.

*As Goro runs into the house, Butterfly's relatives begin to arrive
and observe the Americans with curiosity.
Pinkerton takes Sharpless aside and laughingly observes the bizarre group of relatives.*

Pinkerton:

Che burlletta la sfilata della nova parentela,
tolta in prestito, a mesata!

Parenti ed Amiche:

Dov'è?

Butterfly, Parenti ed Amiche:

Eccolo là!

Una Cugina, Parenti ed Amici

Bello non è.

Butterfly:

Bello è così che non si può sognar di più.

Parenti ed Amiche:

Mi pare un re! Vale un Perù!

Parenti:

In verità, bello non è.

Pinkerton:

Certo dietro a quella vela di ventaglio
pavonazzo la mia suocera si cela.

La Cugina

Goro l'offrì pur anco a me, ma s'ebbe un "no"!

Butterfly:

Sì, giusto tu!

Pinkerton:

E quel coso da strapazzo è lo zio briaco e
pazzo.

Parenti ed Amiche:

Ecco, perchè prescelta fu, vuol far con te la
sopraffiù.
La sua beltà già disfiò.
Divorzierà.

Cugina, Parenti ed Amiche:

Spero di sì.
La sua beltà già disfiò.

Pinkerton:

This procession of my new relatives is a
farce: terms of my monthly contract!

Relatives and friends: (to Butterfly)

Where is he?

Butterfly, Relatives, and friends:

There he is!

A Cousin, Relatives, and friends:

He's not handsome.

Butterfly: (offended)

He's more handsome than you could ever
dream.

Relatives and Friends:

He seems a king! He's worth a fortune!

Relatives:

In truth, he isn't handsome.

Pinkerton: (observing the women)

I'm certain that behind that gigantic fan of
peacock feathers my mother-in-law is hiding.

Cousin: (to Butterfly)

Goro offered him to me first, but I said "no"!

Butterfly: (indignantly to her cousin)

Yes, you, of all people!

Pinkerton: (pointing to Uncle Yakuside)

And that outlandish looking fool is the mad
drunken uncle.

Relatives and friends:

You will agree that if that is true, that's
why she looks down on you.
Her beauty is fading.
He'll divorce her.

Cousin, Relatives, and friends:

I hope so.
Her beauty is fading.

Goro:

Per carità tacete un po'.

Lo Zio Yakuside:

Vino ce n'è?

La Madre, la Zia:

Guardiamo un po'.

Parenti ed Amiche:

Ne vidi già color di thè, color di thè e
chemisi!

Sharpless:

O amico fortunato!

O fortunato Pinkerton che in sorte v'è
toccato un fior pur or sbocciato!

Non più bella e d'assai fanciulla io vidi mai
di questa Butterfly.

Pinkerton:

Sì, è vero, è un fiore, un fiore!

L'esotico suo odore m'ha il cervello
sconvolto, e in fede mia l'ho colto!

Una Cugina, Amiche:

Ei l'offri pur anco a me!

Ma risposi non lo vo'!

Senza tanto ricercar io ne trovo dei miglio
e gli dirò un bel no, di no!

Parenti, La Madre:

Egli è bel, mi pare un re!

No, mia cara, non mi par.

È davvero un gran signor.

Non avrei risposto no!

Non direi mai no!

Parenti:

E divorzierà!

Butterfly:

Badate, attenti a me!

Sharpless:

E se a voi sembran scede il patto e la sua
fede badate! Ella ci crede.

Goro: *(annoyed at the idle chatter)*

For goodness sake be quiet!

Uncle Yakuside:

Is there any wine?

The Mother, the Aunt:

Let's look around.

Relatives and friends:

I've just seen some, some the color of tea,
others red!

Sharpless: *(aside to Pinkerton)*

Oh fortunate friend!

Oh fortunate Pinkerton who luckily has
been given a flower that has just blossomed!

I've never seen a girl more beautiful than
this Butterfly.

Pinkerton:

Yes, it's true, she's a flower!

Her exotic scent has confused my brain,
and by my faith, I've cultivated her!

A Cousin, Friends:

He was also offered to me!

But I answered, "I don't want him!"

Without too much effort, I can easily find
better ones!

Relatives, Mother:

He's handsome, and seems like a king!

No, my dear, he seems wonderful.

He's truly a great gentleman.

I wouldn't have answered no!

I wouldn't have said no!

Relatives:

She'll be divorced!

Butterfly: *(to her people)*

Mind you, pay attention to me!

Sharpless:

If the marriage and her faith seem like a joke
to you, bear in mind, but she believes in it.

Butterfly:

Mamma, vien qua.

Badate a me: attenti, orsù, uno, due, tre e tutti giù.

Butterfly: *(to her mother)*

Mother, come here,

(to the others)

Listen to me: all of you look, one, two, three, all of you down!

All kneel before Pinkerton and Sharpless.

Pinkerton takes Butterfly's hand and leads her towards the house.

Pinkerton:

Vieni, amor mio!

Vi piace la casetta?

Pinkerton:

Come, my love!

Do you like the little house?

Butterfly:

Signor B. F. Pinkerton, perdono.

Io vorrei pochi oggetti da donna.

Butterfly:

Mister B. F. Pinkerton, forgive me.

I should like a few woman's possessions.

Pinkerton:

Dove sono?

Pinkerton:

Where are they?

Butterfly:

Sono qui. Vi dispiace?

Butterfly: *(indicating her sleeves)*

They are here. Are you angry?

Pinkerton:

O perchè mai, mia bella Butterfly?

Pinkerton: *(astonished)*

Why, my lovely Butterfly?

Butterfly:

Fazzoletti. La pipa. Una cintura.

Un piccolo fermaglio.

Uno specchio. Un ventaglio.

Butterfly : *(emptying her sleeve)*

Handkerchiefs. A pipe. A sash.

A little brooch.

A mirror. A fan.

Pinkerton:

Quel barattolo?

Pinkerton:

And that jar?

Butterfly:

Un vaso di tintura.

Butterfly:

A pot of rouge.

Pinkerton:

Ohibò!

Pinkerton:

Aha!

Butterfly:

Vi spiace?

Butterfly:

You don't like it?

(she throws the jar away)

Away with it!!

Via!

Butterfly takes out a long and narrow case.

Pinkerton:

E quello?

Pinkerton:

And that?

Butterfly:

Cosa sacra e mia.

Butterfly: (*very gravely*)

That is sacred to me.

Pinkerton:

E non si può vedere?

Pinkerton: (*curiously*)

And can I see it?

Butterfly:

C'è troppa gente.

Perdonate.

Butterfly:

There are too many people here.

Forgive me.

Goro:È un presente del Mikado a suo padre,
coll'invito.**Goro:** (*whispering to Pinkerton*)It was a present from the Mikado to her
father, with an invitation.(*Goro imitates the act of suicide*)**Pinkerton:**

E suo padre?

Pinkerton: (*whispering*)

And her father?

Goro:

Ha obbedito.

Goro:

He was obedient.

Butterfly:

Gli Ottokè.

Butterfly:

The Ottokè.

Pinkerton:

Quei pupazzi? Avete detto?

Pinkerton:

These puppets? Do you mean it?

Butterfly:

Son l'anime degli avi.

Butterfly:

They are the souls of my ancestors.

Pinkerton:

Ah! Il mio rispetto.

Pinkerton:

Ah! My respects.

Butterfly:Ieri son salita tutta sola in segreto alla
Missione.Colla nuova mia vita posso adottare nuova
religione.

Lo zio Bonzo nol sa, nè i miei lo sanno.

Butterfly (*confidentially to Pinkerton*)Yesterday I went to the Mission, alone and
in secret.I went there to adopt a new religion for my
new life.

My uncle Bonzo or the others don't know it.

Andante**BUTTERFLY**

Io se - guo il mio de - sti - no e pie - na d'u - mil - tà,

Io seguo il mio destino e piena d'umiltà
al Dio del signor Pinkerton m'inchino.
È mio destino.
Nella stessa chiesetta in ginocchio con voi
pregherò lo stesso Dio.
E per farvi contento potrò forse obliar la
gente mia!

Amore mio!

Goro:

Tutti zitti!

I follow my destiny with full humility and
bow to Mr. Pinkerton's God.
It is my destiny.
I will kneel in the same church as you and
pray to the same God.
And to make you happy, I will forsake my
ancestral religion!
(*Butterfly throws away the images*)
My love!

Goro: (*calling to begin the ceremony*)

Silence, silence!

Pinkerton and Butterfly stand together before the Commissioner.

Commissario:

È concesso al nominato
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton,
luogotenente nella cannoniera *Lincoln*,
marina degli Stati Uniti America del Nord:
ed alla damigella Butterfly
del quartiere d'Omara Nagasaki,
d'unirsi in matrimonio,
per dritto il primo della propria volontà,
ed ella per consenso dei parenti
qui testimoni all'atto.

The Commissioner:

It is granted to the named
Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton,
Lieutenant serving on the gunboat *Lincoln*,
ship of the United States of North America:
and to the young woman Butterfly
from the Omara-Nagasaki quarter,
to be united in matrimony,
the former of his free accord and will,
and the latter with the consent of her
relatives. All here witness their marriage.

The Commissioner gives the contract to Pinkerton and Butterfly for their signatures.

Goro:

Lo sposo.

Goro: (*ceremoniously*)

The bridegroom. (*Pinkerton signs*)

Poi la sposa.

E tutto è fatto.

Now the bride. (*Butterfly signs*)

And all is done.

Butterfly's girlfriends approach her, congratulating her by repeatedly bowing.

Le Amiche:

Madama Butterfly!

Girl Friends:

Madam Butterfly!

Butterfly:

Madama B. F. Pinkerton.

Butterfly: (*correcting them*)

Madama B. F. Pinkerton.

Commissario:

Auguri molti.

The Commissioner: (*to Pinkerton*)

Congratulations.

Pinkerton:

I miei ringraziamenti.

Pinkerton:

My thanks.

Commissario:

Il signor Console scende?

The Commissioner: *(to Sharpless)*

Mr. Consul, are you leaving?

Sharpless:

L'accompagno.

Ci vedrem domani.

Sharpless:

I'll go with you.

(to Pinkerton) We'll see each other tomorrow?

Pinkerton:

A meraviglia.

Pinkerton:

Wonderful.

Ufficiale:

Posterità!

The Registrar: *(to Pinkerton)*

I wish you many descendants for posterity!

Pinkerton:

Mi proverò.

Pinkerton:

I'll do my best.

Sharpless:

Giudizio!

Sharpless: *(returning)*

Be judicious!

Pinkerton:

(Ed eccoci in famiglia.

Sbrighiamoci al più presto e in modo onesto.)

Ip! Ip!

Pinkerton: *(to himself)*

(And here we are, a family.

Now to get rid of them quickly and in a decent way.)

Hip! Hip!

Coro:

O Kami! O Kami!

Chorus: *(toasting to Japanese gods)*

O Kami! O Kami!

Pinkerton:

Beviamo ai novissimi legami.

Pinkerton:

Let's drink to new bonds.

The toasts are interrupted by shouting from the distance. The Bonze, Butterfly's uncle-priest, appears. He is raging and extends his hand menacingly towards Butterfly.

Bonzo:

Cio-cio-san! Abbominazione!

The Bonze:

Cio-cio-san! Abomination!

Butterfly, Coro:

Lo zio Bonzo!

Butterfly, Chorus: *(intimidated)*

It's uncle Bonze!

Goro:

Un corno al guastafeste!

Chi ci leva d'intorno le persone moleste?

Goro: *(annoyed)*

A plague on this intruder!

Who brought him here to make trouble?

Bonzo:

Cio-cio-san!

Che hai tu fatto alla Missione?

The Bonze: *(raging)*

Cio-cio-san!

What were you doing at the Mission?

Coro:

Rispondi, Cio-cio-san!

Pinkerton:

Che mi strilla quel matto?

Bonzo:

Rispondi, che hai tu fatto?
Come, hai tu gli occhi asciutti?
Son dunque questi i frutti?
Ci ha rinnegato tutti!

Coro:

Hou! Cio-cio-san!

Bonzo:

Rinnegato vi dico il culto antico.

Chorus:

Answer him, Cio-cio-san!

Pinkerton: *(annoyed)*

What's that lunatic yelling about?

The Bonze:

Answer him, what were you doing?
What, are your eyes dry?
Are these the fruits of my teaching?
She has renounced us all!

Chorus: *(scandalized)*

Hou! Cio-cio-san!

The Bonze:

She has renounced our ancient religion.

The Bonze continues to berate Butterfly, who covers her face with her hands. Butterfly's mother attempts to defend her, but she is violently pushed away by the Bonze. The Bonze invokes "Kami Sarundasico," the Japanese god of lost souls.

Kami Sarundasico!

All'anima tua guasta qual supplizio sovrasta!

Kami Sarundasico!

Punishment threatens your ruined soul!

Pinkerton:

Ehi, dico: basta, basta!

Pinkerton: *(annoyed)*

Hey, enough of this already!

Bonzo:

Venite tutti. Andiamo!

Ci hai rinnegato e noi...

The Bonze:

All come with me. Let's go!
(to Butterfly)
You have renounced us all and we...

Coro:

Ti rinneghiamo!

Chorus:

We renounce you!

Pinkerton:

Sbarazzate all'istante. In casa mia niente baccano e niente bonzeria!

Pinkerton: *(ordering all to depart)*

Leave this place immediately. I'll have no racket and Bonze nonsense in my house!

Coro:

Hou! Cio-cio-san! Kami Sarundasico!
Ti rinneghiamo!

Chorus:

Hou! Cio-cio-san! Kami Sarundasico!
We renounce you!

Evening begins to fall. Butterfly weeps childishly. Pinkerton gently removes her hands from her face.

Pinkerton:

Bimba, bimba, non piangere per gracchiar
di ranocchi.

Butterfly:

Urlano ancor!

Pinkerton:

Tutta la tua tribù e i Bonzi tutti del Giappone
non valgono il pianto di quegli occhi cari e
belli.

Butterfly:

Davver?
Non piango più.
E quasi del ripudio non mi duole per le
vostre parole che mi suonan così dolci nel
cor.

Pinkerton:

Little child, don't cry, for they rant and rave
like croaking frogs.

Butterfly: (*covering her ears*)

They're still shouting!

Pinkerton (*consoling her*)

All your tribes and all the Bonzes in
Japan are not worth a tear from those dear
and beautiful eyes of yours.

Butterfly: (*smiling childishly*)

Really?
Then I won't cry anymore.
And I'm hardly grieved at their repudia-
tion, because your sweet comforting words
sound so sweet in my heart.

Butterfly bends to kiss Pinkerton's hand.

Pinkerton:

Che fai? La man?

Pinkerton: (*gently stopping her*)

What are you doing? My hand?

Butterfly:

M'han detto che laggiù fra la gente
costumata è questo il segno del maggior
rispetto.

Butterfly:

They've told me that abroad among the
more cultured people that this is a sign of
the utmost respect.

Suzuki:

E Izaghi ed Izanami,
Sarundasico, e Kami.

Suzuki: (*murmuring inside the house*)

And Izaghi and Izanami,
Sarundasico, and Kami.

Pinkerton:

Chi brontola lassù?

Pinkerton:

Who's grumbling in there?

Butterfly:

È Suzuki che fa la sua preghiera seral.

Butterfly:

It's Suzuki saying her evening prayer.

Andantino calmo
PINKERTON



Pinkerton:

Viene la sera.

Butterfly:

E l'ombra e la quiete.

Pinkerton:

E sei qui sola.

Butterfly:

Sola e rinnegata!

Rinnegata, e felice!

Pinkerton:

A voi, chiudete!

Butterfly:

Sì, sì, noi tutti soli e fuori il mondo.

Pinkerton:

E il Bonzo furibondo!

Butterfly:

Suzuki, le mie vesti.

Suzuki:

Buona notte.

Pinkerton:

Evening is coming.

Butterfly:

With shadows and the tranquility.

Pinkerton:

And you're here alone.

Butterfly:

Alone and renounced!

Renounced, and happy!

Pinkerton: (*calling for Suzuki*)

You, close everything!

Butterfly:

Yes, we're all alone and away from the world.

Pinkerton: (*laughing*)

And away from your furious Uncle Bonze!

Butterfly: (*calling to Suzuki*)

Suzuki, bring my garments.

Suzuki: (*bowing to Pinkerton*)

Goodnight, Sir.

Assisted by Suzuki, Butterfly changes into a pure white wedding obi.

Butterfly:Quest'obi pomposa di scioglier mi tarda,
si vesta la sposa di puro candor.

Tra motti sommessi sorride e mi guarda.

Celarmi potessi! Ne ho tanto rossor!

E ancor l'irata voce mi maledice.

Butterfly rinnegata, rinnegata, e felice.

Pinkerton:Con moti di scojattolo i nodi allenta e
scioglie!

Pensar che quel giocattolo è mia moglie!.

Ma tal grazia dispiega, ch'io mi struggo
per la febbre d'un subito desio.**Butterfly:**This ponderous obi is delaying me;
a bride must be robed in white garments.

He smiles and looks at me caressingly.

I can't hide it! I'm blushing!

I still hear the angry cursing.

Butterfly renounced, renounced, and happy.

Pinkerton:Her movements of tying and loosening
are just like a little squirrel!

To think that this plaything is my wife!

But her charm is so alluring that I struggle
with my feverish, sudden desire.

Bimba dagl'occhi pieni di malìa,
ora sei tutta mia.
Sei tutta vestita di giglio.
Mi piace la treccia tua bruna fra candidi
veli.

Butterfly:

Somiglio la Dea della luna,
la piccola Dea della luna
che scende la notte dal ponte del ciel.

Pinkerton:

E affascina i cuori.

Butterfly:

E li prende e li avvolge in un bianco
mantel.
E via se li reca negli alti reami.

Pinkerton:

Ma intanto finor non m'hai detto,
ancor non m'hai detto che m'ami.
Le sa quella Dea le parole
che appagan gli ardenti desir?

Butterfly:

Le sa. Forse dirle non vuole per tema
d'averne a morir per tema d'averne a
morir!

Pinkerton:

Stolta paura, l'amor non uccide ma dà vita
e sorride per gioie celestiali
come ora fa nei tuoi lunghi occhi ovali.

Butterfly:

Adesso voi siete per me l'occhio del
firmamento.
E mi piaceste dal primo momento che vi ho
veduto.

Siete alto, forte.
Ridete con modi si palesi!
E dite cose che mai non intesi.
Or son contenta.

Little child with eyes full of magic, now
you are all mine.
You're fully clad in lily white.
I love your brown hair flowing on your
snowy garment.

Butterfly:

I am like the Moon Goddess,
the little Moon Goddess who descends at
night from her bridge in heaven.

Pinkerton:

And fascinates hearts.

Butterfly

And then she takes them, and she wraps
them in a mantle of white.
And away, taking them to lofty realms.

Pinkerton:

But meanwhile you haven't told me that
you love me.
Does the Goddess know the words that
satisfy impassioned desires?

Butterfly:

She knows them. But perhaps she doesn't
want to say them for fear that she may die
as she utters them!

Pinkerton:

Foolish fear, for love does not bring
death, but life and the smiles of heavenly
joy, just as it now shines in your eyes.

Butterfly:

Now, you are the eyes of the heavens to
me.
And I felt it the very first moment that I
saw you.

You are tall and strong.
Your laugh is generous and hearty!
And you say things that I never heard.
I am so happy.

Butterfly:

Vogliatemi bene, un bene piccolino,
un bene da bambino quale a me si conviene.

Noi siamo gente avvezza alle piccole cose
umili e silenziose, ad una tenerezza
sfiorante e pur profonda come il ciel, come
l'onda del mare.

Pinkerton:

Dammi ch'io baci le tue mani care.
Mia Butterfly, come t'han ben nomata,
tenue farfalla.

Butterfly:

Dicon ch'oltre mare se cade in man
dell'uom,
ogni farfalla da uno spillo è trafitta ed in
tavola infitta!

Pinkerton:

Un po' di vero c'è.
E tu lo sai perchè?
Perchè non fugga più.
Io t'ho ghermita, ti serro palpitante.
Sei mia.

Butterfly:

Sì, per la vita!

Pinkerton:

Vieni, via dall'anima in pena l'angoscia
paurosa.

Butterfly: (*pleadingly*)

Love me gently, gently like a little one,
like a child.

We are people accustomed to little things:
we are humble and quiet like a tender
flower, but as profound as the sky, or the
waves of the sea.

Pinkerton:

Give me your dear hands that I may kiss them.
My Butterfly, how aptly your name was
chosen.

Butterfly: (*fearfully*)

They say across the seas that if a butterfly
falls into a man's hand,
he'll pierce its heart with a needle, and then
mount it to a board!

Pinkerton:

There's some truth in that.
And do you know why?
That you may not escape anymore.
I have caught you. I hold you as you tremble.
You are mine.

Butterfly: (*with complete abandon*)

Yes, for life!

Pinkerton:

Come, rid your suffering soul of its fearful
anguish.

Andante mosso appassionato**BUTTERFLY and PINKERTON**

È not - te se - re - na! Guarda: dorme ogni co - sa!

È notte serena!
Guarda: dorme ogni cosa!

It is a calm night!
Look: everything sleeps!

Butterfly:

Ah! Dolce notte!

Butterfly:

Ah! Sweet night!

Pinkerton:

Vieni, vieni.

Butterfly:

Quante stelle!

Non le vidi mai sì belle!

Trema, brilla ogni favilla.

Col baglior d'una pupilla.

Pinkerton:

È notte serena! Guarda: dorme ogni cosa!

Vien, sei mia!

Via l'angoscia dal tuo cor!

Ti serro palpitante.

Butterfly:

Oh! Quanti occhi fisi, attenti d'ogni parte a riguardare!

Pei firmamenti, via pei lidi, via pel mare.

Quanti sguardi ride il ciel!

Tutto estatico d'amor!

Pinkerton:

Come, come.

Butterfly:

So many stars!

I have never seen them so beautiful!

Every spark trembles and shines with the glow of an eye.

Pinkerton:

It's a calm night! Look: everything is asleep!

Come, you are mine!

Rid yourself of the anguish in your heart!

I tremble as I clasp you.

Butterfly:

Oh! So many stars in the heavens are gazing at us!

Through heavens, and shores along the

seas. So many stars in heaven are laughing!

All ecstatic with love!

END OF ACT I

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Act II

*Inside Butterfly's house. Suzuki is praying,
while Butterfly lies on the floor, her head resting in her hands.*

Suzuki:

E Izaghi ed Izanami,
Sarundasico e Kami.
Oh! La mia testa!
E tu Ten-Sjo-o-Daj, fate che Butterfly non
pianga più, mai più!

Butterfly:

Pigri ed obesi son gli Dei Giapponesi.
L'Americano Iddio son persuasa,
ben più presto risponde a chi l'implori.

Ma temo ch'egli ignori che noi stiam qui di
casa.

Suzuki, è lungi la miseria?

Suzuki:

Questo è l'ultimo fondo.

Butterfly:

Questo? Oh! Troppe spese!

Suzuki:

S'egli non torna e presto, siamo male in
arnese.

Butterfly:

Ma torna.

Suzuki:

Tornerà?

Butterfly:

Perchè dispone che il Console provveda
alla pignore, rispondi, su!
Perchè con tante cure la casa rifornì di
serrature s'ei non volessi ritornar mai più?

Suzuki:

Non lo so.

Suzuki: *(praying)*

And Izaghi and Izanami,
Sarundasico and Kami.
Oh my head is throbbing!
And you, Ten-Sjo-o-Daj, grant that
Butterfly shall weep no more!

Butterfly:

The Japanese gods are fat and lazy.
I'm convinced that the American God is
more persuasive and responds immedi-
ately to prayers.

But I fear that he doesn't know that we
live here.

Suzuki, when will our money run out?

Suzuki: *(showing Butterfly a few coins)*

This is all that we have left.

Butterfly:

These? Oh, too many expenses!

Suzuki:

Unless he returns soon, we're going to be
destitute.

Butterfly: *(decisively)*

But he'll return.

Suzuki *(negatively)*

He'll return?

Butterfly *(reasoning)*

Then why did he arrange for the Consul
to pay for our rent? Answer me!
If he didn't intend to return, then why did
he take such care to have the house
provided with safe locks?

Suzuki:

I don't know.

Butterfly:

Non lo sai? Io te lo dico.
Per tener ben fuori le zanzare,
i parenti ed i dolori, e dentro,
con gelosa custodia, la sua sposa,
la sua sposa che son io, Butterfly.

Suzuki:

Mai non s'è udito di straniero marito
che sia tornato al suo nido.

Butterfly:

Ah! Taci, o t'uccido!
Quell'ultima mattina: tornerete, signor?
Gli domandai.
Egli, col cuore grosso, per celarmi la pena
sorridendo rispose:
"O Butterfly piccina mogliettina,
tornerò colle rose alla stagion serena
quando fa la nidia il pettirosso."
Tornerà.

Suzuki:

Speriam.

Butterfly:

Dillo con me: Tornerà.

Suzuki:

Tornerà.

Butterfly:

Piangi? Perché?
Ah la fede ti manca! Senti.

Butterfly:

You don't know? I'll tell you.
It was to keep my relatives away, those
spiteful scavengers who might annoy me;
and to jealously protect his bride,
his bride who is me, Butterfly.

Suzuki: (unconvinced)

I never yet heard of a foreign husband
who returned to his nest.

Butterfly: (furiously seizing Suzuki)

Ah! Quiet, or I'll kill you!
That last morning, I asked him: "Sir, will
you come back to me?"
He answered, with a generous heart that
was concealing his suffering:
"Oh Butterfly my tiny little child-wife,
I'll return with the roses, during the
placid season when the robins are
nesting." He'll return.

Suzuki: (incredulous)

Let's hope so.

Butterfly: (insisting)

Say it with me: he'll return.

Suzuki (reluctantly and then in tears)

He'll return.

Butterfly: (surprised)

Are you crying? Why?
Ah you're lacking faith! Listen to me.

Andante molto calmo
BUTTERFLY



Un bel dì, vedremo levarsi un fil di fumo
sull'estremo confin del mare.
E poi la nave appare.

Poi la nave bianca entra nel porto,
romba il suo saluto.
Vedi? È venuto!

Io non gli scendo incontro. Io no.
Mi metto là sul ciglio del colle e aspetto
gran tempo e non mi pesa la lunga attesa.

E uscito dalla folla cittadina un uomo,
un picciol punto s'avvia per la collina.
Chi sarà? Chi sarà?

E come sarà giunto che dirà?
Chiamerà Butterfly dalla lontana.
Io senza dar risposta me ne starò nascosta
un po' per celia, e un po' per non morire
al primo incontro, ed egli alquanto in
pena chiamerà:
Piccina mogliettina, olezzo di verbena,
i nomi che mi dava al suo venire.

Tutto questo avverrà, te lo prometto.
Tienti la tua paura, io con sicura
fede l'aspetto.

One beautiful day, we will see a thread of
smoke in the far horizon, arising on the sea.
And then a ship appears.

Then the white ship enters the port,
thundering its greeting.
You see? He has come!

I don't go to meet him. Not I!
I stay there on the hill and I wait for a
long time, but it does not weary me.

And from out of the crowded city,
a man, a little speck, climbs the hill.
Who can it be? Who can it be?

And when he's arrived, what will he say?
He'll call from afar: "Butterfly."
I won't answer and I'll hide myself, a bit
to tease him and a bit so as not to die
from our first meeting, and he'll be quite
worried and call:
"Little wife of mine, perfume of verbena,"
the names he gave me when he was here.

All of this will happen, I promise you.
Banish your fears, for I await him with
firm faith.

As Butterfly and Suzuki embrace emotionally, Goro and Sharpless appear in the garden.

Goro:
C'è. Entrate.

Sharpless:
Chiedo scusa. Madama Butterfly.

Butterfly:
Madama Pinkerton. Prego.
Oh! Il mio signor Console!

Sharpless:
Mi ravvisate?

Butterfly:
Ben venuto in casa americana.

Goro: (to Sharpless)
She's there. Go in.

Sharpless:
I beg your pardon. Madam Butterfly.

Butterfly: (excitedly)
Madam Pinkerton, excuse me.
Oh! My dear Mr. Consul!

Sharpless: (surprised)
Do you recognize me?

Butterfly: (becoming hospitable)
Welcome to an American home.

Sharpless:

Grazie.

Butterfly:

Avi, antenati tutti bene?

Sharpless:

Ma spero.

Butterfly:

Fumate?

Sharpless:

Grazie.

Ho qui...

Butterfly:

Signore, io vedo il cielo azzurro.

Sharpless:

Grazie...

Ho...

Butterfly:

Preferite forse le sigarette Americane?

Sharpless:

Ma grazie.

Ho da mostrarvi...

Butterfly:

A voi.

Sharpless:

Mi scrisse Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton.

Butterfly:

Davvero! È in salute?

Sharpless:

Perfetta.

Butterfly:

Io son la donna più lieta del Giappone.

Potrei farvi una domanda?

Sharpless:

Thank you.

Butterfly: (*inviting Sharpless to sit*)

Your honorable ancestors are well?

Sharpless: (*smiling*)

I hope so.

Butterfly:

Do you smoke?

Sharpless (*accepts and produces a letter*)

Thank you.

I have here...

Butterfly: (*politely interrupting him*)

Sir. I see that the sky is quite blue.

Sharpless: (*taking a puff of a pipe*)

Thank you...

I have...

Butterfly:

Would you prefer American cigarettes?

Sharpless:

Well, thank you.

I have to show you...

Butterfly: (*offering him a match*)

A light?

Sharpless:

Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton wrote me.

Butterfly: (*eagerly*)

Really! Is he in good health?

Sharpless:

He's quite well.

Butterfly: (*rising happily*)

I am the happiest woman in Japan.

Could I ask you a question?

Sharpless:

Certo.

Butterfly:Quando fanno il lor nido in America i
pettirossi?**Sharpless:**

Come dite?

Butterfly:

Sì, prima o dopo di qui?

Sharpless:

Ma, perchè?

Butterfly:Mio marito m'ha promesso di ritornar
nella stagion beata che il pettirosso rifà la
nidiata.Qui l'ha rifatta per ben tre volte, ma può
darsi che di là usi nidiar men spesso.*Goro, who had been eavesdropping, is heard laughing from outside.*

Chi ride?

Oh, c'è il nakodo.

Un uom cattivo.

Goro:

Godo.

Butterfly:

Zitto!

Egli osò...

No, prima rispondete alla dimanda mia.

Sharpless:

Mi rincresce, ma ignoro.

Non ho studiato ornitologia

Butterfly:

Orni...?

Sharpless:

...tologia.

Sharpless:

Certainly.

Butterfly:At what time of the year do the robins
nest in America?**Sharpless:** *(amazed)*

What did you say?

Butterfly:

Yes, earlier or later than here?

Sharpless:

But why do you ask?

Butterfly:My husband promised to return in the joyous
season when robins rebuild their nests.Here they have built them three times
already, but I thought that over there it was
less often.

Who's laughing?

Oh, it's the marriage broker.

(whispering to Sharpless)

A wicked fellow.

Goro: *(coming forward and bowing)*

At your pleasure.

Butterfly: *(to Goro)*Quiet! *(to Sharpless)*

He dared...

No, first answer my question.

Sharpless: *(confused and embarrassed)*

I'm sorry, but I don't know.

I haven't studied ornithology.

Butterfly:

Orni...?

Sharpless:

...thology.

Butterfly

Non lo sapete insomma?

Sharpless:

No. Dicevamo...

Butterfly:

Ah, sì. Goro, appena B. F. Pinkerton fu in mare mi venne ad assediare con ciarle e con presenti per ridarmi ora questo or quel marito.

Or promette tesori per uno scimunito.

Goro:

Il ricco Yamadori.

Ella è povera in canna.

I suoi parenti l'han tutti rinnegata.

Butterfly:

Eccolo. Attenti.

Butterfly:

In short, you know nothing about it?

Sharpless:

No. We were saying...

Butterfly: (*interrupting Sharpless*)

Ah, yes, Goro, as soon as B. F. Pinkerton was at sea he assailed me with proposals and gifts, and urged me to consider a marriage with this or that husband.

Now he promises me treasures from a fool.

Goro: (*addressing Sharpless*)

The wealthy Yamadori.

She is in a wretched condition.

Her relatives have all renounced her.

Butterfly: (*noticing Yamadori arriving*)

Here he is. Look.

*Yamadori enters with great pomp, followed by his servants:
Goro and Suzuki run up to him eagerly and kneel before him.
Yamadori greets the Consul, and then bows graciously to Butterfly.*

Butterfly:

Yamadori ancor le pene dell'amor, non v'han deluso?

Vi tagliate ancor le vene se il mio bacio vi ricuso?

Yamadori:

Tra le cose più moleste è l'inutil sospirar.

Butterfly:

Tante mogli omai toglieste, vi doveste abitar.

Yamadori:

L'ho sposate tutte quante, e il divorzio mi francò.

Butterfly:

Obbligata.

Butterfly: (*to Yamadori*)

Yamadori, the pain of unrequited love still hasn't disappointed you?

Will you still end your life if I refuse to kiss you?

Yamadori: (*to Sharpless*)

Among the most troublesome things is to sigh unnecessarily.

Butterfly: (*sarcastically*)

You've had so many wives that you should have become accustomed to it.

Yamadori:

I've married all of them, and won freedom through divorce.

Butterfly:

Very flattering.

Yamadori:

A voi però giurerei fede costante.

Sharpless:

(Il messaggio, ho gran paura, a trasmetter non riesco.)

Goro:

Ville, servi, oro, ad Omara un palazzo principesco.

Butterfly:

Già legata è la mia fede.

Goro e Yamadori:

Maritata ancor si crede.

Butterfly:

Non mi credo: sono, sono.

Goro:

Ma la legge...

Butterfly:

Io non la so.

Goro:

Per la moglie l'abbandono al divorzio equiparò.

Butterfly:

La legge giapponese, non già del mio paese.

Goro:

Quale?

Butterfly:

Gli Stati Uniti.

Sharpless:

(Oh, l'infelice!)

Butterfly:

Si sa che aprir la porta e la moglie cacciar per la più corta qui divorziar si dice. Ma in America questo non si può. Vero?

Yamadori:

But to you of course I would swear my faith eternally.

Sharpless:

(I fear that I will not succeed in delivering this letter.)

Goro: (*pointing to Yamadori*)

He'll provide villas, servants, gold, and a princely palace in Omara.

Butterfly: (*very seriously*)

But I am already married.

Goro and Yamadori: (*to Sharpless*)

She still believes she is married.

Butterfly: (*abruptly*)

You don't believe me: I am, I am.

Goro:

But the law...

Butterfly:

I don't know that law.

Goro:

When a wife has been abandoned it is equivalent to divorce.

Butterfly: (*shaking negatively*)

Japanese law does not apply in my country.

Goro:

Which country?

Butterfly:

The United States.

Sharpless:

(Oh, such an unfortunate girl!)

Butterfly:

It's known that here, a man turns his wife out at whim, and it's automatically divorce. But in America that cannot be done. True?

Sharpless:

Vero. Però...

Butterfly:

Là un bravo giudice serio,

impetito dice al marito:

“Lei vuol andarsene, sentiam perchè?”

“Sono seccato del coniugato!”

E il magistrato:

“Ah, mascalzone, presto in prigione!”

Suzuki, il tè.

Yamadori:

Udiste?

Sharpless:

Mi rattrista una sì piena cecità.

Goro:

Segnalata è già la nave di Pinkerton.

Yamadori:

Quand’essa lo riveda...

Sharpless:

Egli non vuol mostrarsi.

Io venni appunto per levarla d’inganno.

Butterfly:

Vostra Grazia permette.

Che persone moleste!

Yamadori:

Addio. Vi lascio il cuor pien di cordoglio:

ma spero ancor.

Butterfly:

Padrone.

Yamadori:

Ah! Se voleste...

Butterfly:

Il guaio è che non voglio.

Sharpless:

True. However...

Butterfly: (*triumphantly*)

There, a dignified and impartial judge

says to the husband:

“You want to leave, let’s hear why.”

“I am bored with matrimony!”

And the judge replies:

“Ah, scoundrel, immediately to prison!”

Suzuki, the tea.

Yamadori: (*whispering to Sharpless*)

Did you hear that?

Sharpless:

I’m saddened by so much blind ignorance.

Goro: (*whispering to Yamadori, Sharpless*)

Pinkerton’s ship will soon arrive.

Yamadori: (*desperately*)

When she sees him again...

Sharpless: (*to Goro and Yamadori*)

He doesn’t want to show himself.

I came here expressly to explain it to her.

Butterfly: (*serving tea*)

Will Your Honor permit me.

What bothersome persons!

Yamadori: (*rising to leave*)

Goodbye. I leave you my heart, which is

full of sorrow: but yet I have hope.

Butterfly:

As you wish.

Yamadori:

Ah! If you were only willing...

Butterfly:

The trouble is that I’m not willing.

Yamadori sighs, and then bows to Sharpless before departing. Goro eagerly follows Yamadori. Sharpless becomes grave and serious as he once again invites Butterfly to be seated, and once again takes Pinkerton's letter from his pocket.

Sharpless:

Ora a noi. Sedete qui.

Legger con me volete questa lettera?

Sharpless:

And now, sit here.

Would you like to read this letter with me?

Butterfly:

Date. Sulla bocca, sul cuore.

Siete l'uomo migliore del mondo.

Butterfly: *(taking the letter and kissing it)*

Show me. On my lips, on my heart.

(to Sharpless)

You're the best man in the world.

Butterfly returns the letter to Sharpless and settles herself to listen.

Incominciate.

Begin.

Sharpless:

"Amico, cercherete quel bel fior di fanciulla."

Sharpless:

"My friend, seek out that beautiful flower."

Butterfly:

Dice proprio così?

Butterfly:

Did he really say that?

Sharpless:

Sì, così dice, ma se ad ogni momento...

Sharpless:

Yes, he did, but if at every moment...

Butterfly:

Taccio, taccio, più nulla.

Butterfly:

I'll be quiet and not say another word.

Sharpless:

"Da quel tempo felice, tre anni son passati."

Sharpless:

"Since that happy time, three years have passed."

Butterfly:

Anche lui li ha contati!

Butterfly:

He has also counted the years!

Sharpless:

"E forse Butterfly non mi rammenta più."

Sharpless:

"And perhaps Butterfly doesn't remember me anymore."

Butterfly:

Non lo rammento?

Suzuki, dillo tu.

"Non mi rammenta più!"

Butterfly:

That I don't remember him?

Suzuki, tell him.

"Doesn't remember me anymore!"

Sharpless:

(Pazienza!)

"Se mi vuol bene ancor, se m'aspetta."

Sharpless: *(to himself)*

(Patience!)

"If she still loves me, if she is waiting for me."

Butterfly:

Oh le dolci parole!
Tu, benedetta!

Sharpless:

“A voi mi raccomando perchè vogliate
con circospezione prepararla...”

Butterfly:

Ritorna.

Sharpless:

“.....al colpo.”

Butterfly:

Quando? Presto! Presto!

Sharpless:

(Benone. Qui troncarla conviene.
Quel diavolo d'un Pinkerton!)

Ebbene, che fareste Madama Butterfly
s'ei non dovesse ritornar più mai?

Butterfly:

Due cose potrei far:
tornar, a divertir la gente col cantar,
oppur, meglio, morire.

Sharpless:

Di strapparvi assai mi costa dai miraggi
ingannatori.
Accogliete la proposta di quel ricco Yamadori.

Butterfly:

Voi, voi, signor, mi dite questo! Voi?

Sharpless:

Santo Dio, come si fa?

Butterfly:

Qui, Suzuki, presto presto, che Sua
Grazia se ne va.

Sharpless:

Mi scacciate?

Butterfly:

Oh what sweet words! (*kisses the letter*)
You blessed letter!

Sharpless:

“I’m relying on your tact in order to
prepare her...”

Butterfly:

He’s returning.

Sharpless:

“....for the shock.”

Butterfly:

When? Soon! Soon!

Sharpless: (*putting the letter in his pocket*)

(Enough. It’s best to stop here.
That devil, Pinkerton!

All right, Madame Butterfly, what would
you do if he should never return to you?

Butterfly: (*struck almost speechless*)

I can do two things:
return to entertain people with my songs,,
or better, die.

Sharpless: (*with paternal tenderness*)

It is hard for me to tear you away from
your deceptive dreams.
Accept the rich Yamadori’s proposal.

Butterfly:

You, Sir, you tell me this! You?

Sharpless:

Holy God, what can I do?

Butterfly: (*clapping her hands*)

Suzuki, come here quickly, because His
Grave is leaving.

Sharpless: (*starting to leave*)

Are you driving me away?

Butterfly:

Ve ne prego, già l'insistere non vale.

Sharpless:

Fui brutale, non lo nego.

Butterfly:

Oh, mi fate tanto male, tanto male, tanto!

Butterfly: (*contrite*)

Please, insisting is of no use.

Sharpless: (*apologizing*)

I was brutal, I don't deny it.

Butterfly:

Oh, you cause me so much pain, so much pain!

Butterfly staggers. Sharpless tries to support her, but she recovers quickly.

Niente, niente!

Ho creduto morir.

Ma passa presto come passan le nuvole
sul mare.

It's nothing, nothing!

I thought I was dying.

But it passes quickly, like the clouds pass
over the seas.

Ah! M'ha scordata?

Ah! He has forgotten me?

*Butterfly runs into another room. She reenters triumphantly, carrying her child,
who she proudly shows to Sharpless.*

Butterfly:

E questo? E questo egli potrà pure
scordare?

Butterfly:

And this baby? Can he forget this
treasure?

Sharpless:

Egli è suo?

Sharpless:

He is his?

Butterfly:

Chi vide mai a bimbo del Giappone occhi
azzurri?

E il labbro? E i ricciolini d'oro schietto?

Butterfly:

Who ever saw a Japanese child with blue
eyes?

And his lips? And his curls of golden hair?

Sharpless:

È palese.

E Pinkerton lo sa?

Sharpless: (*deeply moved*)

It is obvious.

Does Pinkerton know it?

Butterfly:

No. No.

È nato quand'egli stava in quel suo gran
paese.

Ma voi, gli scriverete che l'aspetta un
figlio senza pari!

E mi saprete dir s'ei non s'affretta per le
terre e pei mari!

Butterfly:

No. No.

He was born when my husband was away
in his great country.

But you will write him that he's the father
of a son without equal!

And when he knows it he will hasten over
land and sea!

(*to the child*)

Sai cos'ebbe cuore di pensare quel
signore?

Do you know what that gentleman has
been thinking in his heart?

Andante molto mosso
BUTTERFLY



Che tua madre dovrà prenderti in braccio
ed alla pioggia e al vento andar per la città a
guadagnarti il pane e il vestimento.

That your mother should take you in her
arms and wander through the city in the
biting wind and blinding rain and beg for
food and clothing.

Ed alle impietosite genti, la man tremante
stenderà, gridando: "Udite, udite la triste
mia canzon. A un infelice madre la carità,
muovetevi a pietà!"

And to the pitying people, she will extend
her trembling hand, crying out: "Listen to
the sad song of an unhappy mother, have
mercy and pity her grief."

E Butterfly, orribile destino, danzerà per te!
E come fece già la Ghesha canterà!
E la canzon giuliva e lieta in un singhiozzo
finirà!

And Butterfly's horrible destiny is for the
Geisha to dance and sing again!
And the merry and happy song will end in a
brokenhearted sigh!

Ah! No! No! Questo mai!
Questo mestier che al disonore porta!
Morta! Morta! Mai più danzar!
Piuttosto la mia vita vo' troncar!
Ah! Morta!

But no! No! Never again!
Not that profession of dishonor!
Death! Death! But never dance again!
I'd rather go to my death!
Ah! Death!

Sharpless:
(Quanta pietà!)
Io scendo al piano.
Mi perdonate?

Sharpless (*tearful and emotional*)
(So pitiful!)
I must be going.
You will excuse me?

Butterfly:
A te, dagli la mano.

Butterfly: (*to the child*)
Now give him your hand.

Sharpless
I bei capelli biondi!
Caro: come ti chiamano?

Sharpless: (*kissing the child*)
What lovely blond hair!
Darling, what is your name?

Butterfly:
Rispondi:
Oggi il mio nome è *Dolore*.
Però dite al babbo, scrivendogli, che il
giorno del suo ritorno, *Gioia* mi chiamerò.

Butterfly:
Answer him!
Today my name now is *Sorrow*,
but when you write my father tell on the
day he will return, I'll be called *Joy*.

Sharpless:

Tuo padre lo saprà, te lo prometto.

Sharpless:

Your father shall be told, I promise you.

*Sharpless leaves. Suzuki is heard shouting outside,
and then drags in Goro.*

Suzuki:

Vespa! Rospo maledetto!

Suzuki:

Wasp! Wretched toad!

Butterfly:

Che fu?

Butterfly:

What was that?

Suzuki:

Ci ronza intorno il vampiro!
E ogni giorno ai quattro venti spargendo va
che niuno sa chi padre al bimbo sia!

Suzuki:

The vampire buzzes around here from
morning to evening spreading this scandal
that no one knows who the boy's father is!

Goro:

Dicevo solo che là in America quando un
figliolo è nato maledetto trarrà sempre
reietto la vita fra le genti.

Goro: *(protesting and frightened)*

I only said that in America when a boy is
born in such shame he will be rejected and
treated as an outcast!

Butterfly:

Ah! Tu menti, menti!
Dillo ancora e t'uccido!

Butterfly: *(raging and threatening him)*

Ah! You're lying!
Say it again and I'll kill you!

Suzuki:

No!

Suzuki *(interceding and stopping her)*

No!

Butterfly:

Va via!

Butterfly *(to Goro in disgust)*

Go away!

Vedrai, piccolo amor, mia pena e mio
conforto, mio piccolo amor.
Ah! Vedrai che il tuo vendicator
ci porterà lontano, lontan, nella sua terra...

(turning to her child)

You see, my little love, you are my sorrow
and my comfort.
Ah! You will see your avenger, and he'll
take us far, far away to his country...

.

A cannon shot is heard from the harbor.

Suzuki:

Il cannone del porto!
Una nave da guerra.

Suzuki:

The cannon from the harbor!
It is a warship.

Butterfly takes a telescope and directs it to the harbor.

Butterfly:

Bianca, il vessillo americano delle stelle.
Or governa per ancorare.

Reggimi la mano ch'io ne discerna il nome.
Eccolo: ABRAMO LINCOLN!

Tutti han mentito! Tutti!
Sol io lo sapevo, sol io che l'amo.

Vedi lo scimunito tuo dubbio?
È giunto! È giunto!
Proprio nel punto che ognun diceva:
piangi e dispera.

Trionfa il mio amor!
La mia fè trionfa intera:
Ei torna e m'ama!

Butterfly:

A white ship, and the American flag with the stars. Now its maneuvering to drop anchor.

Steady my hand steady so I can read the name.
There it is: ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

They all lied! All of them!
Only I knew it, because I love him!

Now do you see the folly of doubting?
He's come! He's come!
Just at the moment when everyone said:
weep and be despairing.

My love has triumphed!
My faith has completely triumphed:
He's returning, and he loves me!

Butterfly runs jubilantly into the garden.

Scuoti quella fronda di ciliegio e m'innonda
di fior.
Io vo' tuffar nella pioggia odorosa l'arsa
fronte.

Suzuki:

Signora, quetatevi, quel pianto.

Butterfly:

No; rido, rido!
Quanto lo dovremo aspettar?
Che pensi? Un'ora?

Suzuki:

Di più.

Butterfly:

Due ore forse.

Tutto tutto sia pien di fior,
come la notte è di faville.
Va pei fior!

Suzuki:

Tutti i fior?

Shake that cherry tree branch and bathe me
in flowers.
I want to plunge my burning brow into the
perfumed rain of cherry blossoms.

Suzuki:

Madame, calm yourself, that weeping.

Butterfly:

No. I am laughing, laughing!
When may we expect him?
What do you think? In an hour?

Suzuki:

More.

Butterfly:

More likely two hours.

Let there be flowers everywhere, just as
the night sky is full of stars.
Fetch flowers!

Suzuki:

All the flowers?

Butterfly:

Tutti i fior, tutti, tutti.
Pesco, viola, gelsomin, quanto di cespo
o d'erba, o d'albero fiori.

Suzuki:

Uno squallor d'inverno sarà tutto il giardin.

Butterfly:

Tutta la primavera voglio che olezzi qui.

Suzuki:

Uno squallor d'inverno sarà tutto il giardin.
A voi, signora.

Butterfly:

Cogline ancora.

Suzuki:

Soventi a questa siepe veniste a riguardare
lungi, piangendo nella deserta immensità.

Butterfly:

Giunse l'atteso, nulla più chiedo al mare.
Diedi pianto alla zolla, essa i suoi fior mi
dà!

Suzuki:

Spoglio è l'orto.

Butterfly:

Spoglio è l'orto? Vien, m'aiuta.

Butterfly:

All the flowers. .
Peaches, violets, jasmine, or anything that
has bloomed on bush, grass or tree.

Suzuki:

The garden will appear desolate like winter.

Butterfly:

I want all of springtimes' aroma in here.

Suzuki:

The garden will appear desolate like winter.
Here's more, madame.

Butterfly: (*strewing flowers in the room*)

Pick some more.

Suzuki:

How often you stood at this hedge weeping
as you looked into the deserted horizon.

Butterfly:

The man I awaited has arrived. I no longer
search the sea. I poured my tears on the
earth and it gave me flowers!

Suzuki:

Not a flower left.

Butterfly:

Not a flower left? Come and help me.

Butterfly and Suzuki scatter flowers everywhere.

Suzuki:

Rose al varco della soglia.

Butterfly, Suzuki:

Tutta la primavera voglio che olezzi qui.
Seminiamo intorno april.

Suzuki:

Gigli, vole?

Suzuki:

Roses shall adorn the threshold.

Butterfly, Suzuki:

I want the aroma of spring here.
Let's sow April around us.

Suzuki:

Lilies, violets?

Butterfly:

intorno, intorno spandi.
Il suo sedil s'inghirlandi di convolvi.

Butterfly:

Spread them all around.
His seat will be garlanded with morning glories.

Allegretto moderato
BUTTERFLY and SUZUKI

**Butterfly, Suzuki:**

Gettiamo a mani piene mambole e
tuberose,
corolle di verbene, petali d'ogni fior!

Butterfly, Suzuki:

Let's sow handfuls of sweet violets and
tuberoses,
corollas of verbenas, petals of every flower!

Butterfly:

Or vieni ad adornar.
No! pria portami il bimbo.

Butterfly:

Now come and adorn me.
No, first bring me the baby.

*Suzuki fetches the baby and places him next to Butterfly.
Butterfly looks at herself in a mirror and comments sadly.*

Non son più quella!
Troppi sospiri la bocca mandò,
e l'occhio riguardò nel lontan troppo fiso.

How much I've changed!
So much sighing has saddened my smile,
and my poor tired eyes from gazing so much!

Dammi sul viso un tocco di carmino,
ed anche a te piccino
perchè la veglia non ti faccia vote
per pallore le gote.

Put a touch of rouge on each cheek
and also on you, little one,
so that the waiting doesn't make your face
pale.

Suzuki:

Non vi movete che v'ho a ravviare i capelli.

Suzuki:

Don't move until I've set your hair.

Butterfly:

Che ne diranno!
E lo zio Bonzo?
Già del mio danno tutti contenti!
E Yamadori coi suoi languori!
Beffati, scornati, spennati gli ingrati!

Butterfly: *(laughing at her thoughts)*

What my relatives will be saying!
And Uncle Bonze?
They were all pleased with my damnation!
And Yamadori and his languors!
Scorned and ridiculed by those ingrates!

Suzuki

È fatto.

Suzuki:

It is finished.

Butterfly:

L'obi che vestii da sposa.

Qua ch'io lo vesta.

Vo' che mi veda indosso il vel del primo dì.

E un papavero rosso nei capelli.

Così.

Butterfly:

The bridal obi I wore.

I want to wear it here.

I want him to see me like on our wedding day.

And in my hair, a red poppy.

Like so.

Nello *shosi* farem tre forellini per riguardar,
e starem zitti come topolini ad aspettar.

We'll make three little holes In the *shoji* so
we can look, quietly waiting like little mice.

Suzuki closes the shoji screens.

As the night grows darker Butterfly leads the baby to the shoji.

*Butterfly makes three holes in the shoji: one at her height, one lower down for Suzuki,
and a third lower still for the child.*

*She seats the child on a cushion, and signals for him to look through the hole. Suzuki
crouches down and also gazes out. Butterfly stands in front of the highest hole and gazes
through it, remaining rigid and motionless as a statue: the baby, who is between
Butterfly and Suzuki, peeps out curiously.*

*The rays of the moonlight illuminate the shosi. A humming chorus is heard from the
harbor. The baby falls asleep on a cushion; Suzuki still in her crouching position,
also falls asleep. Butterfly remains awake, rigid and motionless.*

END OF ACT II

Act III

Marinai:

Oh eh! Oh eh!

Sailors: *(from the harbor in the distance)*

Oh eh! Oh eh!

Suzuki:

Gia il sole! Cio-cio-san.

Suzuki: *(waking and startled)*

It's daylight! Cio-cio-san.

Butterfly:

Verrà, verrà, vedrai.

Butterfly

He'll come, he'll come, you'll see.

Suzuki:

Salite a riposare, affranta siete.

Al suo venire vi chiamerò.

Suzuki:

Go up and rest, you are exhausted.

I'll call you when he comes.

Butterfly takes the sleeping child in her arms to bring him to his room.

Butterfly:

Dormi amor mio, dormi sul mio cor.

Tu se con Dio

ed io col mio dolor.

A te i rai degli astri d'or:

Bimbo mio dormi!

Butterfly:

Sleep my love, sleep on my heart;

you're safe in God's keeping,

and I with my sorrow.

Around your head golden stars dart;

sleep, my beloved!

Suzuki

Povera Butterfly!

Suzuki *(sadly, shaking her head)*

Poor Butterfly!

Butterfly

Dormi amor mio, dormi sul mio cor.

Tu sei con Dio

ed io col mio dolor.

A te i rai degli astri d'or:

bimbo mio, dormi!

Butterfly *(from the room above)*

Sleep my love, sleep on my heart;

You are with God

and I with my sorrow.

For you, the rays of the stars are golden:

my little baby, sleep!

Suzuki:

Povera Butterfly!

Suzuki: *(compassionately)*

Poor Butterfly!

As Suzuki kneels before a Buddha, there is a knock at the door.

Chi sia?

Who is it?

Suzuki opens the door and is greatly surprised to see Sharpless and Pinkerton.

Oh!

Sharpless:

Stz!

Sharpless, Pinkerton:

Zitta!

Pinkerton:

Non la destar.

Suzuki:

Era stanca sì tanto!

Vi stette ad aspettare tutta la notte col bimbo.

Pinkerton:

Come sapea?

Suzuki:

Non giunge da tre anni una nave nel porto che da lunge Butterfly non ne scruti il color, la bandiera.

Sharpless:

Ve lo dissi?

Suzuki:

La chiamo.

Pinkerton:

No non ancor.

Suzuki:

Lo vedete, ier sera la stanza volle sparger di fiori.

Sharpless:

Ve lo dissi?

Pinkerton:

Che pena!

Suzuki:

Chi c'è là fuori nel giardino?

Una donna!!

Oh!

Sharpless: (*signals her to be silent*)

Shh!!

Sharpless, Pinkerton:

Hush!

Pinkerton:

Don't awaken her.

Suzuki:

She was so tired!

She and the baby were waiting you all all night.

Pinkerton:

How did she know?

Suzuki:

No ship has arrived in port over the last three years that Butterfly has not scrutinized for its flags and colors.

Sharpless: (*to Pinkerton*)

Didn't I tell you?

Suzuki: (*about to go*)

I'll call her.

Pinkerton: (*stopping her*)

No, not yet.

Suzuki:

Look around you, last night she scattered flowers around the room.

Sharpless (*touched*)

Didn't I tell you?

Pinkerton: (*upset*)

What sadness!

Suzuki: (*hearing a noise in the garden*)

Who's that outside in the garden?

A woman!!

Pinkerton:

Zitta!

Suzuki:

Chi è? Chi è?

Sharpless:

Meglio dirle ogni cosa.

Suzuki:

Chi è? Chi è?

Pinkerton:

È venuta con me.

Suzuki:

Chi è? Chi è?

Sharpless:

È sua moglie!

Suzuki:

Anime sante degli avi!

Alla piccina s'è spento il sol!

Sharpless:

Scegliemmo quest'ora mattutina per ritrovarti sola, Suzuki, e alla gran prova un aiuto, un sostegno cercar con te.

Suzuki:

Che giova?

Sharpless:

Lo so che alle sue pene non ci sono conforti!

Ma del bimbo conviene assicurar le sorti!

La pietosa che entrar non osa materna cura del bimbo avrà

Suvvia parla con quella pia e conducila qui.

S'anche la veda Butterfly, non importa.

Anzi, meglio se accorta del vero si facesse alla sua vista.

Pinkerton:

Hush!

Suzuki: (*agitated*)

Who is she? Who is she?

Sharpless: (*to Pinkerton*)

It's better to tell her everything.

Suzuki: (*alarmed*)

Who is she? Who is she?

Pinkerton (*embarrassed*)

She came with me.

Suzuki:

Who is she? Who is she?

Sharpless: (*deliberately*)

She's his wife!

Suzuki: (*stupefied*)

Hallowed souls of our ancestors!

The sun has set for little Butterfly!

Sharpless:

Suzuki, we decided to come here early in the morning so as to find you alone, and to seek your help and support.

Suzuki: (*in despair*)

What's the use?

Sharpless:

I know that for such misfortune there's no comfort!

But it's best to guarantee the baby's welfare!

This pitying woman dares not enter, but will provide a mother's care for the baby.

Come, talk to that gentle lady and bring her here.

Even if Butterfly sees her, it doesn't matter.

Indeed, it would be better if she sees her and becomes aware of the truth.

Pinkerton:

Oh! L'amara fragranza di questi fior
velenosa al cor mi va.
Immutata è la stanza dei nostri amor
ma un gel di morte vi sta.

Il mio ritratto.

Tre anni son passati, e noverati
n'ha i giorni e l'ore, i giorni e l'ore!

Suzuki:

Oh me trista!
E volete ch'io chieda ad una madre...
Anime sante degli ave.

Sharpless:

Vien, Suzuki, vien!

Pinkerton:

Oh! The bitter fragrance of these flowers
is like poison in my heart!
This room of our past love is unchanged,
but a deathly chill haunts the air.

(Pinkerton sees his portrait)

My portrait.

Three years have passed, and she counted
every hour and every day!

Suzuki:

Oh my sadness!
And you want me to ask a mother...
Hallowed souls of ancestors.

Sharpless:

Come, Suzuki, come!

*Sharpless pushes Suzuki into the garden and join Kate Pinkerton.
Pinkerton is overcome by emotion.*

Pinkerton:

Non posso rimaner.
Sharpless, v'aspetto per via.

Sharpless:

Non ve l'avevo detto?

Pinkerton:

Datele voi qualche soccorso.
Mi struggo dal rimorso.

Sharpless:

Vel dissi, vi ricorda?
quando la man vi diede:
"Badate, ella ci crede"
e fui profeta allor!
Sorda ai consigli, sorda ai dubbi,
vilipesa nell'ostinata
attesa raccolse il cor.

Pinkerton:

Sì, tutto in un istante io vedo il fallo mio e
sento che di questo tormento tregua mai
non avrò, no!

Pinkerton:

I cannot stay.
Sharpless, I'll wait for you along the way.

Sharpless:

Didn't I tell you?

Pinkerton: *(gives Sharpless money)*

Give her some assistance.
I'm destroyed by remorse.

Sharpless:

I warned you, remember?
When she gave you her hand
I was a prophet:
"Be careful, she believes in it"
She was deaf to advice and deaf to her
doubts, and she gathered strength in her
heart and waited for you.

Pinkerton:

Yes, in one sudden moment, I see my
heartless faults, and I feel that I will never
have peace from this agony.

Sharpless:

Andate: il triste vero da sola apprenderà.

Sharpless:

Go: she will learn the sad truth alone.

Allegro moderato**PINKERTON****Pinkerton:**

Addio, fiorito asil.
 Sempre il mite suo sembiante
 con strazio atroce vedrò.

Pinkerton:

Goodbye, flowered refuge of happiness and love.
 I will always see her gentle face and be
 haunted by my guilt.

Sharpless:

Ma or quel cor sincero presago è già.

Sharpless:

That sincere heart is already foreseeing
 what is happening.

Pinkerton:

Addio fiorito asil.
 Non reggo al tuo squallor!
 Fuggo, son vil!

Pinkerton:

Goodbye, flowered refuge.
 I cannot bear your squalor.
 I flee, I am a coward!

*Pinkerton clasps the Consul's hand and leaves rapidly.
 Suzuki and Kate emerge from the garden.*

Kate:

Glielo dirai?

Kate: (*compassionately to Suzuki*)

Then you will tell her.

Suzuki:

Prometto.

Suzuki:

I promise.

Kate:

E le darai consiglio d'affidarmi?

Kate:

And will you advise her to entrust him to me?

Suzuki:

Prometto.

Suzuki:

I promise.

Kate:

Lo terrò come un figlio.

Kate:

I'll care for him as if he was my own son.

Suzuki:

Vi credo. Ma bisogna ch'io le sia sola
 accanto.
 Nella grande ora, sola!
 Piangerà tanto tanto!

Suzuki:

I believe you. But it's necessary for me to
 alone with her and at her side.
 In this great moment, alone!
 She will weep so much!

Butterfly:

Suzuki, Dove sei?

Butterfly: (*calling from the room above*)

Suzuki! Where are you?

Suzuki:

Son qui, pregavo e rimettevo a posto.

No, non scendete, no!

Suzuki:

I'm here, I was praying and tidying up.

No, don't come down!

Butterfly:

È qui, è qui, dove è nascosto?

Butterfly: (*excitedly*)

He's here, he's here; where's he hiding?

Butterfly notices the Consul. She becomes alarmed and looks for Pinkerton, searching everywhere.

Ecco il Console.

e dove? Dove?

Non c'è!

Here's the Consul.

And where is he? Where is he?

He's not here!

Butterfly sees Kate in the garden and then looks at Sharpless fixedly.

Quella donna?

Che vuol da me?

Nium parla!

That woman?

What does she want from me?

No one answers!

(*to Suzuki*)

Perchè piangete?

Why are you weeping?

Sharpless approaches Butterfly to speak to her. Butterfly shrinks in fear, a sign that she understands everything.

No: non ditemi nulla, nulla.

Forse potrei cader morta sull'attimo.

No: don't tell me anything, nothing.

For I might die the moment I hear it.

Tu Suzuki, che sei tanto buona,
non piangere, e mi vuoi tanto bene.

Un Sì, un No, di' piano. Vive?

You, Suzuki, who are always so good, don't weep, and since you love me so dearly, say softly "yes," or "no." Is he alive?

Suzuki:

Sì.

Suzuki:

Yes.

Butterfly:

Ma non viene più, te l'han detto!

Butterfly: (*as if receiving a mortal blow*)

But they've told you he is not coming!

(*angered by Suzuki's silence*)

Vespa! Voglio che tu risponda!

Wasp! I want you to answer!

Suzuki:

Mai più.

Butterfly:

Ma è giunto ieri?

Suzuki:

Sì.

Butterfly:

Ah! Quella donna mi fa tanta paura!

Sharpless:

E la causa innocente d'ogni vostra sciagura.
Perdonatele.

Butterfly:

Ah! È sua moglie!
Tutto è morto per me!
Tutto è finito! Ah!

Sharpless:

Coraggio!

Butterfly:

Vogliono prendermi tutto!
Il figlio mio!

Sharpless:

Fatelo pel suo bene il sacrificio.

Butterfly:

Ah! Triste madre!
Abbandonar mio figlio!
E sia! A lui devo obbedir!

Kate:

Potete perdonarmi, Butterfly?

Butterfly:

Sotto il gran ponte del cielo
non v'è donna di voi più felice.
Siatelo sempre, non v'attristate per me.

Kate:

Povera piccina!

Suzuki:

Never again.

Butterfly:

But he arrived yesterday?

Suzuki:

Yes.

Butterfly: (*looking warily at Kate*)

Ah ! That woman frightens me so!

Sharpless:

She is the innocent cause of your
misfortunes. Forgive her.

Butterfly: (*finally understanding*)

Ah! She is his wife!
All is over for me!
All is finished! Ah!

Sharpless:

Courage!

Butterfly:

They want to take everything from me!
My son!

Sharpless:

Make the sacrifice for his good.

Butterfly: (*despairingly*)

Ah! A mother's sadness!
To abandon my son!
So be it! I must obey Pinkerton's wish!

Kate:

Can you forgive me, Butterfly?

Butterfly: (*solemnly*)

Beneath the great arches of heaven
there is no woman happier than you.
Always be happy, and not sad for me.

Kate:

Poor little woman!

Sharpless:

È un immensa pietà!

Sharpless:

It's an immense pity!

Kate:

E il figlio lo darà?

Kate:

And will you give him his son?

Butterfly:A lui lo potrò dare se lo verrà a cercare.
Fra mezz'ora salite la collina.**Butterfly:**I will give him his son if he comes to get him.
In a half hour, he can climb this hill.*Suzuki escorts Kate and Sharpless out.
Butterfly almost collapses; Suzuki hastens to support her.***Suzuki:**Come una mosca prigioniera l'ali batte il
piccolo cuor!**Suzuki:** (*placing her hand on Butterfly's heart*)Her little heart is beating like the wings of
an imprisoned fly!**Butterfly:**Troppa luce è di fuor, e troppa primavera.
Chiudi.**Butterfly:**It's too bright outside, and too much spring.
Make it darker!*Suzuki closes the shoji so that the room is almost completely dark.*

Il bimbo ove sia?

Where is the baby?

Suzuki:

Giuoca. Lo chiamo?

Suzuki:

He's playing. Shall I call him?

Butterfly:Lascialo giuocar.
Va a fargli compagnia.**Butterfly:** (*anguished*)Let him play.
Go keep him company.**Suzuki:**

Resto con voi.

Suzuki: (*tearfully*)

I'll stay with you.

Butterfly:

Va, va. Te lo comando.

Butterfly (*with resolution*)

Go, go. I command you!

Butterfly lights the lamp on the shrine of the Buddha. She removes a white veil and a dagger. She piously kisses the blade and reads its inscription.“Con onor muore chi non può serbar vita
con onore.”“To die with honor for one who cannot
serve life with honor.”

The door opens, and Suzuki's arm is seen pushing the child towards Butterfly.

The boy runs to Butterfly with outstretched hands.

Butterfly lets the dagger fall, and passionately hugs and kisses him.

Butterfly

Tu? Tu? Tu? Tu tu? Tu? Tu?
Piccolo Iddio! Amore, amore mio,
fior di giglio e di rosa.
Non saperlo mai per te,
per tuoi puri occhi,
muor Butterfly,
perchè tu possa andar di là dal mare
senza chi ti rimorda ai dì maturi il materno
abbandono.

Butterfly

You? You? You? You? You? You? You?
Little god! My adored one, my love,
flower of lily and rose.
You must never know,
in your pure eyes,
that Butterfly died and abandoned you so
you could go to another land beyond the sea,
and never know when you grow older of
her devotion.



O a me. sceso dal trono del l'alto
Paradiso,
guarda ben fiso, fiso di tua madre la
faccia!
che t'n resti una traccia. Guarda ben!
Amore, addio, addio! Piccolo amor!
Va Gioca, gioca.

My son, sent to me from the highest
Paradise,
look well at your mother's features,
so that a trace of its memory may remain.
Look well!
Beloved, goodbye, goodbye, little love!
Go, play, play!

Butterfly gives the child an American flag and a doll. Then she bandages his eyes.

With her eyes still fixed upon the boy, she goes behind the screen.

The dagger is heard falling to the ground. Butterfly emerges from behind the screen, groping for the child while she smiles feebly. She drags the child toward her, having just enough strength to embrace him. Then she falls to the ground.

Pinkerton is heard calling: "Butterfly!, Butterfly! Butterfly!"

Pinkerton and Sharpless rush into the room. Butterfly points to the child, and then dies.

Pinkerton falls to his knees while Sharpless tenderly embraces the child.

END OF OPERA

La fanciulla del West

(“The Girl of the Golden West”)

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by Guelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini,
after David Belasco’s play, *The Girl of the Golden West*.**

**Premiere: Metropolitan Opera House, New York
December 10, 1910**

Principal Characters in La fanciulla del West

Minnie, proprietress of the “Polka Saloon”	Soprano
Jack Rance, sheriff	Baritone
Dick Johnson, alias José Ramerrez, a bandit	Tenor
Nick, bartender at the “Polka Saloon”	Tenor
Ashby, a Wells Fargo agent	Bass
Billy Jackrabbit, a Native American Indian	Bass
Wowkle, Billy’s squaw	Mezzo-soprano
Jack Wallace, a camp minstrel	Baritone
José Castro, one of Ramerrez’s outlaws	Bass
A Pony Express Rider (Post boy)	Tenor

Miners: Sonora, Trin, Sid, Bello (Handsome), Harry, Joe, Happy, Larkens

TIME: During the California gold rush — 1849-50

PLACE: A gold mining camp at the foot of the Cloudy Mountains, California

Story Synopsis

Minnie is the proprietress of the “Polka Saloon” located in a mining camp at the foot of the Cloudy Mountains of California. A band of outlaws, led by Ramerrez, has been seen near the mining camp, and the miners fear for the safety of their precious gold.

The sheriff, Jack Rance, is in love with Minnie, but she has spurned him. A stranger arrives, calling himself Dick Johnson from Sacramento; he is actually the bandit Ramerrez in disguise. Minnie becomes attracted to Johnson. They share intimacies, inflaming Rance’s jealousy of his rival for Minnie. Johnson (Ramerrez) has come to the “Polka Saloon” to rob the miners’ gold; he will be deterred not by guns, but his growing affection for Minnie.

Minnie and Johnson meet at her cabin that evening and fall in love. Rance and a posse are seeking the bandit Ramerrez. Fearing Rance’s jealousy, Johnson hides. Rance informs Minnie that Johnson is the bandit Ramerrez. After they leave, Minnie orders Johnson from her cabin. Outside, he is shot and wounded. Minnie brings him back to her cabin, sheltering him in the loft to avoid capture by Rance. Rance arrives and finds Johnson. Minnie plays poker with Rance for Johnson’s life, winning through trickery.

The posse continues to pursue Johnson. He is later caught, and just as they are about to hang him, Minnie arrives to save him. She convinces the miners to free him because he is no longer a bandit, but a man redeemed through their love. Minnie and Johnson leave California to begin a new life together, the miners saddened by the loss of their beloved Minnie.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

The prelude presents musical themes that are heard throughout the opera. The first theme evokes the majestic expanse of the California landscape.

Allegro ma non troppo



A second theme is associated with the love of Minnie and Johnson, the music underscoring their first kiss.

Allegro ma non troppo



A third theme is associated with the bandit Ramerrez, its syncopated “cakewalk” rhythms and accents suggesting a Latin or Mexican ambience.

Robusto e sostenuto



Act I: Inside Minnie's "Polka Saloon."

It is evening. Sheriff Jack Rance plays solitaire, his cigar glowing in the semi-darkness. Nick, the barman, lights the lamps. The boisterous miners arrive at the saloon to relax after an exhausting day of panning and searching for gold. They greet each other with exuberant "Hello's," and then call for cigars and whiskey.

"Dooda dooda, dooda, day"

Allegro vivo con energia
JOE and BELLO



Sid proposes a game of faro, which is enthusiastically joined by Harry, Happy and Joe. Sonora, Trin, and other miners arrive.

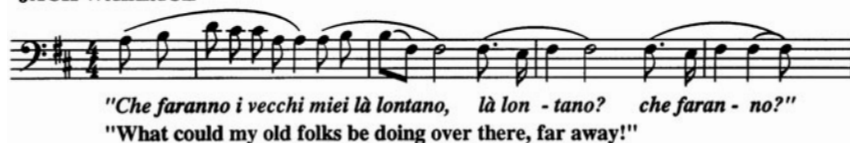
Larkens sits crouched with his arms covering his head, unaffected by the miner's rowdiness. Sheriff Rance inquires of Nick why Larkens seems so melancholy; Nick informs him that he is homesick. Rance curses the West, its gold a poison that destroys a man's soul.

Nick urges some the miners to dance in an adjoining room. Trin sits with Sonora, who is eating supper. Sonora, in love with Minnie, inquires if Nick has learned whether Minnie has finally made up her mind about him. Nick cynically assures Sonora that he is Minnie's favorite; he becomes ecstatic and offers cigars for everyone. Trin similarly asks Nick about his chances with Minnie; Nick encourages him similarly, prompting him to buy everyone a round of whiskey.

From outside the saloon, the itinerant minstrel Jake Wallace sings a nostalgic ballad about family and home.

"Che faranno I vecchi miei, là, lontano, là, lontano?"

Andante tranquillo
JACK WALLACE



Wallace's ballad evokes painful emotions from the miners, all becoming pensive and melancholy. As Wallace enters the "Polka Saloon" the gambling and rowdiness ceases.

Larkens bursts into tears, unable to cope with his homesickness; he curses a miner's life, and yearns to be home farming in Cornwall, near his mother. Sonora is moved to compassion for Larkens; he passes his hat around to collect money to send Larkens home. Larkens leaves with the money from the miners, grateful and happy.

The boisterous atmosphere returns as the miners resume gambling and drinking. Sonora catches Sid cheating at cards. He explodes in rage, throwing the cards into Sid's face. The miner's condemn Sid as a thief and card-cheat, and demand that he be lynched. Sonora draws his revolver, threatening Sid, but while Joe seizes Sonora's shoulders, Trin removes his gun, which he hands to Nick.

Sheriff Rance, who had been watching the fight with cold indifference, finally intercedes, placing himself between Sid and the threatening miners. Rance decides on a more appropriate punishment for Sid: he pins the two of spades over his heart, a mark of shame for a card-cheater. Sid is warned that if he dares to remove the card, he will be lynched immediately. In disgust, Rance brutally grabs Sid and throws him to the floor, kicking him viciously, and then chasing him from the saloon.

Rance sits at a table to begin a poker game; he invites Sonora, Trin, and others to join him. Ashby, the Wells Fargo agent, arrives. He has been pursuing the bandit Ramerrez and his band of Mexican outlaws for the last three months and anticipates his imminent capture.

Nick brings whiskey for everyone, courtesy of Minnie. The miners toast Minnie in appreciation. Rance boasts that very soon Minnie will become Mrs. Rance, sparking a fierce quarrel with Sonora, his jealous rival. Sonora suggests that Minnie is just fooling with him. Sonora and Rance both draw their guns. Trin grabs Sonora's arm, diverting his shot aimed at Rance. Minnie suddenly appears at the door, a rifle in her hands. She approaches Sonora and removes his pistol.

Minnie's entrance theme:



The miners greet Minnie with love and reverence, her presence immediately tempering their rowdiness and quarrelsome behavior; peace has been restored. Nevertheless, Minnie reproaches them, threatening them that if they misbehave she will discontinue their "Scripture Class." The miners immediately become contrite.

Minnie has become the miners' surrogate mother and guardian angel. They show their appreciation to her by showering her with gifts: Joe gives her flowers; Sonora a ribbon; and Harry a silk handkerchief. Ashby offers Minnie a drink, and she in turn offers him cigars.

Sonora gives Minnie a bag of gold to pay his bar bill. Minnie hands it to Nick, who weighs it, cancels Sonora's bill, and then places it in the barrel, the depository of the miners' gold.

Minnie opens a bible to begin her nightly "Scripture Class." The miners encircle her, all except Ashby and Rance, who talk quietly on the side, Ashby cautioning that it is unwise for the miners to keep gold in the saloon while an outlaw is on the loose; he suggests that it would be safer if it were deposited at the Wells Fargo Agency.

Minnie reads from the 51st Psalm of David, stressing its message that there is not a sinner in the world for whom redemption is not available; and that everyone should experience the supreme truth of redeeming love.

There is excitement as a post boy (Pony Express driver) arrives with mail. The miners read their mail, the news from home causing some to express happiness, and others anger and remorse.

Ashby receives a letter from Nina Micheltorena, the bandit Ramerrez's mistress. She offers to meet with him at the "Palms" at midnight, apparently eager to avenge her perfidious lover by revealing his whereabouts. Rance expresses doubt about trusting a woman of that ilk.

Nick announces that a stranger has arrived outside, seemingly from San Francisco. The stranger has requested whiskey and water, an unmanly drink at the "Polka Saloon." Minnie tells Nick to invite him in so that they can "fix his curls": make a man out of him.

The miners go into the adjoining hall to dance, leaving Rance alone with Minnie. Rance's voice trembles as he declares his impassioned love for Minnie; he promises marriage, and offers her money if she would allow him to kiss her. Minnie bursts into laughter, inquiring what Rance's wife would say if she knew his intentions. But Minnie is truthfully offended by Rance's audacity. She points her pistol at him and asks that he leave her in peace. The spurned Rance walks away in silence. Minnie becomes sensitive and apologizes for angering him, but prides her honesty.

Rance bares his soul to Minnie, his unhappiness and despair. He has never loved, and never been loved; only gambling and gold have provided pleasure in his life. He has become a bitter cynic in his search of the true meaning of life; gold has tortured his soul, but nevertheless, he would surrender his fortune for one kiss from Minnie.

"Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito"

Andante sostenuto

RANCE ^{*f*}



Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito che è là dai monti, sopra un altro mare;
Minnie, I left my house, which is beyond the hills, and beyond the high seas;

Love is a noble ideal to Minnie. She nostalgically recalls her childhood in Soledad; her parents ran a tavern, her mother the cook and bartender, and her father the faro dealer who ran the gambling.

Her parents were profoundly in love, a model of true love that has become etched in her heart; she yearns for the day when she will find a man to open her heart to the nobility of that same true love.

“S’amavan tanto”

Con anima
MINNIE



S'amavan tanto! S'amavan tanto! Ah! Anch'io vorrei trovare uomo: e certo l'amerei.
They loved each other so much! Ah! I would also like to find a man that I could truly love.

Minnie's yearning for love inflames Rance's passion for her. But just as he is about to proclaim himself the man who could fulfill her dream of love, Nick reappears with a stranger (Dick Johnson), the man who was outside the saloon requesting whiskey and water.

Johnson's theme: the "Robber" motive

Allegro vibrato



The stranger carries a saddle, and his leather jacket hangs over his left shoulder. He places the saddle on a table. With fierce disdain, he asks, "Who's here to curl my hair?"

Minnie becomes startled when she realizes that she met the stranger before; he likewise expresses surprise when he sees Minnie. Minnie orders Nick to serve the stranger his whiskey as he pleases. The stranger inquires if she was indeed the young lady he accidentally met the other day on the road. Minnie blushes, her revelation that it was indeed a memorable encounter.

Rance watches Minnie and the stranger menacingly, his jealousy immediately transforming into an instant loathing of the stranger. He approaches him aggressively and threateningly, demanding that he explain his presence at the saloon, as well as at the mining camp. Rance intuitively suspects that the stranger might be the outlaw Ramerrez, inquiring if he is en route to meet Nina Micheltorena. The stranger replies with indifference, informing him that he only stopped at the saloon for a rest and perhaps to try his luck at baccarat.

Rance presses the stranger to learn his name. He introduces himself as Johnson from Sacramento. As Minnie graciously welcomes him, Rance storms away, fuming with visible anger.

Johnson and Minnie reminisce about their earlier meeting on the road leading to Monterey, a moment in which their chemistry subconsciously united: they talked, picked flowers, and vowed they would never forget each other. While Minnie and Johnson stare amorously into each other's eyes, Rance approaches them, his uncontrollable jealousy prompting him to knock his rival's whiskey glass to the floor.

Rance is suspicious, determined to know the reason for Johnson's presence at the "Polka Saloon." Both stare at each with intense hostility in their eyes, a confrontation in which heightened passions are about to explode. Rance reaches for his revolver, but Minnie intervenes to stop him. Johnson shrugs his shoulders, gesturing indifference at the bellicose sheriff.

But Rance persists in trying to provoke Johnson: he pushes his saddle from the table to the floor, and then rouses the miners against him. Minnie again comes to Johnson's rescue, defusing Rance's fury by vouching for Johnson. Calm returns as the miners cordially welcome Johnson, some effusively shaking his hands. A disappointed Sheriff Rance watches disapprovingly, his anger seething.

Harry invites Johnson to dance, but instead, Johnson offers Minnie his arm and asks her to dance. Minnie bashfully admits that she never danced before. All dance, except Rance, who watches them while grimacing, frowning, and raging with jealousy.

The miners accompany a waltz tune with "La, la, la's," beating time by clapping their hands.

"La, La, La"



Ashby and a posse arrive with a prisoner, José Castro, a member of Ramerrez's gang. He is tied to a chair and questioned. Castro claims that he deserted Ramerrez's outlaws and wants to kill the bandit. He promises to lead them to him, but his real purpose is to draw the miners away from the "Polka" so that Ramerrez (Johnson) can rob the saloon. Castro notices Ramerrez's saddle on the floor and fears that he has been caught, but he becomes relieved when he sees him dancing in the adjoining hall.

Johnson returns from the dance hall, trying to avoid direct eye contact with Castro. He retrieves his saddle from the floor and places it on the faro table, his back to Castro while he adjusts its stirrups. Castro whispers to Johnson: that he let

himself be caught as a ruse to get the miners out of the saloon to search for Ramerrez. He tells Ramerrez that their men are hiding in the forest, and when he hears their whistle, his whistle response will signal that all is clear to rob the saloon.

Rance, Ashby, and the miners take Castro with them to pursue Ramerrez, leaving Minnie behind to guard their gold. Nick closes the “Polka Saloon” for the night, closing shutters and extinguishing lights.

Johnson goes to the window to confirm that the miners have left. He searches and finds the barrel in which the miners’ gold is stored, the object of his planned robbery. He makes a gesture of disdain, and then retrieves his saddle from the table in lieu of leaving.

Minnie suddenly appears, inquiring if Johnson remained behind to help her guard the saloon. Johnson expresses his concern that she is exposed to danger: that anyone is free to enter the saloon either to drink or steal. Minnie assures him that she is capable of protecting herself. Johnson asks, “Even from one who only wants to steal a kiss from you?” Minnie replies: “This has happened to me several times, but I still haven’t given my first kiss.”

Minnie and Johnson exchange intimacies: intuitively, she feels safe with Johnson, and that she can trust him, even though she knows so little about him; he reveals that he hardly knows himself, but thrives on his love of life. Minnie in turn expresses her insecurity: that she is a humble and inexperienced woman with a meager education, far below Johnson’s sophistication, which she aspires to.

But love has dawned for Minnie and Johnson, expressed in a duet that begins with a lyrical expansion of the earlier waltz melody.

Love Duet: “Quello che tacete me, l’ha detto il cor”

Andante mosso moderatamente
JOHNSON

Quel - lo che ta - ce - te me l'ha det - to cor,
My heart tells me what you are not saying,

quan - do il brac - cio v'of - fer-si all'a danza con me:
when I offered you my arm and we danced together:

Johnson reveals that when they danced together he felt Minnie trembling against his chest, and he was overcome by a strange and indescribable sense of peace and happiness. Minnie likewise feels joy and happiness in his presence.

Nick interrupts Minnie and Johnson. He anxiously searches for his gun, while warning them that another Mexican bandit was seen near the saloon. As Nick leaves, Minnie tries to follow him, but Johnson restrains her.

A whistle is heard from outside, the signal from Ramerrez's bandits. Johnson does not return the whistle. Minnie becomes alarmed; she points to the barrel and reveals that it contains the miners' gold, and since the miners are away tonight, it is her duty to guard it.

Minnie expresses her heartfelt compassion for the miners, men who have toiled endlessly for gold to send to their families far away. Minnie goes behind the bar and retrieves two pistols. She places them on top of the barrel, her determination to protect the miner's gold.

Largamente



Johnson assures her that no one would dare try to rob the gold.

Johnson prepares to leave, presumably to tell his men to call off the robbery. He asks Minnie if he can meet her later at her cabin. Minnie informs him that the miners will return shortly, and afterwards, he can come to her cabin where they can continue their conversation next to the fire.

Minnie again apologizes because she has so little to offer the sophisticated Johnson, her meager education restricting their conversation: she is merely a simple and humble woman. Johnson comforts her, reassuring her that she is a good and pure soul, with the face of an angel. Johnson takes his saddle and leaves.

Nick enters to put out the remaining lights in the "Polka Saloon." Minnie stands alone in the light of the one lamp that remains lit, slightly dazed, mystified, and absorbed in the intoxication of the emotions that have overcome her. She repeats Johnson's last words to her, "A face of an angel."

Minnie covers her face with her hands, and then emits a deep and prolonged sigh. Minnie has discovered love.

Act 2: Minnie's cabin, later that evening.

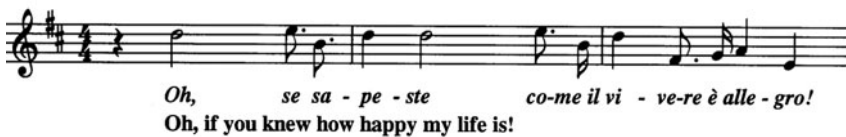
Wowkle, a young Indian, squats on the floor of the cabin near the fire, rocking her papoose to sleep while singing a lullaby. Billy Jackrabbit arrives. Minnie has insisted that they marry to legitimize their child. They discuss a dowry, and that they will go to the Mission to be married tomorrow.

Minnie appears, overflowing with excitement because Johnson will soon be visiting her. She is happy to learn from Billy that he will marry Wowkle. Minnie orders Wowkle to clean the cabin and prepare dinner for two, astonishing Wowkle.

Minnie dresses in her best clothes for her meeting with Johnson: her fine slippers from Monterey, a handkerchief which she splashes with cologne, a shawl and gloves. Afterwards, she places a rose in her hair.

Johnson arrives. He becomes immediately dazzled by her appearance and comments that she looks exceptionally pretty. He tries to kiss Minnie, but she avoids him, offended by his aggressiveness. He apologizes and begs her forgiveness. Minnie allows him to stay.

Minnie tests Johnson's sincerity, suspiciously inquiring if he really came to the "Polka" this evening to see her; or did he mistake the path to Nina Micheltorena? Johnson quickly changes the subject: he notes how pretty her cabin is, and that he is confounded by her lonely life, so remote from the world. Minnie explains that she is happy and content amid the beauty of nature, a closeness to God. And during the winter storms, she is busy teaching the miners at her "school."

"Oh, se sapeste come il vivere è allegro"**Allegretto mosso e giocoso****MINNIE**

Minnie reveals that she loves to read romance stories. Johnson promises that he will send some to her. Their conversation turns to the meaning of love, which Minnie extols as eternal, not a momentary desire.

Johnson again tries to embrace Minnie. This time Minnie restrains the bold Johnson with the excuse that he will squash her roses. He feels uneasy and decides to leave, but when he opens the door he discovers a violent blizzard outside.

Minnie and Johnson embrace, and then kiss passionately, Johnson admitting that he loved her from the first time he saw her.

As if in fear and fright, Johnson suddenly withdraws from her, confounding Minnie. He declares that their love would be a hopeless dream. He again starts to leave, but Minnie convinces him that there is no path in the snow, and that he must remain at the cabin until tomorrow.

Three gunshots are heard. Minnie suggests that it must be the posse on the trail of the bandit Ramerrez; another reason Johnson should stay.

Both affirm their impassioned love: their destiny. They vow never to part again.

“Dolce vivere e morire”

Con espressione grande
MINNIE and JOHNSON

Minnie
Dol - ce vi - ve - re mo - rir e non lasciar - ci

Johnson
Dol - ce vi - ve - re mo - rir e non lasciar - ci
The gentle sweetness of life and death. We'll never part again!

Minnie
più! non la - sciar - ci più!

Johnson
We'll never part again!

più! Col tuo ba - cio fa pu - ro il labbro mio!
Purify my lips with your kiss!

Johnson believes that he hears people outside. Indeed, Nick is heard shouting from outside that the bandit Ramerrez has been seen on the trail. Minnie suspects that Rance and his posse are outside. Fearing the jealous Sheriff Rance, Minnie has Johnson hide behind the bed curtains.

There is a knock on the cabin door. Minnie opens it to find Rance, Ashby, Nick and Sonora, all fully covered with snow. They have come to Minnie's cabin fearing for her safety and to protect her. With relentless malice, Rance explains that Johnson, the man Minnie danced with earlier, is in fact the bandit Ramerrez.

Minnie becomes flabbergasted, refusing to believe Rance's revelation. Ashby adds that the bandit came to the "Polka" to rob them. But Minnie defends Johnson because he did not rob them, although Sonora adds that he certainly had the opportunity. Nevertheless, they have come to her cabin because Nick and Sid saw the bandit take the cabin trail, and the suspicious Rance knows that the trail ends at Minnie's cabin.

Rance notices a cigar stub, and then looks menacingly at Minnie, inquiring forcefully where the bandit has gone. He then plants seeds of jealousy in Minnie, declaring that Nina Micheltorena is indeed Johnson's mistress. He shows Minnie a picture of both, given to him by Nina Micheltorena. Minnie disguises her outrage by bursting into laughter, and then sends them away.

After they leave, Minnie erupts into furious indignation. She commands Johnson to emerge from hiding and accuses him of planning to rob the “Polka.” Johnson swears that he would not have stolen anything from the miners, or from Minnie.

“Ma non vi avrei rubato!”

Andante
JOHNSON

The musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The melody consists of two phrases, each with a long horizontal slur above it. The first phrase ends with a quarter rest, and the second phrase ends with a half note. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

Ma non vi avrei ruba - to! So - no Ramerrez: nacqui vagabondo:
But I wouldn't have robbed you! I'm Ramerrez. I was born a vagabond:

Johnson expresses his remorse, a man cursed from birth to be a robber and criminal. But he claims that after he met Minnie, he suddenly wanted to change his destiny: he yearned to redeem himself from his shame, abandon the life of an outlaw, and perhaps start a new life with her.

“E il labbro mio”

Largo e calmo
JOHNSON

The musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Largo e calmo'. The melody consists of two phrases, each with a long horizontal slur above it. The first phrase ends with a quarter rest, and the second phrase ends with a half note. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

E il labbro mio mormorò un'ardente preghiera: Oh Dio! Ch'ella non sappia mai, non sappia mai la mia vergogna!
And my lips murmured an impassioned prayer: Oh God! May she never know my shame!

Minnie becomes deeply moved by Johnson’s confession, sympathetically and compassionately asking God to forgive his unfortunate life of crime. But Minnie is jealous of Nina Micheltorena, and insists that Johnson leave. With resolution, but without weapons, Johnson hurriedly opens the door and leaves, ready to sacrifice his life and be killed.

Minnie bursts into tears. She hears two gunshots from outside and rushes to the door, opening it to find Johnson wounded on the ground. She helps the staggering Johnson into the cabin, but he insists that he must leave. Minnie persuades him to stay, admitting that she loves him; the man who kissed her for the first time cannot die.

A strong knock is heard at the door; it is Sheriff Rance returning. Minnie decides to hide the protesting Johnson in her loft, the wounded man desperately trying to gather enough strength to climb the ladder.

Rance is certain that the bandit is hiding in Minnie’s cabin. He enters the cabin, his gun poised and ready, and carefully scrutinizes every corner of the room.

Mockingly, Minnie challenges him to search the cabin. Minnie's determination is convincing, and Rance admits that perhaps he was mistaken.

Rance holsters his gun and moves boldly toward Minnie, violently trying to embrace and kiss her. Minnie runs from him as he chases her around the cabin. As Rance extends a menacing hand toward Minnie, cursing his rival and swearing that the bandit shall not possess her either, a drop of blood falls from the loft onto his outstretched hand. He stops in amazement, noticing that there is also blood on the floor. Minnie suggests that perhaps she scratched him, but more blood falls on Rance's hand. The truth quickly unfolds in Rance's mind. He looks toward the loft and shouts ferociously to Johnson, an explosion of hate and joy.

Minnie tries unsuccessfully to restrain him. Rance climbs on a chair, lowers the stairs, and stands before Johnson with his gun drawn. He offers Johnson his choices: death by hanging or by his gun. Impatiently, he orders Johnson to come down.

Johnson descends: pale, numb, and in agonizing pain. He finds a chair, places his head in his arms on the table, and then collapses in a faint.

Minnie is obsessed and determined to save Johnson. She challenges Rance to a game of poker: if Rance wins, he can have her and the wounded bandit, but if he loses, then Johnson is free and belongs to her.

Rance accepts, confident that Minnie will be his final victory. Minnie goes to the cupboard, pretending to be looking for a new deck of cards. She removes something, and hides it in her stocking.

Their game of poker is the best two hands out of three. Minnie wins the first hand, and Rance the second; they are even. During the third hand, Minnie pretends that she is fainting and sick. Rance goes to the cupboard to fetch water for her. While he is there, Minnie replaces her cards with cards she had hidden in her stocking. She then rises triumphantly, announcing that she has three aces and a pair. Rance stares at Minnie's winning hand, and gruffly accepts defeat. He grabs his hat and coat and leaves.

Minnie throws the cards into the air and laughs convulsively. Finally, she bursts into tears, and then embraces the still unconscious Johnson, crying out: "He's mine!"

Act 3: A clearing in the Californian forest.

It is early dawn in winter. A posse of miners, together with Sheriff Rance and Ashby's Wells Fargo agents have camped overnight in a forest clearing. Johnson/Ramerez recovered from his wounds, and once again, is being pursued.

Ashby, Billy Jackrabbit, and several miners are sleeping in a forest clearing. Rance is seated near a fire with Nick.

Rance broods because his rival, an outlaw and bandit, has earned Minnie's love. Nick attempts to console Rance, commending his gallantry with Minnie.

The sound of distant voices awakens the sleeping men. Ashby believes that it is a signal that Ramerez has been caught. A group of shouting men bearing guns,

knives, and clubs arrive to announce that the bandit is cornered, and his capture is imminent. Ashby warns that he must be taken alive, and leaves with some men to join the man-hunt.

Rance exults in his forthcoming revenge; while he agonized in tears, Minnie ridiculed his misery. But now his tears are transformed into triumphant laughter; it will be Minnie who weeps when she learns that the man she loved will be hanged to death.

Some miners return to inform Rance that Ashby and his Wells Fargo men are in hot pursuit of the bandit. Then Sonora arrives to announce that the bandit has been caught. The miners, hungry for revenge and blood, celebrate the forthcoming hanging.

Ashby arrives with the captured Johnson and places him in Rance's custody. The accusing mob disdainfully ridicules and berates Johnson. They accuse him of murder, but he defends himself, protesting that he is indeed a thief, but not a murderer.

Billy Jackrabbit is ordered to prepare a noose for the lynching, but Nick secretly bribes him to delay as long as possible; Nick dashes off to find Minnie.

Rance allows Johnson to speak before his hanging. Johnson asks the miners for one mercy and one promise: that Minnie shall never know how he died.

“Ch’ella mi creda libero e lontano”

Andante molto lento
JOHNSON



Ch'ella mi cre - da libero e lonta-no, sopra una nuova via di redenzione!
I want her to believe that I'm free, far away, on a new path of redemption!

Johnson wants Minnie to believe that he is free and far away, redeemed in a new life. He invokes Minnie as the flower of his life, the woman who blessed him with her true love. Rance, infuriated with jealousy, approaches Johnson and viciously punches him in the face.

Rance selects the tree for the hanging. Sonora prepares the rope. Johnson stands on a stone under the tree stoically awaiting his fate. A miner throws the rope over a branch, the noose dangling before Johnson's face.

From the woods, the sound of a galloping horse and a prolonged cry of a woman are heard. The miners drop the rope, knowing that it is Minnie. Rance, consumed by his passion to destroy his rival, rushes about in rage while urging the miners to hang the man immediately. But they are inattentive, only concerned with the approaching Minnie.

Minnie dismounts and stands before Johnson, protecting him. The miners retreat. Johnson stands motionless, the noose still around his neck.

Minnie dares the miners to hang Johnson. Rance challenges her, asserting that they must fulfill the demands of justice: vigilante justice. The miners seem to be on the verge of being swayed by Rance. As two men try to seize Minnie, she withdraws from them and quickly raises her pistol, threatening to kill herself and Johnson. To protect Minnie, Sonora places himself between her and the miners.

Minnie stares fixedly at the miners, trembling with fury and rage. She accuses them of ingratitude, touching their consciences and emotions by reminding each one of them of the sacrifices she made for them; she cared for them when they were ill, she taught them to read and write, and she consoled them in their troubles, anxieties, and fears.

But most of all, she taught the miners the virtue of forgiveness and the meaning of redemption. Minnie proclaims that Johnson is no longer a bandit, but a man reformed from his horrible destiny, and he must be forgiven.

Minnie taught the miners the supreme truth about love, and now she has found that love, a love that destroyed the bandit in Johnson's soul and led him to the path of redemption; their profound love will bring them to new horizons.

Minnie's emotional plea to the miners becomes irresistible; no one protests. Sonora acknowledges that Minnie's words are like those from God. He unties Johnson.

“Addio mia dolce terra, addio, mia California!”

Andante lento con anima
MINNIE and JOHNSON

Ad - dio mia dolce ter - ra, addio, mia Cali-for - nia!
Goodbye my sweet land, goodbye my California!

With sadness, the miners bid farewell to their beloved Minnie. Minnie and Johnson say goodbye to the miners and beautiful California, and then both ride off to share their new future together.

Commentary and Analysis

After Puccini revised *Madama Butterfly* (1904), the opera achieved worldwide acclaim, joining *Manon Lescaut* and *La bohème* to become the rage on the international lyric stage. Puccini had become rich and famous, the anointed heir of Giuseppe Verdi.

Nevertheless, Puccini was wounded, if not inhibited by the traumatic experience of *Madama Butterfly*'s initial failure, and a long period of psychological crisis began: a period of self analysis and scrutiny of his work. Puccini was 46-years old, a turning point of mid-life. He could look back with pride, but he had to look to the future. He began to believe that he had reached an artistic dead end: that his audiences had tired of his sugary music and his musico-dramatic portrayals of tragic heroines experiencing agonizing deaths; he was determined to swing his emotional pendulum away from his muse of tragic despair, works perhaps, with greater musico-dramatic impact. Ricordi urged him to try something more ambitious, perhaps a grand opera with spectacle, but ideally, Puccini was seeking another *La bohème*, that magic blend of comic and tragic elements, with perhaps less sentimentality.

During the four years following *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini composed very little, his most important piece, a Requiem in memory of Verdi (1905); but he was intensely searching for new inspirations and hunting for extraordinary and original subjects to dramatize musically. He attended the theater whenever possible, and poured himself into reading plays and novels: Gorky, Tolstoy, Turgenyev, and Wilde.

In seeking charismatic subjects, he flirted with a host of vulgar and uncultivated heroines, Carmen stereotypes and *femmes fatales* who were wild, selfish, unsympathetic, and consumed to use their erotic power to exploit, manipulate and destroy men. At the same time, he was seeking a subject that would conquer the lucrative American market, an opera like *Madama Butterfly*, which would offer him adventurous opportunities to invent music in a specific idiom with exotic ambience, and a host of musical impressionism.

In 1907, Puccini visited New York for the Metropolitan Opera premieres of *Manon Lescaut* and *Madama Butterfly*. His search for a new opera subject was resolved when he saw another David Belasco success, *The Girl of the Golden West*.

Belasco was the son of Portuguese Jews, the original name perhaps Velasco. The family fled persecution and eventually settled around San Francisco. During the 1860s, the young Belasco was an actor who toured small California and Nevada towns where memories of the gold rush fever were vivid and even mythologized. His father had once joined a gold-mining camp and subsequently related many authentic incidents to his son, dramatic conflicts that would later appear in *The Girl of the Golden West*: the scenario of Johnson's blood dripping from the loft, and the subsequent poker game between Minnie and Rance for Johnson's life. Jake Wallace, the camp minstrel in both play and opera, is reputed to have been a real historic character, a wandering minstrel during the Gold Rush days, who visited the various camps and sung old 49'ers songs while accompanying himself on the banjo.

Belasco was a true man of the theater: producer, writer and stage designer. In his earlier *Madame Butterfly*, he proved his stage wizardry in the lighting effects of the “Night Vigil” scene, an element that strongly influenced Puccini to convert the play into a music drama. In *The Girl of the Golden West*, he likewise produced sensational and spectacular effects: the backdrop was a moving panorama of breathtaking scenes of the majestic western landscape, and a wind and snow machine was created for the blizzard effects.

But Belasco was first and foremost a writer of realistic melodrama: *The Girl of the Golden West* was “American verismo,” a stark melodrama involving a love triangle, with fierce and brutal characters overpowered by their monomania for gold and wealth. For Puccini, Belasco’s *The Girl of the Golden West* cried out for music.

There is a striking resemblance between the underlying dramas of Belasco’s *The Girl of the Golden West* and Puccini’s earlier *Tosca* (1900): both plots involve a rivalry between two men for a woman; *Tosca*’s Cavaradossi and Scarpia are rivals for Tosca, and in *The Girl of the Golden West*, Rance and Johnson are rivals for Minnie. In both stories, the villains are sinister men who possess power: Rance is a Sheriff, and Scarpia a police chief; both are prepared to kill their rival to win their prize. In each scenario, the villain challenges the woman’s honor in exchange for her lover’s life: both men fail, but unlike *Tosca*, there is no murder or suicide at the conclusion of *The Girl of the Golden West*.

Puccini was captivated by the drama’s virile and robust characters, and the exoticism of the harsh natural surroundings of the American West: an intensely powerful drama with stark realism that would inspire his musico-dramatic and symphonic imagination.

The heroine Minnie represented a new personality for Puccini to exploit, an ideal compromise between the tragic heroines of his previous six operas, and the *femmes fatales* he was exploring for new operas: Minnie possessed wildness and abandon, as well as a girlish innocence and naiveté.

Minnie is the overpowering moral force of the drama: she teaches a group of crude and malicious men about virtue, and that love and compassion will lead to redemption and salvation of the soul. Puccini became intrigued by the story’s central focus: redemption through love was a new ideal in the Puccini canon.

And it is Minnie herself who is the overpowering redeeming force, her love for Johnson/Ramerez the transforming power that causes the outlaw to abandon his criminal life. The heroic and fearless Minnie rescues Johnson from a vigilante-style hanging, an action that places her in the company of the heroines of German Romanticism: Goethe’s “ewige Weibliche,” or Wagner’s “eternal woman” like Brünnhilde, the reason for the oft-heard sobriquet of Minnie as the “Valkyrie of the American West.”

Although Puccini expressed some initial skepticism the dramatic cohesiveness of Belasco’s play, Sybil Seligman, his intimate friend and confidante in London

believed strongly in its musico-dramatic potential. She aroused his enthusiasm by commissioning a translation of the play for the non-English speaking Puccini, and also secured at least one book of American songs for him.

Tito Ricordi secured the rights from Belasco in an agreement that granted Puccini the freedom to alter the dramatic action; a flexibility that enabled him to serve his dramatic instincts and alter certain elements of the plot to satisfy his musico-dramatic needs. Puccini was ready to begin his seventh opera: *La fanciulla del West*.

Puccini was disappointed because his favorite librettists were unavailable: Giacosa was dead, and Illica was fully engaged with another libretto. Ricordi recommended Carlo Zangarini, a dramatist he considered an ideal collaborator because he was half-American. However, the typical Puccini tensions between Puccini and his librettist very quickly arose, and Zangarini was coerced into accepting a collaborator, the journalist and poet, Gualfo Civinini.

Puccini and his librettists struggled with the difficulties of converting Belasco's four-act stage play to the constraints inherent in the opera medium. Essentially, Puccini himself was seeking more dramatic tension: as such, he invented the third act "Manhunt" in the California Forest; the *deus ex machina* arrival of Minnie on horseback to rescue Johnson from being hanged; and Minnie's poignant farewell to the miners.

In Acts I and III, the miners are prominent protagonists, a considerable challenge to Puccini's talents at ensemble craftsmanship. But he predicted that *La fanciulla* would prove to be "a second *bohème*, only stronger, bolder and more spacious"; in *La fanciulla* he would transcend what many considered his ingenious treatment of the *La bohème*'s Act II Latin Quarter crowd scene. Otherwise, there is no relationship between these two operas in almost every respect imaginable.

Belasco's miners were utterly savage creatures: true verismo characters. The libretto and Puccini's music endow the miners with humanity: ambivalent characters that are at times sensitive, emotional, and more deeply afflicted by homesickness and sentiment than with cruel and brutal actions.

The libretto stresses Christian ideals of forgiveness and the redeeming power of compassion and love. Minnie represents the overpowering spiritual and moral force of the drama, a preacher and teacher who reads the Fifty-first Psalm of David to the miners in her scripture class, a sublime moment in the opera. In Belasco's play, she reads from a book called "Old Joe Miller's Jokes." And Minnie's unwavering sense of morality is expressed in the opening of Act II when she insists that the Indians Wowkle and Billy marry in a church to legitimize their child.

Puccini made Sheriff Rance far more sinister and savage than the original Belasco character: like Scarpia and Tosca, Rance is overcome by an impassioned monomania to possess Minnie; in the opera he attempts to rape Minnie, a scenario not in the original Belasco play.

Six years would elapse between the completion of *Madama Butterfly* and the premiere of *La fanciulla del West*, much of the delay attributed to the scandal of the Manfredi affair, not to Puccini's lack of inspiration or musical ideas.

La fanciulla del West premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on December 10, 1910, with an all-star cast featuring Emmy Destinn (Minnie), Enrico Caruso (Dick Johnson), Pasquale Amato (Jack Rance), and conducted by Arturo Toscanini. It was a triumphant success, the composer receiving fourteen curtain calls after the first act, nineteen after the second, and twenty after the finale. Puccini declared it his best opera.

To capture the ambience of the American West, Puccini incorporated many American folk-songs that were popular in the California West of the 1850's. He resorted to the same methods as in *Madama Butterfly* and created a quasi-authentic ambience by combining American tunes with his own musical inventions that he composed in the same idiom. As such, there is a remarkable combination of exotic Western and American motifs and rhythms that permeate the overall musical texture: ragtime, cowboy songs, Spanish rhythms, and Native American chants. Nevertheless, just as in *Madama Butterfly*, he was accused of plagiarizing many of the score's melodies, a guilt of many composers from time to time. But stealing a succession of notes is meaningless, for it requires a genius to work the magic of transforming and unifying them, making the cohesive whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Most of the Western-style songs appear in Act I: the nostalgic "Old Dog Tray" (also known as "Echoes from Home"), which is a leitmotif identified with the miners' homesickness and their sad destiny. The song is introduced offstage by Jake Wallace, the camp minstrel, "Che faranno i vecchi miei là lontano?" ("What could my old folks be doing over there, far away?"), and it appears numerous times in different harmonic and rhythmic textures throughout the opera, particularly at the conclusion of the opera when it underscores the miner's sadness as Minnie and Johnson depart: "Mai più ritornerai, no mai più!" ("You will never return again, no never!")

The emotional level of the miners at the beginning of the first act alternates from sentiment and nostalgia to explosions of uncontrollable passions: the nostalgia of "Old Dog Tray" ("Che faranno"), to Larken's homesickness and the miner's compassion for him, to their brutality when Sid is caught cheating at cards, to an almost fatal quarrel between Rance and Sonora over Minnie, the latter signaling Minnie's dramatic entrance.

Minnie reigns in the miners' blustery passions, her very presence calming their savage souls, a power that is heightened by the morality and goodness preached in the "Scripture Class."

Belasco's realism captured the supercharged gold rush craze of 1849-50, its rugged individualism and the pioneering spirit of the era.

The miners represent the emotional core of the opera, a motley aggregation of diverse humanity that can at times be crude, brash, and even savage, but also easily moved to emotion, sentiment and tears. These men have surrendered their souls to greed and dreams of wealth, a quest that at times leads to passions of violence and brutality. They toil endlessly to reap gold from the almost indomitable California mountains. In their greed, they have descended into a nether world, self-destructing

into a community of lost souls, exiles, and ruffians: doomed creatures haunted by despair and melancholy; the ideal inspiration to kindle Puccini's tragic muse. And indeed, Puccini's music unmasks the miners' souls: music conveying pain, suffering, homesickness, loneliness, fear of death, yearning and longing, and above all, the need for the redeeming essence of love and compassion.

The impregnable Cloudy Mountains of California are the miners' enemy. They are motivated by dreams of gold and wealth, forced to fight for survival in a brutal, terrifying and dangerous land, and seek wealth in mountains that yield just minuscule amounts of treasure. Rance snarls in Act I: "Che terra maledetta, quest'occidente d'oro" ("What a cursed place this Golden West is.")

The Native Americans, Wowkle and Billy Jackrabbit, are exaggerated stereotypes, marginalized people who have become demoralized by life in the miner's camp: Billy Jackrabbit steals cigars and whiskey and is drunk most of the time; his squaw Wowkle has borne his child out of wedlock. When Billy reveals that Minnie has insisted that they marry, Wowkle's reply is simple, if not innocuous: "Wowkle not know."

Puccini Christianized his "golden West": Minnie insists that Wowkle and Billy marry to legitimize their child. They celebrate their forthcoming nuptials with a hymn based on the Ninetieth Psalm: "The day which the Lord gave unto man is like a blade of grass, once winter descends onto the plains, man becomes sad and dies." The theme of resignation seems an inappropriate blessing for two people about to be married, but it appropriately conveys the sense of human despair that is one of the underlying themes of the opera.

Belasco conceived the hero Johnson as a noble bandit: a tall, smooth-faced gentleman who buys his clothing in fashionable Sacramento. Johnson orders his whiskey mixed with water, a sacrilege at Minnie's "Polka Saloon," where virility is defined by drinking liquor straight. In his first appearance he is modest, certainly the last man one would suspect of being the outlaw Ramerrez.

Ramerrez/Johnson is patterned after courageous, flesh-and-blood historic personages of the American West: the California natives of Hispanic descent known as californios or rancheros, who became victims of the non-latino, or Yankee gold speculators who poured into the region in search of immediate wealth during the Gold Rush of 1849-50.

The Yankees were bigoted, and sometimes murderous. They characterized the latino natives as sub humans, a self-serving race of congenital liars, thieves, and murderers. But in the end, the Yankees used force to extricate the latinos and seize the lands where the precious gold was hidden.

Before the discovery of gold in 1848, the californios and rancheros considered themselves Spanish grandees of the New World, traditionally hospitable and extremely cordial to Yankee visitors from the East. But after gold was discovered in California, fortune-seekers began pouring in, the population swelling with foreigners who overpowered them. The native californios had extensive experience with mining

and were far more successful than the Yankees, which quickly led to serious friction between them and the newcomers.

The treaty that ended the Mexican War in 1848 guaranteed full civil and property rights to the californios, but the Yankees became envious, and many of them, veterans of the recently concluded Mexican War, began driving the californios from the gold fields with threats, beatings, and occasional lynching. As far as the Yankees were concerned, anyone whose mother tongue was Spanish had no business intruding on what was manifestly America's gold: their gold.

Yankee claim-jumpers flogged the californios, hung them, and raped their wives. Deprived of a living in the mines, some californios took to crime: they joined Mexican gangs and became outlaws and bandits who roamed the countryside and terrorized the counties during the 1850s and 1860s; they looted, pillaged, and committed scores of robberies, resorting to bloodshed when necessary. Bands of Texas-style rangers were organized to counter the outlaws, but when that failed, vigilantes emerged and attempted to drive out the entire californio population: anyone with a Spanish surname.

Armed Yankee vigilantes attempted to extricate californios who were working claims near Sutter's Mill and the Sacramento. They were aided by the State Assembly that extorted the miners with levies, and when the state failed to enforce taxation with vigor, the vigilantes marched into the towns, collected the taxes from a few wealthy californios, and warned the rest to relinquish their claims to the mines.

In desperation, the californio outlaws became daring in order to shield their disaffected community from the Yankee pursuers; they became renegades who pursued an outlaw's life in revenge against Yankee injustice. Most of them failed: apprehended, convicted, and sentenced to hanging.

*L*a *fanciulla del West*'s Dick Johnson, nee Ramerrez, was one of those bandits, a californio turned outlaw, who was struggling to survive in a land that was overrun by foreigners. Puccini, the musical dramatist and narrator of this story, unabashedly exposes Johnson's despair; a melancholy, anguish and agony that the composer shared with the opera's hero.

In Act II, Johnson hides in Minnie's cabin to avoid the pursuing Sheriff Rance. Rance appears and reveals to Minnie that Johnson is none other than the bandit Ramerrez. Alone with Minnie, Johnson unmask himself, poignantly and passionately revealing his horrible destiny to Minnie: "Sono Ramerrez, nacqui vagabondo: era ladro il mio nome da quando venni al mondo" ("I'm Ramerrez. I was born a vagabond: my name was thief from the moment I was born."); his inheritance after his father's death was "a gang of highway bandits!"

The underlying theme of *La fanciulla del West* is the redeeming power of love, a hope that Johnson expresses fervently: "Ho sognato d'andarmene con voi tanto lontano e rendermi tutto in una vita di lavoro e d'amore." ("I dreamed of going far away with to totally redeem myself in a life of work and ardent prayer.")

Johnson expresses the agony of his shame with self-deprecation: "Vergogna

mia!” (“My shame!”) Johnson, like all the characters of *La fanciulla*, is struggling to resurrect his life, to escape from the “terra maledetta,” that cursed land.

Minnie, now aware of Johnson’s identity, expresses pity for him, but she was deceived by him and cannot restrain her moral indignation: she has learned that the first man she ever kissed is an outlaw and a bandit, and also — as she suspects — that Nina Micheltorena is her rival.

Minnie insists that Johnson leave, oblivious to the mortal danger awaiting him outside. But after he is wounded, she is suddenly overcome with compassion for the man she now realizes she truly loves; Minnie’s emotions have conquered reason. She conceals Johnson in the loft, protecting him from Rance and the miner’s who are in pursuit of the outlaw.

In Act III, the miner’s manhunt is successful, and Johnson is caught. Rance tries to whip the miners into a frenzy to hang him immediately: he wants his rival for Minnie destroyed. The miners taunt Johnson, but he will not surrender his dignity: “Risparmiate lo scherno” (“Spare yourself the mocking.”) The miners accuse Johnson of being a murderer, which he vehemently denies. (He is, however, an admitted thief.)

Johnson is on the threshold of death, and his thoughts turn to his love for Minnie. The centerpiece of Act III is the aria, “Ch’ella mi creda libero e lontano” (“I want her to believe that I’m free, far away”), The aria is superb, vintage Puccini, a masterpiece from a master song-writer: twenty-one bars that are melodically unforgettable, its music saturated with a sense of self-loathing, longing and suffering: that plaintive, weeping despair that had become his musical signature. But above all, “Ch’ella mi creda” represents a passionate longing for a new life, a renewed life far away from the failure and shame of the past.

Belasco wrote *The Girl of the Golden West* for Blanche Bates, a famous actress in her time, and he tailored the role of the heroine to suit the diva’s charisma. As such, Minnie became an overbearing and authoritative character, utterly frank, devoid of vice or immorality, happy, and unsoiled by the coarse and crude miners surrounding her.

But Puccini’s librettists painted Minnie in a much softer, romantic light than Belasco’s rather blustery characterization of the heroine. Minnie possesses deep insight into the men surrounding her, profoundly aware of their yearnings and desires, accustomed to their flattery, and totally capable of keeping their rowdiness under control. Puccini’s Minnie is a synthesis of tomboy, glorified barmaid, and angelic Puritan schoolteacher, a woman as crafty with a revolver as she is artful in pouring whiskey.

In Act I, Minnie’s autobiographical aria, “Laggiù nel Soledad, ero piccina” (“I was a little girl down there in Soledad”) is a poignant reminiscence of her innocent and happy childhood; her parents loved each other profoundly, and the spirit of that love has remained deeply etched in her soul: “S’amavan tanto!” (“They loved each other so much!”) Minnie expresses her own aspirations and yearnings for true love:

“Anch’io vorrei trovare un uomo e certo l’amerei.” (“I would also like to find a man that I could truly love!”)

Minnie conveys a virginal innocence: in Act I. Just before her dance with Johnson, she apologizes to him: “You won’t believe it, but I’ve never danced in my life!” And of course, Johnson will later become the first man she has ever kissed.

In Act II, Johnson expresses his bewilderment, unable to comprehend how Minnie can live such a lonely life in the seclusion of the mountains. Minnie’s explains her love of nature, a life in which she senses a closeness to God: “Oh, se sapeste come il vivere è allegro!” (“Oh, if you knew how happy my life is!”)

Puccini elevated Minnie’s character: she alone possesses the secret of renewal, the “via di redenzione,” the path to redemption. The Act I Scripture Class expresses the essential underlying theme of the entire opera: that redemption can be achieved through pure love: “Ciò vuol dire, ragazzi, che non v’è al mondo peccatore cui non s’apra una via di redenzione.” (“Boys, that means that there’s not a sinner in the world for whom a path of redemption is not open.”) And she concludes: “Sappia ognuno di voi chiudere in sè una suprema verità d’amore.” (“May all of you know how to keep the supreme truth of love inside of you.”)

Minnie may take offence at the miners for their slightest impropriety, but she herself thinks nothing of cheating in her poker game with Rance. Nevertheless, Minnie is not compromising her noble ideals by cheating at poker; her actions are those of a woman who is consumed to save the life of the man she loves, the road to achieving the ideal of redeeming love.

At the conclusion of Act III, Minnie pleads with the miners for Johnson’s freedom, her plea for forgiveness underscored with intensive, plaintive lyricism. Minnie’s sermon to the miners reminds them again: “Brothers, there isn’t a sinner in the world to which the path of redemption is not open!” Sonora rescues Johnson for Minnie, and sends both off to a new life together.

Belasco described the character of Rance: “A cool, waxen, deliberate gambler, and a dissolute rascal.” Belasco implies that Rance is no different than the outlaw Ramerrez, a victim of unfortunate incidents in his youth, perhaps his anticipation of modern discoveries about the psychology of criminals.

Rance is a flawed character, an ambivalent man who vacillates between good and evil: as Sheriff he symbolizes law and order, but he is as prone to criminality as those he pursues. He is as lost and despairing as every other man in the opera, bitter about his life, and obsessed by greed.

In Act I, Rance unmask his consuming passion for Minnie. Minnie becomes offended by his overtures; after all, he is a married man. In Rance’s autobiographical narrative, “Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito” (“Minnie, I left my house, which is beyond the hills.”), he defends his yearning for Minnie: a victim of misfortune who left his home long ago; and no one wept when he left. He has had no pleasure in life, never loved any one, and no one has ever loved him. He has reached middle-age and it is only the lure of gold that attracts him. Yet he would surrender his fortune for one kiss from Minnie.

Rance's music is restless, twisting, haunting, and eerily melancholy, reflecting anxiety and hopelessness; in that sense, his music defies any comparison to the music of *Tosca*'s Scarpia, which is leering and violently lustful. But Rance also believes that he will find redemption through Minnie's love, a resurrected life transcending his greed.

When Rance realizes that Johnson is his rival for Minnie, his jealous passions explode uncontrollably. But in Act II, he has his great opportunity for revenge, cunningly playing on Minnie's jealousy (as Scarpia does with *Tosca*) by showing Minnie the picture of Ramerrez given to him by Minnie's presumed rival, Nina Micheltorena. In his lust to possess Minnie, Rance has descended into villainy.

Rance assaults Minnie, intending to rape her, Puccini's music appropriately communicating Minnie's fear and Rance's terror. The ensuing poker game is a moment of heightened music drama, Rance's music seemingly twisting like a knife in a wound; and there is a profound sense of terror created by rhythms, discords, and ferocious brass explosions. While the cards are being dealt, Rance asks Minnie about her love for Johnson, who has passed out at the table: "Che ha che tu l'adori?" ("What does he have that makes you adore him?") Minnie responds: "Voi che trovate in me?" ("What do you find in me?") Each exchange between Rance and Minnie intensifies through the emotive power of the underlying music, the music providing a contrast of Minnie's fear and Rance's sinister nature and potential for violence.

Rance is determined to possess Minnie by any means, but he accepts his defeat with honor, even though he has lost the poker game, and lost Minnie to his rival. He withdraws with grace and dignity, merely taking his hat and coat, and leaving with a sneering "Good evening!" But the wound is deep and painful; Rance will have his revenge.

In *La fanciulla del West*, Minnie represents a beacon of hope for all of the flawed and ambivalent lost souls, men of moral contradictions who vacillate between good and evil.

Minnie not only teaches morality to the miners, but she is also the protector of their gold. Minnie is most vivid at the end of Act I when she reveals to Johnson that she would give her life to protect that gold for the miners: "In quel barile, Johnson, c'è un tesoro" ("Johnson, in that barrel there's a treasure.") Yet, Minnie is unaware that Johnson is Ramerrez, a bandit who has come to rob the "Polka Saloon" of the miner's gold. He will be dissuaded from stealing the gold not by blustery miners with pistols, but by his sudden passion for Minnie.

The essence of *La fanciulla del West*'s story is that humanity can be redeemed through love. Each of the male characters is a lost soul, but the angelic Minnie has taught them about hope, forgiveness, redemption, compassion, and love. In the end, the lost soul she will rescue and redeem will be Johnson, the man she has learned to love.

In the Act III finale, Minnie heroically arrives to save Johnson from being hanged. She reminds the miners about the "Scripture Class": that all men can be forgiven

and redeemed. The miners release Johnson, and both Minnie and Johnson vanish into the distance, singing their farewell: “Addio mia bella California.” In the fairy-tale sense, *La fanciulla del West* ends happily as the lovers ride off to a new life together: a victory of virtue over vice, of pure love over lust, and most of all, the triumph of the redeeming power of love.

But there is terrible sadness, underscored by the minstrel’s song of longing that was heard at the beginning of the opera: “Che faranno i vecchi miei.” The miners’ final words are directed to their beloved Minnie: “Mai più ritornerai, no mai più!” (“You will never return again, no never!”): a moment of heartfelt sadness.

These lost souls know in their hearts that somehow they must be liberated from their torment and misery. Minnie taught them how to resolve their despair: through the redeeming power of love; and each of the miners knows in his heart that he must find that love in order to survive.

Puccini declared *La fanciulla del West* his best opera to date. It is certainly one of his most alluring operas: a straightforward, self-evident plot that features the exoticism and ambience of the American West, and robust characters caught in the heat of heightened passions. And the plot delivers many spine-chilling dramatic situations: Minnie’s poker game with Rance for Johnson’s life, the manhunt in the California forest, and Minnie’s deus ex machina arrival to save Johnson from being hanged.

Nevertheless, almost a century after its premiere, *La fanciulla del West* has yet to firmly establish itself in the general repertory: it certainly does not share the popularity of Puccini’s greatest successes, particularly its three predecessors: *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*, or the later *Turandot*.

Over the years, *La fanciulla del West* has become the victim of ambivalent criticisms; at times it has been considered silly and inane, and at times a sublime music drama. Critics and audiences alike have been outspoken in condemning its brash plot, which they have derided, mocked, and sometimes deemed senseless: a mythologized, overblown oater that is related in Italian and in the Italian opera art form; the absurdity of cowboys singing in Italian, certainly a dubious vehicle for modern American audiences who have been nurtured on Westerns on film and television.

In speculation, if Puccini possessed a Wagnerian imagination, he would have redeemed what many consider his musical magnum opus: perhaps a romantic or mythological legend, with a community of lost souls protected by a Minnie-type goddess, a love triangle, and eventual redemption through love.

Nevertheless, most musicians acknowledge that *La fanciulla del West* is a musico-dramatic masterpiece, and a work of stupendous craftsmanship. Puccini’s orchestra is most definitely a protagonist in this opera, prompting Toscanini to have called it a “great symphonic poem.”

Puccini was speaking a new musical language in *La fanciulla*, the language of modern music that is patently unrecognizable from the composer of *La bohème*; the score resonates with echoes of Stravinsky's harmonic innovations, Debussy's Impressionism, and Richard Strauss's Expressionism of *Salome* and *Elektra*. In terms of Impressionism, Puccini again proved himself a master in capturing effects through his musical inventions: Johnson's blood dripping on Rance's hand from the overhead loft in Act II; the Act II blizzard; and the chilling opening of Act III's "Manhunt." Puccini's use of the whole-tone scale represents his most complex and daring harmonic advancements preceding *Turandot*.

The music drama is through-composed, all of its elements seamlessly integrated into an organic unity. Themes associated with characters and ideas (leitmotifs) recur throughout the score; these are melodic units, or blocks of music that Puccini expertly integrates into the score with his typical symphonic mastery. The orchestration is scored for an extremely large and intensely powerful orchestra with a wide range of instrumental colors.

Minnie is at the center of the action in an opera that is commandingly masculine. The miners play significant roles, their choral lines disharmonic and in unison octaves, a technique intended to convey their primitiveness.

Although *La fanciulla* echoes many of the musico-dramatic ideas of Wagner, it is an Italian opera to the core, an opera that does not sacrifice lyricism and melody to musico-dramatic integrity. In fact, with *La fanciulla*, Puccini may have proven himself the Italian master of Wagner's transformations and metamorphoses, just as Wagner, the arch-enemy of the Italian bel canto genre, composed perhaps the greatest bel canto opera in *Lohengrin*.

La fanciulla del West deserves much praise; it is arguably Puccini's best opera score, a magnificent example of remarkable craftsmanship composed in Puccini's unique personal style.

LIBRETTO

La fanciulla del West

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Act I

A short prelude introduces two themes from the opera: the first, an expansive theme suggesting the vast California landscape; the second, a theme associated with “the kiss,” the moment when Minnie and Johnson avow their love.

Allegro ma non troppo**Allegro ma non troppo**

Inside the “Polka” saloon, a large room with a long bar on one side. Above the room there is a balcony. The entrance is an old western-style swinging door. There are many windows. All around there are bottles and glasses. Stuffed animal heads hang on the walls.

There are many chairs and tables, the latter covered with cards and poker chips.

Sheriff Jack Rance is seated at a table, smoking a cigar and playing solitaire.

Nearby, Larkens sits, his head buried in his hands.

Voci lontano:

Hello! Hello!

Alla “Polka”! Alle “Palme”!

Hello! Hello!

Voices in the distance:

Hello! Hello!

To the “Polka”! To the “Palms”!

Hello! Hello!

Un baritono interno:

“Là lontano, là lontan, quanto piangerà!”

A baritone inside:

“There, far away, how much she’ll weep!”

Nick, the barman, light candles, and the “Polka” saloon is suddenly aglow.

Groups of miners return from the mining camps and burst into the saloon.

Harry, Joe, Bello, e Minatori:
Hello, Nick! Hello!

Harry, Joe, Bello, and Miners:
Hello, Nick! Hello!

Nick:
Buona sera, ragazzi!

Nick:
Good evening, boys!

Allegro vivo con energia
JOE and BELLO



Bello, Joe, e Minatori:
"Dooda, dooda day..."

Bello, Joe, and Miners:
"Dooda, dooda day..."

Harry:
Sigari, Nick!

Harry:
Nick, cigars!

Joe:
E Whisky!

Joe:
And whiskey!

Nick:
Son qua, son qua. Sta bene.

Nick:
I'm here! O.K.

Bello:
Minnie?

Bello:
How's Minnie?

Nick:
Sta bene!

Nick:
She's well!

Sid:
Ragazzi, un faraone!
Chi ci sta?

Sid: *(sitting down at a table)*
Boys, a game of faro!
Who wants to play?

Harry:
Io ci sto!

Harry:
I'll play!

Happy:
Anch'io ci sto!

Happy:
I'll play also!

Joe:
Anch'io!

Joe:
Me too!

Bello:
Chi è che tiene il banco?

Bello:
Who'll be the banker?

Happy:
Sid.

Happy: *(indicating Sid)*
Sid.

Bello:
Brutto affare!

Bello:
It's an ugly business!

Sid:
Chi vuol mischiare, mischi!

Sid: (*throwing the cards down disdainfully*)
Whoever wants to shuffle can shuffle!

Harry shuffles the cards.

Joe:
Holla!

Hoe: (*slapping Sid on the shoulder.*)
Holla!

Sonora, Trin, and other miners enter the saloon.

Robusto e sostenuto



Sonora, Trin:
Hello!

Sonora, Trin:
Hello!

Sonora:
Da cena, Nick! Che cosa c'è?

Sonora:
Nick, what's there to eat for supper?

Nick:
C'è poco!
Ostriche sott'aceto.

Nick:
Very little!
Ostrich with vinegar.

Sonora:
Hello! Larkens!

Sonora: (*slapping Larkens on his back*)
Hello, Larkens!

Larkens:
Hello!

Larkens:
Hello!

Harry e Minatori:
Andiamo!

Harry and Miners: (*ready to play cards*)
Let's go!

Sid:
Fate giucco!

Sid:
Ante up!

Joe:
Al giardino!

Joe:
To the queen!

Harry:
Alle piccole!

Harry:
To low cards!

Bello:
Alle grandi!

Minatori:
Nick, da bere!

Nick:
Vengo, vengo!

Sonora:
T'aspetto?

Trin:
Vengo!

Happy:
Gettoni!

Sid:
Un re. Un asso.

Bello:
Maledetto!

Bello:
To high cards!

Miners:
Nick, something to drink!

Nick:
I'm coming!

Sonora: (to Trin)
Should I wait for you?

Trin: (to Sonora)
I'm coming!

Happy:
Chips!

Sid:
A king. An ace.

Bello: (angrily)
Damn!

*As Nick passes by, Rance points to Larkens,
sitting crouched with his arms covering his head.*

Rance:
Larkens che ha? Sta male?

Nick:
Il suo solito male.
Nostalgia. Mal di terra natia!
Ripensa la sua vecchia Cornovaglia e alla
madre lontana che l'aspetta.

Rance:
Che terra maledetta, quest'occidente d'oro!

Nick:
Ha la malaria gialla.
L'oro avvelena il sangue a chi lo guarda.

Rance:
E Minnie, come tarda?

Sid:
Quanti dollari?

Rance:
What's wrong with him? Is he sick?

Nick:
The usual sickness.
Nostalgia! Homesickness!
He's always thinking about his mother and
Cornwall, and that they're waiting for him.

Rance: (relighting his cigar)
This golden west is a cursed land!

Nick:
He's got the yellow fever.
Gold poisons the blood of anyone who sees it.

Rance: (looking at his pocket watch)
How come Minnie is late?

Sid: (showing Happy the ante)
How much?

Happy:

Dieci.

Happy:

Ten.

Sid:E novanta, fan cento.
Fante. Regina.**Sid:**And ninety makes a hundred.
A Jack. A Queen.**Joe:**

Hola! Evviva!

Joe:

Hurrah!

Harry:

Sacramento!

Harry:

Damn it!

Trin:

Australiano d'inferno!

Trin:

Damned Australian!

Joe:

Il tre non vince mai!

Joe:

The three never wins!

Trin:

Tutto sul tre!

Trin:

Everything on the three!

Sid:

Tre. Sette.

Sid:

Three. Seven.

Trin:

Tutto perso. "Goodbye!"

Trin:

It's all lost. "Goodbye!"

Trin rises from the table and sits down at the table where Sonora is eating.

Nick:

Nella sala, ragazzi, vi si vuol ballar!

Nick:

Boys, you can dance in the hall!

Some of the men go into the dance hall.

Sonora:A ballare? Son pazzi!
Io non ballo con uomini! Ti pare?**Sonora:**Dance? They're crazy!
I don't dance with men! Do you agree?**Trin:**

È giusto!

Trin:

You're right!

Sonora:

Minnie infine s'è decisa per me?

Sonora: *(aside to Nick)*

Has Minnie finally made up her mind about me?

Nick:

Certo: ho capito che siete il preferito!

Nick: *(cunningly playing along with him)*

Certainly: I understand you're her favorite!

Sonora:
Sigari a tutti!

Sonora: (*excitedly*)
Cigars for everyone!

Tutti:
Hurrà! Hurrà!

All:
Hurrah!

Trin:
Nick, che t'ha detto?

Trin: (*aside to Nick*)
Nick, What did she tell you?

Nick:
Mah! Se ho ben capito voi siete il preferito!

Nick: (*playing along with him*)
Well, if I understand it, you're her favorite!

Trin:
Whisky per tutti!

Trin:
Whiskey for everyone!

Tutti:
Hurrà! Hurrà!

All:
Hurrah!

Andante tranquillo
JACK WALLACE



Jake Wallace:
"Che faranno i vecchi miei là lontano,
là lontano?
Tristi e soli i vecchi miei piangeranno,
penseranno che non torni più!"

Jake Wallace: (*from outside*)
"What could my old folks be doing over
there, far away?
They're probably weeping, thinking that I'll
never come home again!"

Nick:
Ragazzi, v'annunzio Jake Wallace, il
cantastorie del campo!

Nick:
Boys, let me introduce Jake Wallace, the
minstrel of the camp!

*Jake Wallace's song affects the men emotionally, and they become pensive.
As Wallace enters the "Polka" the gambling ceases.*

Jake Wallace:
"La mia mamma, che farà s'io non torno?
Quanto piangerà!"

Jake Wallace:
"What will my mother do if I don't return?
She'll weep so much!"

**Trin, Harry, Joe, Sonora, Bello, Happy, e
Minatori:**
"Quanto piangerà!"

**Trin, Harry, Joe, Sonora, Bello, Happy,
and Miners:**
"She'll weep so much!"

Wallace ei Minatori:

“Al telaio tesserà lino e duolo pel lenzuolo
che la coprirà.”

Minatori:

Il mio cane dopo tanto mi raviserà?

Harry:

O mia casa al rivo accanto.

Minatori:

Là lontano, chi ti rivedrà?

**Trin, Harry, Joe, Sonora, Bello, Happy, e
altri:**

Jim, perchè piangi?

Jim! Che hai?

Larkens:

Non reggo più, ragazzi, mandatemi via!

Son malato, non so di che.

Son rovinato!

Son stanco di piccone e di miniera!

Voglio l'aratro, voglio la madre mia!

Wallace and the Miners:

“In her grief, she'll weave the shroud that
will cover her.”

Miners:

Will my dog recognize me after so long a time?

Harry:

Oh my home beside the river.

Miners:

There, far away, who will see you again?

**Trin, Harry, Joe, Sonora, Bello, Happy,
and others:**

Jim, why are you crying?

Jim, what's wrong?

Larkens:

Boys, I can't take it anymore, send me away!

I'm sick, I don't know from what.

I'm broke!

I'm tired of picks and mining!

I want to plow, I want my mother!

The miners are moved by Larkens' outburst.

Sonora removes his hat and takes up a collection for him.

Sonora:

Per rimandarlo a casa.

Sonora:

To send him back home.

Minatori:

Prendi. To'.

Cinque dollari!

Altri cinque!.

A te Son. Anche questi.

Miners:

Take it. Here.

Five dollars!

Another five!

For you Sonora. This too.

Sonora empties the contents of his hat into Larkens' hands.

Larkens is overcome by emotion; he smiles and thanks his friends.

Sonora:

Coraggio!

Sonora:

Courage!

Larkens:

Grazie, grazie, ragazzi!

Larkens:

Thanks, boys!

The miners return to their seats and resume their gambling.

Sid:

Va tutto?

Sid:

Ready?

Minatori:

Al quattro. Al tre.

Raddoppio. Due.

Miners:

To the four. The three.

I double. Two.

Sid:

Giuoco fatto!

Sid:

Bets are in!

Sonora:

Raddoppio!

Sonora:

I double!

Sid:

Niente va più! Due. Tre.

Sid:

No more bets! Two. Three.

*Sonora catches Sid cheating. He viciously slams his fists on the table,
and then throws the cards in Sid's face.*

Bello:

Questa è da ladro!

Bello:

That's cheating!

Sonora:

Su le mani! Baro!

Sonora: *(revolver drawn, threatening Sid)*

Raise your hands! Cheater!

*Everyone is agitated. Joe grabs Sid by the shoulders.
Trin removes Sid's gun and hands it to Nick.*

Minatori:

Baro!

Miners:

Cheater!

Bello takes cards from Sid that he hid in his vest pocket and throws them on the table.

Bello:

Su le braccia! Guardate!

Bello:

Raise your arms! Look!

Harry e otre:

Sia legato! Al laccio!

Il ladro! Baro!

Harry and others:

Tie him up! Hang him!

The thief! Cheater!

Sid:

Per carità!

Sid:

For pity's sake!

*Sid is dragged to the center of the room and beaten.
Rance approaches them with cold indifference.*

Rance:

Che succede?

Rance:

What's happening?

Bello:
Ha barato!
Avrà quel; che gli spetta!

Bello:
He cheated!
He'll get what he deserves!

Tutti:
Al laccio! Sid! A morte!

All:
Hang him! Put Sid to death!

Rance places himself between Sid and the miners.

Rance:
Andiam, ragazzi; un po' di calma.
Su: vediam!

Rance:
Boys, come now; calm down.
Get up, let's see!

Tutti:
Al laccio, Sid! A morte!

All:
Hang him! Put him to death!

Rance:
Evvia! Cos'è la morte?
Un calcio dentro il buio e buona notte!
So un castigo più degno.
Datemi la sua carta.

Rance: (stopping them)
Be off! What is death?
A kick in the dark and good night!
I know a more appropriate punishment.
Give me his card.

Rance is given the two of spades, which he pins on Sid's chest, right over his heart.

Sopra il cuore, come si porta un fiore.
Non toccherà più carte.
È questo il segno.
Se s'azzardasse a toglierlo, impiccatelo!

Over his heart, like one wears a flower.
He won't touch cards any more.
This is the sign.
If he dares to take it off, hang him!

Rance grabs Sid brutally by his collar and throws him to the floor.

Domani al campo, tu spargi la voce.
Va!

Tomorrow, spread the word at the camp.
(kicking Sid) Get out!

Sid:
Ragazzi, siate buoni!

Sid: (whimpering)
Boys, be lenient!

Tutti:
Ladro! Fuori! Via di qua!

All:
Thief! Out! Get out of here!

Rance sits town at a table, and invites Sonora, Trin, and others to join him at poker.

Rance:
Un poker! Nick, gettoni!

Rance:
Some poker! Nick, chips!

As they start playing Ashby enters.

Ashby:
Sceriffo, hello!

Ashby: (approaching Rance)
Hello, Sheriff!

Rance:

Ragazzi, fate largo!
Salute a Mister Ashby, dell'Agenzia Wells Fargo.

Ashby:

Nick, portami da bere!
Come sta la ragazza?

Minatori:

Grazie, bene.

Rance:

Che nuove del bandito?

Ashby:

Da tre mesi l'apposto!
Non è molto discosto!

Rance:

Boys, stand aside!
Say hello to Mr. Ashby of the Wells Fargo Agency.

Ashby: *(greeting all, shaking hands with Rance)*

Nick, bring me something to drink!
How is the girl?

Miners:

She's well, thanks.

Rance:

Any news about the bandit?

Ashby:

I've been tracking him for three months!
He can't be very far away!

Everyone gathers around Ashby to hear the news.

Rance:

Dicon che ruba come un gran signore!
È spagnolo?

Ashby:

La banda di ladri a cui comanda è messicana: gentaccia gagliarda, astuta, pronta a tutto.
State in guardia.
Io mi sdraio.
Sono stanco, ho l'ossa rotte.
A tutti buona notte!

Rance:

They say he steals like a gallant gentleman!
Is he Spanish?

Ashby:

The band of thieves he's leading are Mexican: they're rabble, but sturdy and cunning, ready for anything.
Be on your guard.
I'm stretching out.
I'm dead tired and I have to go to bed.
Good night to all of you!

Nick brings in a jug of whiskey, lemon and glasses. He hands glasses to the men.

Trin:

Cosa c'è?

Trin: *(to Nick)*

What's this?

Nick:

Offre Minnie!

Nick:

Minnie's treat!

Minatori:

Viva Minnie! La nostra Minnie!

Miners: *(as they drink)*

Long live Minnie! Our Minnie!

Rance:

Mistress Rance, fra poco.

Rance:

Very soon to be Mrs. Rance.

Sonora:

No, faccia di cinese!
Minnie si prende giuoco di te!

Rance:

Ragazzo, è il whisky che lavora.
Ti compatisco.
Di Jack Rance finora nessuno, intendi,
nessuno s'è mai preso giuoco! Intendi?
E buon per te ch'io non curi le offese degli
ubriachi!

Sonora:

Vecchio biscazziere!
Minnie ti burla!

Rance:

Provalo!

Sonora:

Ti burla, muso giallo!

Rance:

Briaco! Ah, miserabile!

Sonora:

No, you yellow face!
Minnie's toying with you!

Rance: (*turning livid*)

Boy, the whiskey is making you babble too
much. I feel sorry for you.
Up to now, no one, no one toys with Jack
Rance! Understand!
It's a good thing that I don't listen to insults
from drunkards!

Sonora: (*slamming the table*)

You're a dirty old gambler!
Minnie's making fun of you!

Rance: (*calmly advancing toward Sonora*)

Prove it!

Sonora:

She's making fun of you, yellow face!

Rance:

Drunkard! Ah, you wretch!

*The two men draw their guns. Just as they are about to shoot,
Trin grabs Sonora's shoulders, and the gunshot is diverted.
Minnie appears at the door, rifle in hand. She approaches Sonora and takes his pistol.
The anger subsides as all greet Minnie.*

Andante vibrato**Tutti:**

Hello, Minnie!

All:

Hello, Minnie!

*Minnie returns Sonora's pistol, and then pushes him towards Rance,
forcing him to shake hands with the Sheriff. Rance complies coldly,
and then goes to a table and begins to play cards by himself.*

Minnie:

Che cos'è stato?
Sempre tu, Sonora?

Minnie: (*to Sonora*)

What happened?
Sonora, is it you again?

Trin:

Nulla, Minnie, sciocchezze.
Si scherzava!

Trin:

It's nothing, Minnie, just nonsense.
They were fooling around!

Minnie:

Voi manderete tutto alla malora!
Vergogna!
Non farò più scuola.

Minnie: *(angrily)*

You'll send everything to blazes!
What a shame!
I'm not going to run the school anymore.

Sonora:

No, Minnie!
Sai, quando tu tardi ci s'annoia. E allora.

Sonora:

No, Minnie!
You know that when you're late we get edgy.

Minnie shakes her head and smiles. Then she notices Bello in contemplation.

Minnie:

Bello, che fai?
Che guardi?

Minnie:

Bello, what are you doing?
What are you looking at?

Bello:

Nulla.

Bello: *(smiling and perplexed)*

Nothing.

Minatori:

Guardava te!

Miners:

He was looking at you!

Joe:

Minnie, li ho colti lungo il "Torrente Nero."
Al mio paese ce ne son tanti!

Joe: *(offering her flowers)*

Minnie, I've gathered them along the "Black
Torrent." There are so many in my village!

Minnie:

Oh, grazie, Joe!

Minnie:

Oh Joe, thank you!

Sonora:

È passato pel campo oggi un merciaio di San
Francisco, aveva trine e nastri.
Questo è per voi.
Vedete, è color porpora come la vostra
bocca.

Sonora: *(giving Minnie a ribbon)*

A trader from San Francisco passed through
the camp today with laces and ribbons.
This is for you.
Look, it's the color of crimson, just like your
lips.

Harry:

E questo è azzuro, come il vostro sguardo!

Harry: *(giving her a silk handkerchief)*

And this is blue, like your eyes!

Minnie:

Grazie, grazie!

Minnie:

Thanks!

Ashby:

Gli omaggi di Wells Fargo!

Ashby: *(offers Minnie a drink)*

A tribute from Wells Fargo!

Minnie:

Hip! Hip!

Minnie: *(takes a sip)*

Hip! Hip!

"Regalias," "Auroras," "Eurekas"?

Minnie offers Ashby cigars

"Regalias," "Auroras," "Eurekas"?

Ashby:

Se li scegliete voi, la qualità non conta nulla.
Ognuno avrà per me il profumo della man
che li tocca!

Nick:

Vi prego, andate in giro: ogni vostro sospiro
è una consumazione!

Minnie:

Mala lingua!

Vi do la buona sera, sceriffo!

Rance:

Buona sera, Minnie.

Sonora:

Tira una riga sul mio conto!

Ashby: (*gallantly*)

If you choose any, the quality is unimportant.
Each cigar will have the perfume of the
hand that touches them!

Nick: (*to Minnie*)

Please make the rounds: each sigh of yours
brings satisfaction!

Minnie:

What a naughty remark!

(*to Rance*)

Sheriff, I bid you good evening!

Rance:

Good evening, Minnie.

Sonora: (*giving Minnie a small bag of gold*)

Cancel a row of charges on my bill!

*Minnie gives the gold to Nick, who cancels Sonora's bill.
He weighs the gold, and then places it in the barrel.*

Ashby:

Con queste bande in giro è una pazzia tener
l'oro qua dentro.
All'Agenzia starebbe molto meglio.

Ashby: (*approaching Rance*)

With those outlaws on the loose, it's
madness to keep the gold here.
It would be much safer at the Agency.

*Minnie takes out a Bible. She goes to the center of the room and all encircle her,
except Rance and Ashby, who talk quietly on the side.*

Minnie:

Dove eravamo?
Ruth? Ezechiel? No, Ester?
No, ecco il segno.
Salmo cinquantunesimo di David.

Minnie:

Where were we?
Ruth? Ezekiel? No, Esther?
No, here's the place.
Psalm Fifty-One of David.

Harry, ricordi chi era David?

Harry, do you remember who David was?

Harry:

Era un re dei tempi antichi, un vero eroe che
quando era ragazzo, armatosi d'una mascella
d'asino, affrontò gran gigante e l'amazzò.

Harry: (*rising like a schoolboy*)

He was a king in ancient times, a real hero
who armed himself with the jawbone of an
ass, and confronted a big giant and killed him.

Minnie:

Che confusione! Siedi.
A posto, Joe!

Minnie: (*laughing*)

What confusion! Sit down.
Find your place Joe!

Ora leggiamo.

Versetto secondo: “Aspergimi d’issòpo e sarò mondo.”

Trin:

Cos’è quest’issòpo, Minnie?

Minnie:

È un’erba che fa in Oriente.

Joe:

E qui da noi non fa?

Minnie:

Sì, Joe, nel cuore ognun di noi ne serba un cespuglietto.

Joe:

Nel cuore?

Minnie:

Nel cuore.

“Lavami e sarò bianco come neve.

Poni dentro al mio petto un puro cuore,
e rinnovella in me, uno spirito eletto.”

Ciò vuol dire, ragazzi, che non v’è al mondo
peccatore cui non s’apra una via di
redenzione.

Sappia ognuno di voi chiudere in sè una
suprema verità d’amore.

Now let’s read.

The second verse: “Purify me with hyssop
and I’ll be cleansed.”

Trin:

Minnie, what is hyssop?

Minnie:

An herb that grows in the Orient.

Joe:

Does it grow here?

Minnie:

Yes, Joe, everyone’s heart has a little bush of
hyssop in it.

Joe:

In the heart?

Minnie:

In the heart.

“Purify me and I’ll be white as snow.

Place a pure heart in my breast,
and renew a righteous spirit in me.”

Boys, that means that there’s not a sinner in
the world for whom a path of redemption is
not open.

May all of you know how to keep the
supreme truth of love inside of you.

*Minnie’s words stun the miners. She approaches Trin to ask him a question,
but he avoids her. Then she approaches Sonora and pokes him
to be sure that he has retained the message of her lesson.*

Nick:

La posta!

Nick: (running to the door)

The mail!

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello:

La posta!

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello:

The mail!

Postiglione:

Hello, ragazzi! State attenti!

S’è visto sul sentiero un ceffo di meticcio.

Post boy: (appearing at the door)

Hello, boys! Be on your guard!

A half-breed has been seen on the trail.

*The post boy gives Nick a packet of letters, which he distributes. He also gives Ashby a
dispatch, and a newspaper to Harry. Ashby becomes incredulous as he reads the dispatch.*

Ashby:
Postiglione!
Conosci certa Nina?
Nina Micheltorena?

Minnie:
È una finta spagnuola nativa di Cachuca,
una sirena che fa consumo di nero fumo per
farsi l'occhio languido.
Chiedetene ai ragazzi!

Ashby:
Sceriffo, questa sera ho Ramerrez al laccio.

Rance:
Come?

Ashby:
L'avventuriera mi dice che sa il covo del
bandito, e che stanotte a mezzanotte vada
alle "Palme."

Rance:
Quella Micheltorena è una canaglia.
Ashby, non vi fidate.

Ashby:
Vendette di donne innamorate.
Ad ogni modo, Rance, tengo l'invito.

*Ashby and Rance leave. Some miners read their letters: some are so pleased with the news
and kiss their letters; others seem angered.*

Happy:
Perfino il pappagallo s'è avvilito.
Chiama "Happy" e poi dice "partito!"

Harry:
Incendi, guerre, terremoti, piene,
quante cose nel mondo!
Al mio paese, che faranno laggiù?
Staranno bene?

Bello:
Ketty sposa?
E chi sposa la mia Ketty?

Ashby:
Post boy!
Do you know a certain Nina?
Nina Micheltorena?

Minnie:
She's a native of Cachuca who pretends to
be Spanish. She's a seductress who puts lots
of black soot on her eyes to look sexy.
Ask the boys!

Ashby: (to Rance)
Sheriff, tonight I'll have Ramerrez with a
noose around his neck.

Rance:
How?

Ashby:
The daring woman has told me that she
knows the bandit's hideout, and tonight, at
midnight, I'm to meet her at the "Palms."

Rance:
That Micheltorena woman is a good-for-
nothing. Ashby, don't trust her.

Ashby: (winking)
It's the vengeance of women in love.
In any case, Rance, I'll keep the appointment.

Happy:
The parrot has also become depressed.
He calls out "Happy" and then says "gone"!

Harry:
So many things in the world: fires, wars,
earthquakes, floods!
What are they doing down in my village?
Are they all right?

Bello:
Is Ketty getting married?
And who's marrying my Ketty?

Senti!
L'orologia suo vicino.
Quel vecchio sordo!
Bah! Povera Ketty!

Joe:
Pur troppo, Joe, ci son notizie, notizie tristi.

Tutte:
Joe, che c'è?
Brutte nuove? Su, coraggio!

Joe:
E anche nonna se n'è andata!

Listen!
It's her neighbor, the watchmaker.
That old man is deaf!
Bah! Poor Ketty!

Joe: (*reading*)
But for Joe, there's sad news.

All:
Joe, what is it?
Bad news? Come on, be brave!

Joe: (*expressing anger*)
Grandma has passed away!

Joe dries his tears.

Whisky!

Nick:
C'è fuori uno straniero.

Minnie:
Chi è?

Nick:
Non l'ho mai visto.
Sembra di San Francisco.
M'ha chiesto whisky ed acqua.

Minnie:
Whisky ed acqua?
Che son questi pasticci?

Nick:
È quello che gli ho detto: All "Polka" si beve
il whisky schietto.

Minnie:
Ben, venga! Gli aggiusteremo i ricci.

Whiskey!

Nick:
There's a stranger outside.

Minnie:
Who is it?

Nick:
I've never seen him before.
He looks like he's from San Francisco.
He asked me for whiskey and water.

Minnie:
Whiskey and water?
What kind of nonsense is that?

Nick:
That's what I told him: at the "Polka" a man
drinks whiskey straight.

Minnie:
Well, let him come! We'll fix his curls.

As Nick goes out, Rance approaches Minnie and speaks to her in a trembling voice.

Rance:
Ti voglio bene, Minnie!

Minnie:
Non lo dite.

Rance:
Minnie, I love you!

Minnie: (*smiling and indifferent*)
Don't say that.

Rance:

Mille dollari, qui, se tu mi baci!

Minnie:

Rance, mi fate ridere. Su via, finitela!

Rance:

Tu non puoi star qui sola! Ti sposo.

Minnie:

E vostra moglie, che dirà?

Rance:

Se tu lo vuoi, ma più mi rivedrà!

Minnie:

Rance, basta! Basta!
M'offendete!

Rance:

Here's a thousand dollars if you kiss me!

Minnie:

Rance, you're making me laugh. Now stop it!

Rance:

You can't stay here alone! I'll marry you.

Minnie:

And what will your wife say?

Rance:

If it's your wish, she'll never see me again!

Minnie: (with pride)

Rance, enough!
You're offending me!

Minnie takes out her pistol and flashes it before Rance.

Vivo sola così, voi lo sapete, perchè così mi piace, con questa compagnia sicura e buona che mai non m'abbandona.
Rance, lasciatemi in pace!

I live alone, and you know that it's because I like it that way; there's a safe and good company of men who'll never abandon me.
Rance, leave me in peace!

Minnie puts her pistol back in her blouse. Rance walks away in silence, and then nervously starts playing at the faro table.

Siete in collera, Rance?

Perchè? V'ho detto il mio pensiero schietto.

Rance, are you angry?

Why? I've told you my honest thoughts.

Andante sostenuto**RANCE**

Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito che è là dai monti, sopra un altro mare;

Rance:

Minnie, dalla mia casa con partito che è là dai monti,
sopra un altro mare: ma non rimpianto,
Minnie, m'ha seguito,
non un rimpianto vi potea lasciare!

Rance: (throwing down the cards violently)

Minnie, I left my house, which is beyond the hills,
and beyond the high seas: when I left there was not one regret,
and I left no regrets behind!

Nessuno mai m'amò, nessuno ho amato,
nessuna cosa mai mi diè piacere!
Chiudo nel petto un cuor di biscaggiere
amaro avvelenato,
che ride dell'amore e del destino:
mi son messo in cammino attratto sol dal
fascino del l'oro.
È questo il solo che non m'ha ingannato.
Or per un bacio tuo getto un tesoro!

Minnie:

L'amore è un'altra cosa.

Rance:

Poesia!

Minnie:

Laggiù nel Soledad, ero piccina,
avevo una stanzuccia affumicata nella
taverna sopra la cucina.
Ci vivevo con babbo e mamma mia.
Ah! Tutto ricordo: vedo le persone entrare,
uscire a sera.

Mamma faceva da cuoca e cantiniera,
babbo dava le carte a faraone.
Mamma era bella, aveva un bel piedino.
Qualche volta giocava anch'essa:
ed io che me ne stavo sotto al tavolino
aspettando cader qualche monetta,
la vedevo serrar furtiva il piede al babbo mio.

No one ever loved me; I never loved
anyone, and nothing ever gave me pleasure!
A poisoned and bitter gambler dwells in
my heart,
and it laughs at love and at destiny.
My journey in life is only for the attraction
and fascination of gold.
Gold is the only thing that hasn't deceived me.
But for one kiss from you, I'd give up a
fortune!

Minnie: (dreamily)

Love is another thing.

Rance:

Nonsense!

Minnie:

I was a little girl down there in Soledad,
I had a tiny smoky room in the tavern,
above the kitchen.
I lived there with my mom and dad.
Ah! I remember everything: I can see the
people coming and going in the evening.

Mamma was the cook and bartender,
and Daddy dealt the cards at faro.
Mamma was beautiful, with lovely feet.
Sometimes she also gambled:
and I would be under the little table waiting
for some coins to fall,
I saw her snuggle her feet to daddy's feet.

Con anima
MINNIE



S'amavan tanto!
Ah! Anch'io vorrei trovare un uomo e certo
l'amerei!

Rance:

Forse la perla è già trovata?

They loved each other so much!
Ah! I would also like to find a man that I
could truly love!

Rance: (menacingly)

Perhaps the pearl has already been found?

Just as Minnie is about to respond to Rance, Nick reappears, accompanied by a stranger (Dick Johnson.) Johnson carries a saddle and a leather jacket over his left shoulder. He places the saddle on a table.



Johnson:
Che c'è per farmi i ricci?

Johnson: *(forcefully)*
Who's going to curl my hair?

Minnie is startled when she realizes that she met the stranger before.

Minnie:
Salute allo straniero!

Minnie:
Hello stranger!

Johnson:
Io son quello che chiesi whisky ed acqua.

Johnson: *(also surprised at seeing Minnie)*
I'm the one who asked for whiskey and water.

Minnie:
È vero?
Nick, il signor prende l'whisky come gli pare.

Minnie:
Is that so?
Nick, let the gentleman drink his whiskey as he pleases.

Nick and Rance exchange glances. Rance frowns as Nick gets a bottle of whiskey and searches for a bottle of water.

Minnie:
Sedete. Sarete stanco.

Minnie: *(motioning Johnson to sit down)*
Sit down. You must be tired.

Johnson:
La ragazza del campo?

Johnson:
Are you the girl I met at the camp?

Minnie:
Sì.

Minnie: *(blushing)*
Yes.

Rance:
Nessun straniero può entrare al campo.
Certo, voi sbagliaste sentiero.
Per caso andavate a trovare Nina Micheltorena?

Rance: *(aggressively approaching Johnson)*
No stranger is allowed to enter the camp.
You must have surely missed the trail.
Any chance you were en route to meet Nina Micheltorena?

Minnie:
Rance!

Minnie:
Rance!

Johnson:

Fermai il cavallo qualche momento appena,
per riposarmi, e al caso, tentare un baccarat.

Rance:

Giocare? E il vostro nome?

Minnie:

Forse che qui si sa il nome della gente?

Johnson:

Johnson.

Rance:

Johnson. E poi?

Johnson:

Vengo da Sacramento.

Minnie:

Benvenuto fra noi, Johnson di Sacramento!

Johnson: *(with indifference)*

I stopped here to rest my horse for a few
minutes, and maybe try my chances at baccarat.

Rance: *(roughly)*

To gamble? What's your name?

Minnie: *(laughing)*

Since when do we ask people's names here?

Johnson: *(staring at Rance)*

Johnson.

Rance: *(with hostility)*

Johnson. And what else?

Johnson:

I come from Sacramento.

Minnie: *(very pleasantly)*

Welcome among us, Johnson from
Sacramento!

Rance goes off, shaking and fuming with anger.

Johnson:

Grazie. Vi ricordate di me?

Minnie:

Sì, se anche voi mi ricordate.

Johnson:

E come non potrei?

Fu pel sentier che mena a Monterey.

Johnson:

Thanks. Do you remember me?

Minnie: *(smiling)*

Yes, if you also remember me.

Johnson:

And how could I not?

It was on the road that leads to Monterey.

Minnie:

Fu nel tornare m'offriste un ramo di
gelsomino.

Minnie:

It was while I was returning that you offered
me a sprig of jasmine.

Johnson:

E poi vi dissi: Andiamo a coglier le more.

Johnson:

And then I said let's go and pick some berries.

Minnie:

Ma io non venni.

Minnie:

But I didn't come.

Johnson:

È vero.

Johnson

That's right.

Minnie:

Ricordate, signore?

Minnie:

Sir, do you remember?

Johnson:
Come adesso.

Minnie:
Io ripresi il cammino.
Voi dicevate. Non ricordo più.

Johnson:
Sì, che lo ricordate: Dissi che da quell'ora...

Minnie:
...Non m'avreste scordato.

Johnson:
Nè v'ho scorado mai, mai, mai!

Minnie:
Quanto tempo sperai di rivedervi.
E non vi vidi più!

Johnson:
As if it was right now.

Minnie:
I went on my way.
You were saying, I don't remember any more.

Johnson: (*coming closer to Minnie*)
Yes, remember I said that from that moment...

Minnie:
...You would never forget me.

Johnson:
Nor have I ever forgotten you, never!

Minnie:
I waited a long time to see you again.
And I never saw you again!

*As Minnie and Johnson look fixedly each other's eyes, Rance approaches them.
In a fit of jealousy, he knocks Johnson's glass down.*

Rance:
Mister Johnson, voi m'avete seccato!
Sono Rance, sceriffo.
Non mi lascio burlare.
Che venite a far qui?

Rance:
Mister Johnson, you've bothered me!
I am Rance, the Sheriff.
I don't let myself be fooled.
What did you come here to do?

Johnson takes a step back, and stares at Rance. He is about to draw his gun but Minnie intervenes to stop him. Johnson smiles, shrugs his shoulders, and goes to the counter, paying no attention to the seething Rance.

Ragazzi!
Uno straniero ricusa confessare perchè si trova al campo!

Boys!
A stranger refuses to tell us why he's in the camp!

Minatori:
Chi è? Lo faremo cantar!

Miners:
Who is he? We'll make him talk!

Minnie:
Io lo conosco! Innanzi al campo intero sto garante per Johnson!

Minnie: (*commandingly*)
I know him! I vouch for Johnson in front of the entire camp!

Minnie's intervention calms the miners. They approach Johnson and greet him cordially.

Sonora:
Buona sera, Mister Johnson!

Sonora:
Good evening, Mister Johnson!

Johnson:
Ragazzi, buona sera!

Johnson: (*effusively shaking hands*).
Boys, good evening!

Trin:
N'ho piacere per lui!
Questo cialtrone smetterà fare da padrone!

Trin: (*indicating a discouraged Rance*)
I'm happy for him!
That rogue will now stop being so bossy!

Harry:
Mister Johnson, un valzer?

Harry: (*indicating the dance floor*)
Mister Johnson, a waltz?

Johnson:
Acceto!

Johnson:
I accept!

But instead of dancing with Harry, Johnson offers his arm to Minnie.

Permetete?

Will you allow me?

All look at Minnie, as to urge her to dance with Johnson. Rance frowns.

Minnie:
Io? Scusatemi: voi non lo crederete, non ho mai ballato in vita mia!

Minnie:
Me? Forgive me. You won't believe it, but I've never danced in my life!

Johnson:
Andiamo.

Johnson:
Let's go.

Tutti:
Avanti, Minnie!

All:
Go on, Minnie!

Minnie:
Andiamo pure!

Minnie: (*gracefully taking Johnson's arm*)
Then let's go!

Tutti:
Musica!
Hip! Hurrah!
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la...

All: (*except Rance*)
Music!
Hip! Hurrah!
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la...

Minnie and Johnson dance. The onlooking miners accompany the waltz tune, and beat the time with their hands.

Tempo di Valzer Moderato



Nick:
Dov'è Minnie?

Nick: (*approaching Rance*)
Where's Minnie?

Rance:

È là dentro che balla con quel can di pelo
fino giunto da Sacramento!

Rance:

She's inside dancing with that dandy who
just arrived from Sacramento!

Nick shrugs his shoulders. Rance angrily kicks Johnson's saddle off the table.

Uomini fuori:

Al laccio! Al Laccio! A morte!

Men outside:

Hang him with the noose! Death to him!

Ashby arrives with Castro, a bandit he has just apprehended.

Ashby:

Al laccio!

Ashby: (*pushing Castro to the floor*)

Hang him!

Castro:

(La sella del padrone! L'hanno preso!)

Castro: (*after seeing Johnson's saddle*)

(The boss's saddle! They've caught him!)

Ashby:

Da bere! Son morto!

Ashby: (*to Nick*)

Something to drink! I'm dead tired!

Rance:

Figlio di cane, mostraci la tua lurida faccia!
Tu sei con Ramerrez?

Rance: (*grabbing Castro's hair*)

You dog, show us your filthy face.
Are you one of Ramerrez's men?

Castro:

Son fuggito. L'odiavo.
Se volete vi porto sulla sua traccia!

Castro:

I ran away. I hated him.
If you want, I'll put you on his trail!

Sonora:

Questo sudi cio ladro c'inganna!

Sonora:

This dirty thief is lying to us!

Castro:

No, non v'inganno!

Castro:

No, I'm not lying!

Rance:

Conosci il nascondiglio?

Rance:

Do you know his hiding place?

Castro:

È a poco più d'un miglio: alls Madrona
Canyada.
Vi mostrerò la strada.
In nome di mia madre, Maria Saltaja,
giuro che non v'inganno!
Se volete, vi porto.
Gli pianterò nel dorso la mia navaja!

Castro:

It's in the Madrona Canyada, just a little
more than a mile from here.
I'll show you the way.
In the name of my mother, Maria Saltaja,
I swear that I'm not lying to you!
If you want, I'll take you there.
I'll plant my dagger in his back!

Rance:

Si va?

Rance: (*to the others*)

Shall we go?

Ashby:
S'è annuvolato. Avremo la tormenta.

Ashby: *(studying the weather outside)*
It's clouded up. We're going to have a storm!

Rance:
Legatelo!

Rance: *(indicating Castro)*
Tie him up!

Some of the miners tie Castro to a chair.

Sonora:
È un buon colpo.

Sonora:
It's a stroke of luck!

Trin:
Si tenta!

Trin:
We'll try it!

Trin e Sonora:
A cavallo, a cavallo!

Trin and Sonora:
Let's get our horses!

Castro:
(Non è preso! È nel ballo!)

Castro: *(happily, as he notices Johnson)*
(He's not caught! He's dancing!)

Minatori:
Dove si va?

Miners:
Where do we go?

Rance:
S'insegue Ramerrez!

Rance:
We'll track Ramerrez!

Nick and Sonora push the barrel with the gold to the center of the room.

Nick:
E l'oro?

Nick:
And the gold?

Sonora:
Gl'occhi di Minnie bastano a guardare il tesoro!

Sonora:
Minnie's eyes are enough to guard the treasure!

Rance and the miners leave.

Castro:
Aguardiente!

Castro: *(shouting to Nick)*
Fire water!

Nick goes behind the bar to get a drink for Castro. Johnson emerges from the dance hall, controlling himself after he sees Castro. He picks up his saddle from the floor and places it on the faro table, all the while pretending that he is adjusting the stirrups.

He turns his back to Castro, who whispers to him.

Mi son lasciato prendere per sviarli.
Mi seguono nel bosco i nostri.
Presto udrete un fischio.
Se c'è il colpo, col fischio rispondete!

I let myself be caught to mislead them.
Our men followed me and are in the forest.
Soon you'll hear a whistle.
If the robbery is "on" answer with your whistle!

Nick:
Quest'uomo sa la traccia di Ramerrez.

Nick: (*addressing Johnson*)
This man knows the trail to Ramerrez.

Rance:
Ora, via!

Rance: (*indicating Castro*)
Now, let's go!

The men drag Castro with them. After sneering at Johnson, Rance follows them.

Nick:
Buona fortuna!

Nick: (*standing at the door*)
Good luck!

Nick prepares to close the "Polka" saloon. He closes the window shutters and extinguishes lights. Johnson goes to the window, looks out, and when he turns he sees the barrel. He makes a gesture of disdain, and then goes to the faro table to retrieve his saddle. Minnie appears at the door of the dance hall.

Minnie:
Mister Johnson, siete rimasto indietro a farmi compagnia per custodir la casa?

Minnie:
Mister Johnson, have you remained behind to join me in guarding the saloon?

Johnson:
Se volete.
Strana cosa! Ritrovarvi qui dove ognuno può entrare per bere e per rubare.

Johnson: (*slightly startled*)
If you wish.
It's so strange, to find you here where anyone can come in to drink or to steal.

Minnie:
Vi do la mia parola che saprei tener fronte a chiunque.

Minnie:
I promise you that I know how to stand up to anyone.

Johnson:
Anche a chi non volesse rubare più ch'un bacio?

Johnson: (*smiling*)
Even one who only wants to steal just a kiss from you?

Minnie:
Anche! Questo m'è accaduto più volte ma il primo bacio debbo darlo ancora.

Minnie: (*laughing*)
That too! That's happened to me several times but I still haven't given my first kiss.

Johnson:
Davvero?
E abitate qui alla "Polka"?

Johnson:
Really?
Do you live here at the "Polka"?

Minnie:
Abito una capanna a mezzo monte.

Minnie:
I live in a cabin half way up the hill.

Johnson:
Meritare di meglio.

Johnson:
You deserve better.

Minnie:

Mi contento.
A me basta; credete.
Ci vivo sola senza timore.

Minnie:

I'm content.
Believe me, it's sufficient for me.
I live there alone and without fear.

Minnie places some coins in an empty cigar box, and then approaches the barrel.

Io sento che anche in voi mi fiderei,
benchè non so chi siate.

I also feel that I can trust you, even though I
don't know who you are.

Johnson:

Non so ben neppur io quel che sono.
Amai la vita, e l'amo, e ancor bella m'appar!

Johnson:

I hardly even know myself.
I loved life, and I love life, and it still seems
beautiful to me!
Surely you love life also, but you haven't
lived long enough to absorb the entire
essence of the world.

Certo anche voi l'amate, ma non avete tanto
vissuto per guardar fino in fondo alle cose
del mondo.

Minnie:

Non so, non so.
Io non son che una povera fanciulla oscura e
buona a nulla.
Mi dite delle cose tanto belle che forse non
intendo.
Non so che sia, ma sento nel cuore uno
scontento d'esser così piccina
e un desiderio d'innalzarmi a voi su,
come le stelle, per esservi vicina, per potervi
parlare.

Minnie: (somewhat confused)

I don't know.
I am merely a poor girl of humble birth with
very little to offer.
You say such beautiful things to me but
perhaps I don't understand them all.
I don't know what it is, but in my heart I feel
disappointed that I'm so inconsequential.
I'd like to elevate myself to your level, like
the stars, to be close to you and be able to
talk to you.

Andante mosso moderatamente
JOHNSON

**Johnson:**

Quello che tacete me l'ha detto il cor,
quando il braccio v'offersi alla danza con
me:
control il mio petto vi sentii tremar;
e provai una gioia strana,
una nuova pace che dir non so!

Johnson:

What you don't say, my heart tells me.
When I offered you my arm, and then we
danced together,
I felt you trembling against my chest;
and I felt a strange joy,
a new kind of peace that I can't describe!

Minnie:

Come voi, leggermi in cor non so: ma ho
l'anima piena di tanta allegrezza, di tanta
pau..

Minnie interrupts herself after noticing that Nick has come in from outside, looking fearful.

Che cosa c'è?

Minnie:

I can't read my heart like you do: but I
have a soul full of so much happiness, and
so much fea..

What is it?

Nick:

S'è visto qui attorno un altro ceffo
messicano.

Nick: (*getting a gun from behind the counter*)

They've seen another ugly Mexican around
here.

Minnie:

Dove, Nick?

Minnie: (*following Nick*)

Nick, where?

Johnson:

Non andate!

Johnson: (*trying to restrain Minnie*)

Don't go!

A whistle is heard from outside.

(Il segnale!)

(The signal!)

Minnie:

Ascoltate! Che sarà questo fischio?

Minnie: (*scared, seeking Johnson's protection*)

Listen! What can that whistle be about?

Minnie points to the barrel.

In quel barile, Johnson, c'è un tesoro.
Ci ripongono l'oro i ragazzi.

Johnson, there's a fortune in that barrel.
The boys put their gold in there.

Johnson:

E vi lascian così?

Johnson:

And they leave you alone like this?

Minnie:

Ogni notte rimangon qui a vegliarlo a turno
un po' per uno.
Stanotte son partiti sulle peste di quel
dannato!

Minnie:

Every night, one of them takes turns to
watch it.
Tonight they left to follow the track of that
damned bandit!

Oh, se qualcuno vuol quell'oro,
pria di toccarlo dovrà uccidermi qui!
Povera gente!
Quanti son di loro che han lasciato lontano
una famiglia, una sposa, dei bimbi,
e son venuti a morir come cani in mezzo alla
fanghiglia per mandare un po' d'oro ai cari
vecchi, e ai bimbi lontani!
Ecco, Johnson, perchè chi vuol quest'oro,
pria passerà su me!

If someone wants that gold, he'll have to kill
me before he can touch it!
Those poor people!
So many of them have left family, a
betrothed, and children, far away from here.
They've come here to work like dogs in the
middle of this mire so they can send a bit of
gold to their parents and children far away!
Here Johnson, whoever wants this gold
will first have to pass over my dead body!

*Minnie goes behind the counter and gets two guns, which she places on top of the barrel.
Johnson stretches out his hand to her, which she clasps forcefully.*

Johnson:

Oh, non temete, nessuno ardirà!
Come mi piace sentirvi parlare così!
E me ne debbo andare.
Avrei voluto salire a darvi l'ultimo saluto
nella vostra capana.

Johnson retrieves his jacket and hat.

Minnie:

Dovete proprio andare?
Che peccato!
I ragazzi saranno qui fra poco.
Quando saran tornati, io me ne andrò.
Se volete venir a salutare seguiranno la
conversazione standoci accanto al fuoco.

Johnson:

Grazie, Minnie.
Verrò!

Minnie:

Non v'aspettate molto!
Non ho che trenta dollari soli d'educazione.
Se studiavo di più, che avrei potuto essere?
Ci pensate?

Johnson:

Ciò che avremmo potuto essere!
Io lo comprendo ora che vi guardo, Minnie!

Minnie:

Davvero? Ma che vale!

Johnson:

Oh, don't be afraid, no one will dare!
How I like to hear you talk like that!
And now I must leave.
I would have liked to go up to your cabin to
at least say goodbye

Minnie: (sadly)

Must you really leave?
What a shame!
The boys will be returning shortly.
When they return, I'll be able to leave here.
If you want to come and say goodbye to me,
the two of us can continue the conversation
next to the fire.

Johnson: (hesitant, then decisive)

Thanks, Minnie.
I'll come!

Minnie:

Don't expect too much!
I only have thirty dollars worth of education.
What could I have become if I studied more?
What do you think?

Johnson:

That which we have we can become!
Minnie, I understand, now that I look at you!

Minnie: (drying a tear)

Is that the truth? But what's the use!

Minnie sobs, hiding her face in her hands.

Oscura e buona a nulla.

I'm of humble birth and good for nothing.

Johnson:

No, Minnie, non piangete.
Voi non vi conoscete.
Siete una creatura d'anima buona e pure e
avete un viso d'angelo!

Johnson: (tenderly)

No, Minnie, don't cry.
You don't know yourself.
You are a person with a good and pure soul,
and you have the face of an angel!

Johnson exits. Nick enters and puts out the lights. It is unusually silent in the "Polka" saloon. Minnie, as if half dazed, stands alone in the light of the one lamp that is still lit, as if lost in an intoxicating memory.

Minnie:

Ha detto.

Come ha detto?

Un viso d'angelo!

Minnie:

He said.

What did he say?

A face of an angel!

Minnie covers her face with her hands, and then vents her feelings of happiness with a deep, prolonged sigh.

END OF ACT I

Act II

A cabin with a single room and a loft above. At the back, a door leads to a short landing. There are two windows with curtains, a bed covered with a quilt, and at the foot of the bed a small table. There is a hand basin and jug, a bureau with several woman's accessories, a wardrobe on which a dress hangs, a hat and shawl on a hook, and pots and pans hang on a bracket. On the mantelpiece of the fireplace there is an old clock, an oil lamp with a globe, a bottle of whiskey, and a glass.

In front of the mantelpiece, a bearskin. To one side, there is a small table set for two.

One hour has elapsed since Johnson parted from Minnie at the "Polka" saloon. The wind outside is howling, and the window panes are covered with frost.

The young Wowkle, an Indian squaw, squats on the floor near the fire, her papoose on her back. She sings a lullaby to her baby in a soft, monotonous melody.

Wowkle:

"Il mio bimbo è grande e piccino,
sta dentro la cuna, è grande e tocca la luna,
col suo ditino.
Hao, wari! Hao, Wari!"

Billy:

Ugh.

Wowkle:

Ugh.

Wowkle:

"My baby inside the crib is big and small,
he's big and touches the moon with his little
finger.
Hao, wari!"

Billy: *(enters and greets Wowkle)*

Ugh.

Wowkle:

Ugh.

Billy sees cookies and milk on the table and is about to taste them.

Crema. Biscotti. Padrona.
Non toccare.

Billy:

Tua padrona mandare.
Dice: Billy sposare.

Wowkle:

Wowkle non sapere.

Billy:

Cosa dare tuo padre per nozze?

Wowkle:

Non sapere.

Billy:

Billy dare quattro dollari tuo padre; e una
coperta.

Cream. Cookies. The missus.
Don't touch.

Billy: *(sits down next to Wowkle)*

Your musses order me.
She say: Billy must marry.

Wowkle:

Wowkle not know.

Billy:

What do I give your father to marry you?

Wowkle:

Not know.

Billy:

Billy will give your father four dollars and a
blanket.

Wowkle:

Wowkle dire: meglio tenere coperta noi per bimbo.

Billy:

Nostro bimbo!

Wowkle:

Wowkle says: better we keep the blanket for the baby.

Billy: (boasting)

Our baby!

Billy lights a pipe and passes it to Wowkle. She takes a puff and then returns it to him.

Domani chiesa cantare.

I sing in church tomorrow.

Wowkle e Billy:

“Come fil d’erba è il giorno che all’uomo diè il Signor,
scende l’inverno al piano,
l’uomo intristisce e muor.”

Wowkle and Billy:

“The day which the Lord gave unto man is like a blade of grass,
once winter descends onto the plains, man becomes sad and dies.”

Billy:

Dopo sposare: avere perle e whisky!

Billy:

After marrying we get beads and whiskey!

Wowkle:

Ecco padrona!

Wowkle:

Here’s the missus!

Minnie appears at the door with a lantern. Wowkle and Billy draw back as if confused. Minnie has difficulty concealing her excitement. She looks around the room as if trying to see what impression it will make on Johnson when he arrives. She hangs the lantern on a nail. Wowkle turns up the lamp on the table.

Minnie:

Billy, è fissato?

Minnie:

Billy, has the marriage date been set?

Billy:

Domani.

Billy:

Tomorrow.

Minnie:

Sta bene. Va via!

Minnie:

All right. Go away!

Stanotte, Wowkle, cena per due.

(to Wowkle)

Tonight, Wowkle, dinner for two.

Wowkle:

Altro venire? Ugh!
Mai prima d’ora.

Wowkle:

Another come? Ugh!
Never before now.

Minnie:

Zitta! Pulisci!
Che ora è?
Sarà qui fra poco.

Minnie:

Quiet! Clean up!
What time is it?
He’ll be here soon.

Minnie removes her boots and throws them to Wowkle, who then places them in a closet.

Piglia!
Dove hai messo le mie rose rosse?

Catch!
Where have you put my red roses?

Wowkle:
Ugh.

Wowkle points to the chest.
Wowkle:
Ugh!

*Wowkle removes her papoose, places it near the fire, and starts to prepare dinner.
Minnie places her gun in a drawer. She looks into a mirror and places some roses in her hair.*

Minnie:
Il bimbo come sta?
Billy davvero t'ha detto?

Minnie:
How's the baby?
Has Billy really said he'll marry you?

Wowkle:
Noi sposare.

Wowkle:
We marry.

Minnie:
To', pel bimbo!

Minnie: *(throwing a ribbon to Wowkle)*
There, for the baby!

Wowkle:
Ugh! Ugh!

Wowkle:
Ugh! Ugh!

Minnie:
Vorrei mettermi queste.
Le scarpette di Monterey.
Purchè mi riesca d'infilarle!
Ahi! Son strette!

Minnie:
I'd like to wear these slippers from
Monterey,
provided they'll fit me!
Ouch! They're tight!

Guardami: credi che gli piaceranno?
Voglio vestirmi tutta come in giorno di festa,
da capa a piedi.

Look at me: Do you think he'll like them?
I want to dress from head to foot like it's a
holiday.

Minnie throws a shawl over her shoulders and looks into the mirror.

Non son poi tanto brutta.

I'm not so ugly after all.

She pours cologne on her handkerchief.

Anche il profumo. Vedi?

Even the perfume. See?

She puts on her gloves.

E i giunti.
È più d'un anno che non li metto!
Non sarò poi troppo elegante?

And these gloves.
It's been over a year since I've worn them!
Does it seem too dressy?

Johnson:
Hello! Hello!

Johnson: (*knocking on the door*)
Hello! Hello!

Minnie:
Wowkle, è già qui!

Minnie: (*startled*)
Wowkle, he's already here!

Minnie notices stockings hanging on a clothes-line and angrily motions to Wowkle to remove them. Minnie looks at herself again in the mirror, hastily places a rose in her hair, and throws a shawl over her shoulders. She stands near the bed, seemingly embarrassed.

Johnson:
Hello!

Johnson: (*at the door, with a lantern*)
Hello!

Minnie:
Buona sera!

Minnie: (*shyly*)
Good evening!

Johnson:
Uscivate!

Johnson:
Were you going out?

Minnie:
Sì. No. Non so. Entrate.

Minnie: (*extremely confused*)
Yes. No. I don't know. Come in.

Johnson:
Come siete graziosa!

Johnson:
How pretty you look!

Johnson is about to kiss Minnie, but she turns away. Then he notices Wowkle.

Perdonate. Non avevo osservato.

Forgive me. I hadn't noticed.

Minnie:
Basta così, signore: non aggiungete scuse.

Minnie: (*as if offended*)
That's quite enough, sir. No more excuses.

Johnson:
Mi siete apparsa così bella.

Johnson:
You seem so lovely to me.

Minnie:
È un andare un po' troppo per le corte.

Minnie: (*still resentful*)
You're getting to the point too quickly.

Johnson:
Vi prego scusare.

Johnson: (*coming closer*)
I beg you to forgive me.

Minnie:
Siete pentito?

Minnie: (*seriously*)
Are you sorry?

Johnson:
No!

Johnson: (*jokingly*)
No!

Minnie lowers her head, and then looks up at Johnson. Their glances meet and she blushes. Wowkle puts out Johnson's lantern and then goes to snuggle up next to the fire.

Rimango?
Grazie.

Amici?
Che pensate?

Minnie:
Un pensiero.
Questa notte alla “Polka” non veniste per me.
Che vi condusse, allora?
Forse è vero che smarriste il sentiero della Micheltorena?
Wowkle il caffè!

Johnson:
Che graziosa stanzetta!

Minnie:
Vi piace?

Johnson:
È tutta piena di voi.
Che cosa strana; la vostra vita, su questa montagna solitaria, lontana dal mondo!

Minnie:
Oh, se sapeste come il vivere è allegro!
Ho un piccolo polledro che mi porta a galoppo laggiù per la campagna;
per prati di giunchiglie, di garofani ardenti,
per riviere profonde cui profuman le sponde gelsomini e vainiglie!

Poi ritorno ai miei pini ai monti della Sierra così al cielo vicini che Iddio pasando pare la sua mano v’inclini,
lontani dalla terra così, che vien la voglia di battere alla soglia del ciel per entrar!

Johnson:
E quando infuriano le tempeste?

Minnie:
Allor sono occupata. È aperta l’accademia.

Johnson:
L’accademia?

Do I stay? (*Minnie nods “yes.”*)
Thanks.

Johnson takes Minnie’s hand.
Friends?
What are you thinking about?

Minnie:
Just a thought.
This evening, you didn’t come to the “Polka” to see me.
Then what brought you there?
Perhaps it’s true: that you took the wrong path en route to that Micheltorena woman?
Wowkle, the coffee!

Johnson: (*as he looks around*)
What a pretty little room!

Minnie:
Do you like it?

Johnson:
It’s full of your charm.
What a strange and lonely life you lead living on this lonely mountain, far away from the world!

Minnie:
Oh, if you knew how happy my life is!
I have a little colt that takes me down there at a gallop, down through the fields of daffodils, of red carnations, and through deep shores whose banks are scented with jasmine and vanilla!

Then I return to my pines and the hills of the Sierra that are so close to Heaven that God can almost touch them with His hand as He passes by, and it’s so far away from the earth that I can almost knock at Heaven’s threshold to enter!

Johnson:
And what happens when the storms rage?

Minnie:
Then I’m busy because school is open.

Johnson:
School?

Minnie:

È la scuola dei minatori.

Johnson:

E la maestra?

Minnie:

Io stessa.

Del biscotto alla crema?

Johnson:

Grazie. Vi piace leggere?

Minnie:

Molto.

Johnson:

Vi manderò dei libri.

Minnie:

Oh, grazie, grazie!

Delle storie d'amore?

Johnson:

Se volete. Vi piacciono?

Minnie:

Sì! Tanto!

Per me l'amore è una cosa infinita!

Non potrò mai capire come si possa,

amando una persona desiderarla per un'ora sola.

Johnson:

Credo che abbiate torto.

Vi sono delle donne che si vorrebbero nella

nostra vita per quell'ora soltanto, poi morire!

Minnie:

Davvero?

Quante volte siete morto?

Uno dei nostri avana?

La candela!

Minnie: *(laughing)*

It's the school for the miners.

Johnson:

And the teacher?

Minnie:

I myself.

Minnie offers Johnson sweets.

Some biscuit with cream?

Johnson:

Thanks. Do you like to read?

Minnie:

Very much.

Johnson:

I'll send you some books.

Minnie:

Oh, thanks!

Some love stories?

Johnson:

If you wish. Do you like them?

Minnie:

Yes! So much!

For me love is an eternal thing!

I won't ever be able to understand how someone can love a person and desire her for only one hour.

Johnson:

I think you're wrong.

There are some women whom we would desire for only an hour, but then want to die!

Minnie: *(playfully)*

Really?

How many times have you died?

Minnie offers Johnson a cigar.

One of our Havanas?

Calling to Wowkle.

A light!

Wowkle brings a candle to light Johnson's cigar. Then Johnson tries to embrace Minnie.

Ah, le mie rose! Me le sciuperete!

Ah, my roses! You'll squash them!

Johnson:

Perchè non le togliete?

Un bacio, un bacio, un bacio solo!

Johnson:

Why don't you remove them?

A kiss, just one kiss!

Minnie:

Mister Johnson, si chiede spesso la man per avere il braccio!

Minnie:

Mister Johnson, go slowly. Before one asks for an arm, ask for a hand!

Johnson:

Il labbro nega quando il cuor concede!

Johnson:

The lips deny when the heart concedes!

Minnie:

Wowkle, tu a casa!

Minnie:

Wowkle, go home!

(to Johnson)

You can stay one hour, two, or more.

Voi potete restar un'ora, due, o più.

Wowkle:

Ugh! Neve!

Wowkle:

Ugh! Snow!

Minnie:

Va! Riposati sul fieno.

Minnie: *(nervously)*

Go! Rest yourself on the hay.

Johnson:

Un bacio, un bacio almen!

Johnson:

A kiss, one kiss, at least!

Minnie:

Eccolo, è tuo!

Minnie: *(falling into Johnson's arms)*

Here it is, it's yours!

Minnie and Johnson embrace, kissing passionately, oblivious to a gust of wind that suddenly blows open the door and sends snow violently flying inside. Gradually the wind subsides, the door closes by itself, and a calm descends upon the room.

The gusts of wind are still heard howling outside.

Johnson:

Minnie, che dolce nome!

Johnson:

Minnie, what a sweet name!

Minnie:

Ti piace?

Minnie:

Do you like it?

Johnson:

Tanto!

T'amo da che t'ho vista.

Johnson:

Very much!

I've loved you since I first saw you.

Johnson suddenly withdraws from Minnie, as if in fear and fright.

Ah, no, non mi guardare, non m'ascoltare!
Minnie, è sogno vano!

Minnie:

Perchè questa parola?
Sono una povera figliuola, lo so.
Ma quando t'ho incontrato mi son detta:
Egli è perfetto; egli m'insegnerà.
Se mi vorrà, m'avrà!

Johnson:

Sii benedetta! Addio!

No, don't look at me, don't listen to me!
Minnie, it's a hopeless dream!

Minnie: (*unable to understand*)

Why are saying such words?
I know that I'm a poor girl.
But when I met you, I said to myself:
he is perfect, he will teach me.
If he wants me, he'll have me!

Johnson:

Be blessed! Farewell!

*Johnson kisses Minnie, and then rushes to the door.
As he opens the door, a sudden gust of snow blows into the room.*

Nevica!

It's snowing!

He closes the door. Minnie takes Johnson to a window and opens the curtains.

Minnie:

Guarda! Il monte è tutto bianco:
non c'è più sentier per andar!

Minnie:

Look! The hill is all white:
there isn't a path to walk on!

Johnson:

Debbo!

Johnson: (*very agitated*)

I must leave!

Minnie:

Perchè?
Domani t'apriranno la via!
È destino! Rimani!

Minnie:

Why?
They'll open the path for you tomorrow!
It's destiny! Stay!

Three gunshots are heard outside.

Johnson:

Ascolta!

Johnson:

Listen!

Minnie:

Ascolta! Forse è un bandito!
Forse è Ramerrez!
A noi che importa!

Minnie:

Listen! Perhaps it's a bandit!
Perhaps it's Ramerrez!
But why should we care about that!

Johnson:

A noi che importa?

Johnson: (*darkly*)

Why should we care?

Minnie:

Resta! È destino!

Minnie:

Stay! It's destiny!

Johnson:

Resto! Ma ti giuro ch'io non ti lascio più!
Mi stringo a te, confuso cuor a cuor, sol con
te!

Johnson:

I'll stay! But I swear that I won't ever leave
you again! I'll draw close to you, united only
with you, heart to heart!

Con espressione grande
MINNIE and JOHNSON

Minnie
Dol - ce vi - ve - re mo - rir e non lasciar - ci
più! non la - sciar - ci più!

Johnson
Dol - ce vi - ve - re mo - rir e non lasciar - ci
più! Col tuo ba - cio fa pu - ro il labbro mio!

Minnie e Johnson:

Dolce vivere e morir e non lasciarci più!

Minnie and Johnson:

The sweetness of life and death. Don't ever
leave us!

Johnson:

Col tuo bacio fa puro il labbro mio!

Johnson:

Purify my lips with your kiss!

Minnie:

Fammi, amor, degna di te!

Minnie:

My love, make me worthy of you!

Johnson:

Sai dirmi che sia questo soffrir?
Non reggo più!
Ti voglio per me!

Johnson:

Do you understand this suffering?
I can't bear it any longer!
I want you only for myself!

Minnie e Johnson:

Eternamente in estasi santa d'amor,
verso la vita,
sotto più fulgido ciel!

Minnie and Johnson:

Eternally, in love's holy ecstasy,
towards a new life,
under a more resplendent sky!

Ah, vivrem nella pace!
Vivremo di bonta!
Mia gioia o amor!
Con te mio amor!

Ah, we'll live in peace!
We'll live from goodness!
My joy and beloved!
With you my beloved!

Johnson:
Minnie! Minnie!

Johnson:
Minnie! Minnie!

Minnie:
Sognavo: si stava tanto bene!
Ora conviene darci la buona notte.

Minnie: (*gently withdrawing*)
I was dreaming: it was so nice!
Now we must say goodnight to each other.

Minnie points to the bed.

Ecco il tuo letto.
Io, presso il focolar.

Here's your bed.
I'll sleep close to the fireplace.

Johnson:
Non vorrò mai!

Johnson: (*protesting*)
I'll never allow it!

Minnie:
Ci sono avvezza, sai?
Quasi ogni notte quando fa troppo freddo
mi rannicchio in quella pelle d'orso e
m'addormento.

Minnie:
Don't you know that I'm used to it?
Almost every night when I'm cold, I curl up
in that bearskin and fall asleep.

Minnie finds a pillow and blanket in the closet and places it on the bearskin near the fireplace. She stands on a chair to extinguish a lamp, and then goes behind the closet and changes into a long white nightgown that she covers with a bright colored robe.

Johnson has thrown his jacket and hat on the bed. He removes his gun from its holster, primes it, and places it on the pillow. As he is about to draw the curtain on the windows, Minnie reappears.

Minnie:
Ora mi puoi parlare, là dalla tua cuccetta.

Minnie:
Now you can talk to me from your bed.

Johnson:
Benedetta!

Johnson:
You are blessed!

Johnson throws Minnie a kiss. Before going into the bed, he hears noises from outside. He goes to the door and listens attentively. Minnie prays before she lies down in bed.

Johnson:
Che sarà?

Johnson: (*whispering near the door*)
What can it be?

Minnie:
Son folate di nevischio.

Minnie:
It's a gust of sleet.

Johnson:
Sembra gente che chiami.

Johnson:
It seems like people are calling.

Minnie:

È il vento dentro ai rami.
Dimmi il tuo nome.

Johnson:

Dick.

Minnie:

Per sempre, Dick!

Johnson:

Per sempre!

Minnie:

Non conoscesti mai Nina Micheltorena?

Johnson:

Mai.

Johnson e Minnie:

Buona notte!

Nick:

Hello! Hello!

Johnson:

Chiamano!

Minnie:

Chi sarà?

Johnson:

Non rispondere!

Minnie:

Non farti sentire.
È geloso Jack Rance.

Nick:

Hanno veduto Ramerrez sul sentiero.

Minnie:

Vengono a darmi aiuto?

Minnie:

It's the wind through the branches.
Tell me your name.

Johnson:

Dick.

Minnie:

Dick, forever!

Johnson:

Forever!

Minnie:

Did you ever know Nina Micheltorena!

Johnson:

Never.

Johnson and Minnie:

Good night!

Nick: *(from outside)*

Hello! Hello!

Johnson:

They're calling!

Minnie: *(rising)*

Who could it be?

Johnson: *peers through the curtains and then seizes his gun)*

Don't answer!

Minnie:

Don't let them know that you're here.
Jack Rance is jealous.

Nick: *(shouting outside)*

They've seen Ramerrez on the trail.

Minnie:

Are they coming here to help me?

Minnie pushes the reluctant Johnson behind the bed curtains. She opens the door and Rance, Ashby, Nick and Sonora enter; they are fully covered with snow.

Sonora:

Sei salva! Io tremo tutto!

Nick:

Abbiam passato un brutto quarto d'ora!

Minnie:

Perchè? Perchè?

Ashby:

Temevano per te.

Minnie:

Per me?

Ashby:

Quel vostro Johnson...

Nick:

Lo straniero.

Rance:

Il tuo damo alla danza era Ramerrez!

Minnie:

Che dite?

Rance:

Abbiamo detto che il tuo perfetto Johnson di Sacramento è un bandito da strada!

Minnie:

Ah! Non è ver! Lo so!

Rance:

Bada di non fidarti troppo un'altra volta!

Minnie:

Non è vero! No! Mentite!

Ashby:

Questa notte alla "Polka" è venuto a rubare.

Minnie:

Ma non rubò!

Sonora:

Non ha rubato, è vero.

Pure, avrebbe potuto!

Sonora:

You're safe! I'm trembling all over!

Nick:

We've spent an ugly quarter of an hour!

Minnie: (*curious*)

Why?

Ashby:

They feared for you.

Minnie:

For me?

Ashby:

That Johnson of yours...

Nick:

The stranger.

Rance: (*maliciously*)

The dandy you danced with was Ramerrez!

Minnie: (*dumbfounded*)

What are you saying?

Rance: (*intently*)

We've said that your Johnson, the dandy from Sacramento, is a highway robber!

Minnie:

It's not true! I know it!

Rance:

Next time, watch that you're not so trusting!

Minnie:

It's not true! No! You're lying!

Ashby:

He came to the "Polka" tonight to rob it.

Minnie:

But he didn't rob it!

Sonora:

It's true, he didn't rob it.

However, he could have!

Rance:

Ha detto Nick che Sid l'ha veduto prender
questo sentiero.
È vero, Nick?

Nick:

È vero!

Rance:

Qui finisce la traccia.
Tu non l'hai visto.
Dov'è dunque andato?

Nick:

(Uno dei nostri avana! È qui!)
Forse ho sbagliato.
Quel Sid è una linguaccia!

Minnie:

Ma chi v'ha detto insomma che il bandito sia
Johnson?

Rance:

La sua donna!

Minnie:

La sua donna? Chi?

Rance:

Nina.

Minnie:

Nina Michtorena? Lo conosce?

Rance:

È l'amante!
Quando capimmo d'essere giocati traemmo
dietro Castro prigioniero,
e predemmo il sentier verso le "Palme."
Eravamo aspettati.
Nina era là.
Ci ha fatto vedere il suo ritratto.
A te!

Rance:

Nick said that Sid saw him take this trail.

Isn't that true, Nick?

Nick:

It's true!

Rance: *(looking fixedly at Minnie)*

The trail ends here.
You haven't seen him?
Then where has he gone?

Nick: *(sees a cigar stub)*

(One of our Havanas! He's here!)
Perhaps I'm mistaken.
That Sid is a blabbermouth!

Minnie: *(proudly)*

But who told you that the bandit is Johnson?

Rance: *(staring intently at Minnie)*

His woman!

Minnie:

His woman! Who?

Rance: *(sneering)*

Nina.

Minnie:

Nina Michtorena? She knows him?

Rance:

She's his lover!
After we found out that we were duped by
the prisoner Castro,
we took the path to the "Palms."
We were expected there.
Nina was there.
She showed us his picture.
Look!

After Rance show Minnie the picture, she bursts out laughing.

Minnie:

Ah, ah, ah, ah!

Minnie:

Ah, ah, ah, ah!

Rance:
Di che ridi?

Minnie:
Oh, di nulla, di nulla.
La compagnia gentil ch'egli s'è scelto!
Nina!

Sonora:
Impara!

Minnie:
Ora, ragazzi, è tardi. Buona notte.

Sonora:
Vi lasciamo dormire.

Minnie:
Grazie. Ora son calma.

Ashby:
Andiamo.

Nick:
Se volete io resto.

Minnie:
No. Buona notte.

Ashby:
Buona notte.

Rance:
What are you laughing about?

Minnie:
Oh, nothing.
What lovely company he's chosen!
Nina!

Sonora:
You've learned something!

Minnie:
Now, boys, it's late. Good night.

Sonora: (*gently*)
We'll let you sleep.

Minnie:
Thanks. I'm calm now.

Ashby:
Let's go.

Nick: (*to Minnie*)
I'll stay if you want.

Minnie:
No, good night.

Ashby:
Good night.

They all leave. Minnie turns with disdain to where Johnson is hiding.

Minnie:
Vieni fuori, vieni fuori, vieni fuor!
Sei venuto a rubare!

Johnson:
No! No! Tutto m'accusa, ma..

Minnie:
Mentisci! Sì! Finisci!
Perchè sei qui, se non per rubare?

Johnson:
Ma quando v'ho veduta...

Minnie:
Come out!
You came to rob us!

Johnson:
No! Everyone accuses me, but...

Minnie:
You're lying! Yes! Finish!
Why are you here if not to steal?

Johnson: (*approaching Minnie*)
But when I saw you...

Minnie:

Adagio, adagio! Non muovere un passo o
chiamo aiuto!

Un bandito! Un bandito!

Ah! Ah! Son fortunata!

Puoi andartene! Va! Va, va, va!

Minnie: (stopping him decisively)

Slow down! Don't take a step or I'll call for
help!

A bandit!

Ah! I'm so fortunate!

You can get yourself out of here! Go!

Johnson:

Una parola sola!

Non mi defenderò sono un dannato!

Johnson:

Let me have just one word!

I won't defend myself. I'm a cursed man!

Andante
JOHNSON



Lo so, Io so!

Ma non vi avrei rubato!

Sono Ramerrez, nacqui vagabondo:

era ladro il mio nome da quando venni al
mondo.

Ma finchè visse mio padre, io non sapevo.

I know it!

But I wouldn't have robbed you!

I'm Ramerrez, I was born a vagabond:

my name was thief from the moment I came
into the world.

But while my father lived, I didn't know it.

Or son se mesi che mio padre morì.

Sola ricchezza mia, per la madre e pei
fratelli, alla dimane,

l'eredità paterna una masnada di bandito di
strada!

Now it's six months since my father died.

My only wealth, for my mother, for my
brothers, for the future,

was my father's inheritance: a gang of
highway bandits!

L'accettai!

Era quello il mio destino!

Ma un giorno v'ho incontrata.

Ho sognato d'andarmene con voi tanto
lontano e redimermi tutto in una vita di
lavoro e d'amore.

I accepted it!

It was my destiny!

But one day I met you.

I dreamed of going far away with you to
totally redeem myself in a life of work and
love.

Largo e calmo
JOHNSON



E il labbro mio mormorò un'ardente preghiera:
 Oh Dio! Ch'ella non sappia mai la mia
 vergogna!
 Ahimè! Ahimè! Vergogna mia!
 Il sogno è stato vano!
 Ora ho finito!

Minnie:

Che voi siate un bandito ve lo perdoni Iddio.
 Ma il primo bacio mio vi siete preso,
 chè vi credevo mio, soltanto mio.
 Andate, andate!
 V'uccideranno! Che m'importa!

And my lips murmured an impassioned
 prayer:
 Oh God! May she never know my shame!
 Alas! My shame!
 The dream has been in vain!
 Now I'm finished!

Minnie: (*moved but angry*)

May God forgive you for being a bandit.
 But you took my first kiss,
 and I thought you were mine alone.
 Go away!
 They'll kill you! What to I care!

Minnie is confounded. But Johnson is desperate and resolved: without weapons, he opens the door, ready to sacrifice his life and be killed.

Johnson:

Addio!

Johnson:

Goodbye!

Johnson leaves hurriedly.

Minnie:

È finita. Finita!

Minnie: (*drying her tears*)

It's over!

Two gunshots are heard outside.

L'han ferito.
 Che importa?

They've wounded him.
 What do I care?

Minnie goes to the door and hears Johnson fall. With a cry of anguish she opens the door. Johnson lies on the ground wounded. She drags him into the house.

Johnson:

Non chiudete la porta.
 Debbo uscire, no!

Johnson:

Don't close the door.
 I must leave!

Minnie:

Entra, sta qui! Sei ferito!
 Nasconditi qui!

Minnie:

Come in, stay here! You're wounded!
 Hide here!

Johnson:

No! Aprite la porta!
 Voglio uscire! No!

Johnson:

No! Open the door!
 I want to leave!

Minnie:

Resta! Resta! Resta!

Minnie:

Stay!

Io t'amo!
Ah! Sei l'uomo che baciai la prima volta!
Non puoi morir!

I love you!
You're the man I kissed for the first time!
You can't die!

Minnie lowers the loft ladder.

Su, su, su, presto!
Su, salvati!
Poi verrai con me. Lontano! Così!
Lo puoi, lo devi! Coraggio!

Up, quickly!
Up, save yourself!
Then you'll come with me! Far away!
You can, you must! Have courage!

Johnson protests, but desperately gathers his strength and ascends the ladder.

Johnson:
Non posso più!

Johnson:
I can't any more!

Minnie:
Su! T'amo! t'amo! Su! Su!

Minnie:
Up! I love you! Up!

A strong knock is heard at the door. Johnson has crawled into the loft.

Minnie calms herself and then goes to answer the door.

Rance enters, gun in hand, and carefully scrutinizes every corner of the room.

Che c'è di nuovo, Jack?

Jack, what's new?

Rance:
Non son Jack, son lo Sceriffo, a caccia del
tuo Johnson d'inferno!
N'ho seguito la traccia.
Dev'esser qui. Dov'è?

Rance: (*imperiously*)
I'm not Jack. I'm the Sheriff in search of
your damned Johnson!
I've followed his trail.
He must be here. Where is he?

Minnie:
Ah! M'avete seccato con questo vostro
Ramerrez!

Minnie:
Ah! I'm sick of hearing about this Ramerrez
of yours!

Rance:
È là! Non c'è, ma l'ho ferito perdio, ne son
certo!
Non può esser fuggito!
Non può esser che qua!

Rance: (*pointing his gun toward the bed*)
He's there! He isn't! But by God, I wounded
him, I'm certain of it!
He couldn't have gotten away!
He can't be anywhere but here!

Minnie:
E cercatelo dunque! Rovinate dove vi pare,
e poi levatevi dai piedi una volta per sempre!

Minnie: (*harshly*)
Then look for him! Search wherever you
please, and then get out, once and for all!

Rance:
Mi giuri che non c'è?

Rance:
Do you swear that he isn't here?

Minnie:
Perché non seguitate a cercarlo?

Minnie:
Why don't you keep looking for him?

Rance:
E sarà! L'avrò sbagliato!

Rance: (*holstering his gun*)
All right! I must have been mistaken!

Rance suddenly turns towards Minnie with unbridled passion.

Ma dimmi che non l'ami!

But tell me that you don't love him!

Minnie:
Siete pazzo!

Minnie: (*with disdain*)
You're crazy!

Rance:
Lo vedi, son pazzo di te!
T'amo! Ti voglio!

Rance: (*approaching Minnie*)
You see, I'm crazy for you!
I love you! I want you!

*Rance violently grabs Minnie, attempting to kiss her.
She fends him off and he chases around the room.*

Minnie:
Vigliacco! Via di qua! Esci!

Minnie:
Coward! Out of here! Get out!

Rance:
Sei fiera! L'ami!
Vuoi serbarti a lui!
Sì, vado.
Ma ti giuro che non t'avrà!

Rance:
You're wild! You love him!
You want to keep yourself for him!
Yes, I'm going.
But I swear to you that he won't have you!

*As Rance extends a menacing hand towards Minnie, a drop of blood
falls from the loft onto his hand. He stops in amazement.*

Oh, strano!
Del sangue sulla mano.

Oh, strange!
Blood on my hand.

Minnie:
Forse v'avrò graffiato!

Minnie: (*trembling*)
Perhaps I scratched you!

Rance:
Non c'è graffio.
Guarda! E sangue ancora!

Rance:
No, it isn't a scratch.
Look! There's more blood!

*Rance cleans the blood off his hand with a handkerchief. More blood drips from above.
Rance looks up and shouts ferociously, a cry of hate and joy.*

È là!

He's there!

Minnie:
Ah, no! Non voglio!

Minnie: (*desperately holding him back*)
No! I won't let you!

Rance:
Lasciami!
Mister Johnson, scendete!

Rance:
Let me go!
Mister Johnson, come down!

Minnie:

Aspettate, non può, vedete, non può!

Minnie:

Wait, he can't, you see, he can't!

Rance climbs on a chair, lowers the ladder, and stands before Johnson with his gun drawn.

Rance:

Scendete, o, perdio!

Rance: (*impatiently*)

By God, come down!

Johnson starts to descend, pale and in pain.

Minnie:

Un minuto, Rance, un minuto ancora!

Minnie: (*imploringly*)

Rance, one minute, one minute more!

Rance:

Un minuto? E perchè?

Ah, ah, ah, che mutamento!

Volete ancor giocare la partita con me,
signor di Sacramento?

Rance:

A minute? Why?

Ah, how things have changed!

Do you still want to play the game with me,
gentleman from Sacramento?

With the help of Minnie, Johnson descends the last rungs of the ladder.

He drags himself to the table.

La scelta a voi: a corda o a pistola!

The choice is yours: by rope or by gun!

Johnson faints on the table, his head in his arms.

Minnie:

Basta, uomo d'inferno!

Vedetelo, è svenuto!

Non può darvi più ascolto!

Minnie: (*violently*)

Enough, you devil!

Look at him, he's fainted!

He can't hear you any more!

Minnie approaches Rance, looks at him fixedly, and then excitedly addresses him.

Parliamoci tra noi e si finisca!

Chi siete voi, Jack Rance?

Un biscazziere. E Johnson? Un bandito.

Io? Padrona di bettola e di bisca.

Vivo sul whisky e l'oro.

Tutti del pari!

Tutti banditi e bari!

Stanotte avete chiesto una risposta all vostra
passione.

Evvovi la mia posta!

Let's talk between ourselves and end this!

Jack Rance, who are you?

A gambler. And Johnson? A bandit.

Me? Owner of a tavern and gambling house.

I live on whiskey and gold.

We're both the same!

Both bandits and cheaters!

Tonight you asked for an answer to resolve
your passion.

Here's my offer!

Rance:

Che vuol dire?

Rance:

What do you mean?

Minnie:

Ch'io v'offro quest'uomo e la mia vita!
Una partita a poker!
Se vincete, pendetevi questo ferito e me.
Ma se vinco, parola di Jack Rance,
è mio quest'uomo!

Rance:

Come l'ami! Accetto, sì!
T'avrò!

Minnie:

La parola?

Rance:

So perdere come un signore.
Ma, perdio! Son tutto della sete di te arso e
distrutto.
Ma se vinco, t'avrò!

*Minnie goes behind the open door of the cupboard,
furtively hiding something in her stocking.*

Minnie:

Aspettate un momento.

Rance:

Che aspetti?

Minnie:

Cercavo un mazzo nuovo.

Minnie approaches the table and puts down the deck of cards.

Son nervosa, scusatemi.
È una cosa terribile pensar che una partita
decide d'una vita.
Siete pronto?

Rance:

Son pronto. Taglia. A te.

Minnie:

Due mani sopra tre.

Rance:

Quante?

Minnie:

I offer you this man and my life!
A game of poker!
If you win, you take this wounded man and me.
But if I win, on Jack Rance's word,
this man is mine!

Rance:

How much you love him! Yes, I accept!
I'll have you!

Minnie:

Your word?

Rance:

I know how to lose like a gentleman.
But, by God! I've been burned and destroyed
from thirsting for you.
But if I win, I'll have you!

Minnie:

Wait a moment.

Rance: (*shuffling a deck of cards*)

What are you waiting for?

Minnie:

I'm looking for a new deck.

Excuse me, I'm nervous.
It's a terrible thing to think that one game
decides a life.
Are you ready?

Rance:

I'm ready. Cut. It's yours.

Minnie:

The best two hands out of three.

Rance:

How many?

Minnie:

Due.

Minnie:

Two.

Rance:

Che ha che tu l'adori?

Rance:

What does he have that makes you adore him so?

Minnie:

Voi che trovate in me?

Minnie:

What do you find in me?

Both anxiously watch their cards. Minnie shows her cards.

Che avete?

What do you have?

Rance:

Io re.

Rance: *(showing his cards)*

Me, a king.

Minnie:

Io re.

Minnie:

Me, a king.

Rance:

Fante.

Rance:

Jack.

Minnie:

Regina.

Minnie:

Queen.

Rance:

Hai vinto. All mano seguente!

Rance:

You've won. Next hand!

Minnie shuffles, makes Rance cut, and then deals the cards.

Minnie:

Quante?

Minnie:

How many?

Rance:

Una.

Rance:

One.

Minnie gives Rance one card. She hides her hand in her stocking and then takes five more cards.

Minnie:

Due.

Minnie:

Two.

Rance:

Due assi e un paio.

Rance:

Two aces and a pair.

Minnie:

Niente!

Minnie: *(showing her hand)*

Nothing!

Rance:
Pari! Siam pari! Evviva!

Minnie:
Ora è la decisiva?

Rance:
Sì, taglia!

Minnie:
Rance, mi duole delle amare parole.

Rance:
Scarta!

Rance: (*joyously*)
Even! We're even! Hurray!

Minnie:
Now comes the decisive game?

Rance:
Yes, cut!

Minnie: (*trying to appease him*)
Rance, I'm sorry for the bitter words.

Rance:
Discard!

Minnie discards two cards. Rance gives her two, and keeps three for himself.

Minnie:
Ho sempre pensato bene di voi, Jack Rance,
e sempre penserò...

Rance:
Io penso solamente che t'avrò fra le mie
braccia.
Tre re! Vedi: ti vinco!

Minnie:
Presto Jack, per pietà!
Qualche cosa, sto male!

Rance:
Che debbo darvi?

Minnie:
Là!

Rance:
Ah! La bottiglia. Vedo.
Ma il bicchiere dov'è?

Minnie:
I've always thought highly of you, Jack
Rance, and I'll always think...

Rance: (*thinking only of victory*)
I think only that I'll have you in my arms!

Three kings! See, I've beaten you!

Minnie: (*as if fainting*)
Jack, quickly, for pity's sake!
Something is wrong, I'm sick!

Rance: (*rising hastily*)
What can I give you?

Minnie: (*pointing to the cupboard*)
There!

Rance:
Ah! The bottle. I see it.
But where is the glass?

*While Rance is at the cupboard, Minnie quickly changes the cards,
replacing her hand with cards she hid in her stocking.*

Minnie:
Presto Jack ve lo chiedo per pietà!

Rance:
So perchè sei svenuta: la partita è perduta!

Minnie:
Jack, hurry up, I beg you, for pity's sake!

Rance: (*bringing a glass of water to Minnie*)
I know why you've fainted: you lost the game!

Minnie:

Vi sbagliate. È la gioia!

Ho vinto io!

Tre assi e un paio!

Minnie: *(rising triumphantly)*

You're wrong. It's my joy!

I have won!

Three aces and a pair!

Rance looks at Minnie's cards, and then grabs his hat and coat.

Rance:

Buona notte!

Rance:

Good night!

*Once Rance has gone, Minnie throws the cards into the air and laughs convulsively.
Finally, she bursts into tears and embraces the still unconscious Johnson.*

Minnie:

È mio!

Minnie:

He's mine!

END OF ACT II

Act III

*A large California forest. There is an open space that is surrounded by tall pine trees.
In the background there are dense woods and a trail winding through the trees.
Snow-capped mountains can be seen in the distance. There are large felled tree trunks that
serve as seats for the miners. Near one of them, a fire burns.*

*It is an early dawn in winter. Ashby and some of the miners are sleeping.
Rance is seated near the fire with Nick.*

Nick:

Ve lo giuro, sceriffo, darei tutte le mance di
dieci settimane pur di tornare indietro d'una
sola, quando questo dannato Johnson della
malora non ci s'era cacciato ancor fra i piedi!

Rance:

Maledetto cane!
Parea ferito a morte.
E pensar che d'allora, mentre noi si gelava
fra la neve,
è stato là, scaldato dal respiro di Minnie,
accarezzato, baciato.

Nick:

Oh, Rance!

Rance:

Un ladro del suo stampo!
Avrei voluto a tutti gridar quel che sapevo.

Nick:

E non l'avete fatto.
È stato proprio un tratto cavalleresco.

Rance:

Ah, sì!
Ma che ci vede, dimmi, che ci trova la nostra
Minnie in quel fantoccio?

Nick:

Qualcosa ci vedrà! Amore, amore!
Paradiso, inferno, è quel che è:
tutto il dannato mondo s'innanamora!
Anche per Minnie è giunta oggi quell'ora.

Nick:

I swear to you, Sheriff, I'd give all my tips
for ten weeks if I could return for one
moment to the days before that damned
Johnson crossed our paths!

Rance: (*angrily*)

That cursed dog!
He seemed to be mortally wounded.
And to think, since then, while we were
freezing in the snow,
he was up there, warmed by Minnie's
breath, and caressed and kissed by her.

Nick:

Oh, Rance!

Rance:

A thief of his breed!
I wanted to shout what I knew for all to hear.

Nick:

And you didn't do it.
That was truly a chivalrous act.

Rance: (*grinning bitterly*)

Ah, yes!
But tell me, what does Minnie see or find in
that little animal?

Nick:

She sees love in him!
Paradise and hell is what it is:
the whole damned world falls in love!
The time for love arrived, even for Minnie.

*Dawn slowly appears. Shouts are heard in the distance.
Ashby leaps to his feet, unties his horse, and leads it towards the path.
Rance and Nick also rise.*

Ashby:

Hurrah, ragazzi!
Sceriffo, avete udito?
N'ero certo! Han trovato il bandito!
Una buona giornata per Wells Fargo!

Minatori:

Hollà! Hollà!

Ashby:

Udite? Ah, questa volta non mi sfuggi,
brigante!

Rance:

Siete più fortunato di me!

Ashby:

Da quella notte alla "Polka" non v'ho
capito più, Sceriffo!

Ashby:

Hurrah, boys!
Sheriff, did you hear?
I wasn't sure! They've found the bandit!
It's a good day for Wells Fargo!

Miners:

Hello! Hello!

Ashby:

Do you hear? This time that scoundrel isn't
going to escape from me!

Rance:

You're luckier than me!

Ashby:

Sheriff, since that night at the "Polka" I
haven't been able to understand you!!

A group of men appear, bearing guns, knives and clubs, They are all shouting wildly.

Ashby:

Hollà! Fermi tutti!
Perdio! Giù le armi!
Dev'esser preso vivo!
Dov'è?

Coro:

S'insegue. Per di qua.

Ashby:

Dove?

Coro:

Di là dal monte!
Il bosco fino a valle è già tutto in allarme.
Ashby, a fra poco. addio!

Ashby:

Vengo con voi!

Ashby:

Holla! All of you stop!
By God! Put down your weapons!
He must be caught alive!
Where is he?

Chorus:

We're after him. Through there.

Ashby:

Where?

Chorus:

There in the hills!
They're alerted from the woods to the valley.
See you soon, Ashby, goodbye!

Ashby:

I'm coming with you!

Ashby leaves with the miners. Rance and Nick remain alone.

Rance:

Or piangi tu, o Minnie, or piangi tu!
Per te soltanto mi son disfatto per notti di
pianto, e tu ridevi alla miseria mia!

Ora quel pianto mi trabocca in riso!
Minnie, ora piangi tu, or piangi ti, tu che
m'hai deriso!
Quegli che amasti non ritornerà.
La corda è pronta che l'impiccherà!

Nick:

Dite! Dite!

Minatori:

È rinchiuso! Fra poco! Urrah!
Avanti ! Avanti!

Nick:

Sceriffo, avete udito?

Rance:

Johnson di Sacramento, un demonio
t'assiste!
Ma, perdio, se ti prendono al laccio e non ti
faccio scontare ogni tormento, puoi sputarmi
sul viso!

Joe, Minatori:

Fugge!

Rance:

Ah! Perdio! Come? Dove?

Harry:

È montato a cavallo!

Harry, Joe, Bello:

Alla Bota già un uomo gli era sopra.
Sembrava ormai spacciato!
Non gli restava scampo!
Già l'avea acciuffato per i capelli,
quand' ecco...

Rance:

Racconta!

Rance: (*pointing menacingly to Minnie's cabin*)

Minnie, now you are going to weep!
I was overcome to possess you. I spent nights
in tears while you laughed at my misery!

Now my tears have turned to laughter!
Minnie, you derided me; now you can weep
yourself!
The man you loved won't return to you.
The rope that will hang him is ready!

Nick: (*to the returning men*)

Tell me what happened!

Miners:

He's surrounded! Soon! Hurrah!
Go on!

Nick:

Sheriff, did you hear that?

Rance:

Johnson from Sacramento, a demon is
assisting you!
But, by God, if they catch you in the noose
and I don't make you pay for tormenting me,
you can spit in my face!

Joe, Miners:

He's run away!

Rance:

Ah! By God! How? Where?

Harry:

He's mounted a horse!

Harry, Joe, Bello:

A man was already on top of him at the Bota.
It seemed that he'd been apprehended!
There was no escape left for him!
We had him caught by the hair,
when suddenly...

Rance:

Tell me!

Harry, Joe, Bello e Minatori:

Quand'ecco il maladetto, con un colpo lo
sbalza giù d'arcioni, s'afferra ai crini,
balza in sella, e sprona e via come un
lampo!

Gli uomini di Wells Fargo l'inseguono a
cavallo!
Ashby colla sua gente gli son tutti alle spalle!

Han passato il torrente!
È un turbine che passa!
Guardate! Urrah!
Via, ragazzi! Alla caccia!
Alla valle! Via tutti!

Joe:

È Sonora, guardate!

Rance, Harry, Joe, Bello:

Racconta!

Sonora:

È preso!

Minatori:

Come fu? Dov'è stato?
Non l'hai visto?
Di' su presto!

Sonora:

L'ho veduto! Perdio! Pareva un lupo stretto
dai cani!
Fra poco sarà qui!

Minatori:

Maledetto spagnuolo!

Rance:

Minnie, Minnie, è finita!

Harry, Joe, Bello, Minatori:

Che ne faremo?
Un ottimo pendaglio!
Lo faremo ballar!

Rance:

Io non fui, non parlai, tenni fede ai divieto!

Harry, Joe, Bello, Miners:

When that scoundrel knocked him out of the
saddle with one blow, grabbed the horse's
mane, jumped into the saddle, kicked the horse
with his spurs, and he was off in a flash!

The Wells Fargo men are now chasing him
on horseback!
Ashby and his men are close behind him!

They've crossed the stream!
It's like a whirlwind passing!
Look! Hurrah!
Go on, boys! To the hunt!
To the valley! Go on, all of you!

Joe:

Look, it's Sonora!

Rance, Harry, Joe, Bello:

Tell us what happened!

Sonora:

He's caught!

Miners:

How did it happen? Where did it happen?
Didn't you see it?
Tell us quickly!

Sonora:

I saw it! By God! He seemed like a wolf set
upon by dogs!
He'll be here soon!

Miners:

That accursed Spaniard!

Rance:

Minnie, it's over!

Harry, Joe, Bello, Miners:

What will we do with him?
Give him a perfect lynching!
We'll make him dance!

Rance:

It wasn't me, I didn't speak, I kept my word!

Harry, Joe, Bello, Minatori:

E quando ballera, Pam, Pam!
Tiremo al bersaglio! Pam! Pam!

Minatori:

Dooda, dooda, dooda, dooda day!

Rance:

A che ti valse?
A che ti vale ormai?
Il tuo bel vagheggin dondolerà da un albero
al rovaio!

Minatori:

Lo farem ballare appena arriva! Urrah!

Nick:

Questo è per te! Ritarda ancor a fare il
laccio.
Guai se mi tradisci! In parola di Nick, bada,
t'amazzo!

Minatori:

A morte! Al laccio!
Al laccio lo spagnuolo!

Ashby:

Sceriffo Rance, consegno a voi quest'uomo
perchè sia dato all comunità.
Faccia essa giustizia!

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy::

La farà!

Ashby:

Buona fortuna, o mio bel gentiluomo!

Rance:

E così, Mister Johnson, come va?
Scusate se v'abbiamo disturbato.

Johnson:

Purchè facciate presto!

Rance:

Oh, quanto a questo bastano sbrigarci pochi
minuti.

Harry, Joe, Bello, Miners:

And when he dances, Pam, Pam!
We'll shoot at him like he's the bulls-eye!

Miners:

Dooda, dooda, dooda, dooda day!

Rance: (*thinking of Minnie*)

Was it worth it for you?
What is it worth to you now?
Your pretty dandy will be swinging from a
tree in the north wind!

Miners:

We'll make him dance as soon as he gets
here! Hurrah!

Nick: (*giving Billy some gold coins*)

This is for you! Delay awhile in making the
noose.
It'll be disaster if you betray me! On my
word, be careful, or I'll kill you!

Miners:

To death! To the noose!
The noose for the Spaniard!

Ashby: (*leading Johnson, who is tied up*)

Sheriff Rance, I give you this man so that he
be given over to the community.
Administer justice accordingly!

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy:

It will be done!

Ashby: (*to Johnson*)

Good luck, my handsome gentleman!

Rance: (*blows a cigar puff in Johnson's face*)

So Mister Johnson, how are you?
Forgive us if we've disturbed you.

Johnson: (*with disdain*)

As long as you get it over with quickly!

Rance:

Oh, as far as finishing you off, it's only a
matter of minutes.

Johnson:

È quello che desidero.

Rance:

E che desideran tutti, vero?

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy, Minatori::

Al laccio! A morte! Cane!

Figlio di cane! Ladro!

Harry:

Hai saccheggiato tutto il paese!

Bello:

La tua banda ladra ha rubato ed ucciso!

Johnson:

No! No!

Trin:

La squadra di Monterey, bandito, fu massacrata dalle faccie gialle di quelle tue canaglie messicane!

Happy:

Pugnastesti alle spalle il povero Tommy!

Johnson:

No! Non è vero!

Happy, Minatori:

Sì!

Harry:

Non è un mese, all'vale fu ucciso un postiglione!

Bello, Harry, Trin:

Tu l'uccidesti! A morte!

Johnson:

No!

Maledizione a me!

Fui ladro, ma assassino, mai!

Joe, Minatori:

No, non è ver!

Johnson:

That's what I want.

Rance:

And that's what we all want, right?

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy, Miners:

To the noose! To death! Dog!

Son of a bitch! Thief!

Harry:

You sacked the whole countryside!

Bello:

Your band of thieves robbed and killed!

Johnson:

No! No!

Trin:

Bandit, the Monterey squadron was massacred by that yellow-faced Mexican rabble of yours!

Happy:

You knifed poor Tommy in the back!

Johnson:

No! It isn't true!

Happy, Miners:

Yes!

Harry:

Less than a month ago, a post boy was murdered in the valley!

Bello, Harry, Trin:

You killed him! To death!

Johnson:

No!

I'm cursed!

I was a thief, but a never a murderer!

Joe, Miners:

No, it isn't true!

Harry, Minatori:

Se pure, fu la sorte che t'aiutò!

Trin:

Alla "Polka" quella notte venisti per rubare!

Sonora:

Furon gl'occhi e il sorriso di Minnie a disarmati!

Bello:

Anche lei ci hai rubato!
Ladro d'oro e di ragazze!

Minatori:

Al laccio lo spagnuolo!
A morte!
Billy ha la mano maestra!
E sarai fatto re della foresta!

Trin, Harry, Joe:

Ti farem ballare l'ultima contraddanza!

Minatori:

Ti farem cantare la romanza della "Bella Fanciulla."

Rance:

Non vi preoccupate, caballero!
È una cosa da nulla!

Johnson:

Risparmiate lo scherno.
Della morte non mi metto pensiero;
e ben voi tutti lo sapete!
Pistola o laccio è uguale.
Se mi sciogliete un braccio, mi sgozzo di mia mano!
D'altro voglio parlarvi: della donna ch'io amo.

Rance:

Hai due minuti per amarla ancora.

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy, Minatori:

Basta! Per Dio!
Fatelo star zitto! Che sfacciato!
È meglio finirla!

Harry, Miners:

If so, it was luck that helped you!

Trin:

That night, you came to the "Polka" to steal!

Sonora:

Minnie's eyes and smile disarmed you!

Bello:

You even stole her from us!
You're a thief of gold and girls!

Miners:

Put the Spaniard to the noose!
To death!
Billy has the hand of a master!
And you'll be made king of the forest!

Trin, Harry, Joe:

We'll make you dance your last square dance!

Miners:

We'll make you sing the ballad of the "Pretty Girl."

Rance: (with irony)

Boy, don't preoccupy yourself!
It's nothing at all!

Johnson:

Spare yourself the mocking.
I don't give a thought about death;
and you all well know it!
Pistol or noose is the same.
If you untie one of my arms, I'll slit my throat with my own hand!
I want to talk to you about something else:
about the woman who I love.

Rance:

You've two minutes to still love her.

Trin, Harry, Joe, Bello, Happy, Miners:

That's enough! By God!
Make him shut up! What impudence!
It's better to end it right away!

Alla corda!
Parlerà da quel ramo!

To the rope!
He'll speak from that branch!

Sonora:
Lasciatelo parlare!
È nel suo dritto!

Sonora: (*authoritatively*)
Let him speak!
It's his right!

Sonora nears Johnson and looks at him fixedly: a look of hate, admiration, and jealousy.

Johnson:
Ti ringrazio, Sonora!
Per lei soltanto, che tutti amate,
a voi chiedo una grazia e una promessa.
Ch'ella non sappia mai come son morto!

Johnson: (*with surprise*)
Thank you, Sonora!
I ask of you one mercy and one promise for
her sake alone, for the woman you all love:
that she may never know how I died!

Rance:
Un minuto, sii breve.

Rance:
One minute, but be brief.

Andante molto lento
JOHNSON



Ch'ella mi cre - da libero e lonta-no, sopra una nuova via di redenzione!

Johnson:
Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano,
sopra una nuova via di redenzione!
Aspetterà ch'io torni.
E passeranno i giorni ed io non tornerò.

Johnson:
I want her to believe that I'm on a new path of
redemption, free and far away!
She'll be waiting for me to return.
The days will pass and I won't return.

Minnie, che m'hai voluto tanto bene!
Ah! Tu della mia vita mio solo fior!

Minnie, who has loved me so much!
Ah! You are the only flower in my life!

Rance:
Ah! Sfacciato!
Hai null'altro da dire?

Rance: (*punching Johnson in the face*)
Ah! What impudence!
Have you anything more to say?

Johnson:
Nulla. Andiamo!

Johnson:
Nothing. Let's go!

Rance indicates the tree for the hanging. Sonora winds the rope. Johnson stands on a stone under the tree, stoically awaiting his fate. One miner throws the rope over a branch, the noose now dangling before Johnson's face.

From the woods, a galloping horse is heard, accompanied shouts from a womanm. The miners drop the rope and run to see who is coming: it is Minnie.

Minatori:

È Minnie!

Miners:

It's Minnie!

Rance:

Impiccatelo!

Rance:

Hang him now!

*Rance, in a crazed state, runs toward Johnson, and urges the miners to hang his rival,
but their only concern is the approaching Minnie.*

*Minnie dismounts from her horse, picks up the rope, and stands before Johnson, protecting
him. The miners step back. Johnson stands motionless, the noose still around his neck.*

Minnie:

Ah! No! Chi l'oserà?

Minnie:

No! Who'll dare to hang him?

Rance:

Giustizia lo vuol!

Rance:

Justice demands it!

Minnie:

Di qual giustizia parli tu, vecchio bandito?

Minnie:

Old bandit, what justice do you speak about?

Rance:

Bada, donna, alle tue parole!

Rance: (*menacingly*)

Woman, watch your words!

Minnie:

Che puoi farmi?
Non ti tremo! Ah!

Minnie: (*staring him fixedly at Rance*)

What can you do to me?
I'm not afraid of you!

Rance:

Strappatela di là!
Nessun di voi ha sangue nelle vene?
Una gonna vi fa sbiancare il viso?
Strappatela di là! Orsù!

Rance: (*inciting the miners*)

Get her away from there!
Are you all a bunch of bloodless cowards?
Has a woman's skirt made you turn pale?
Get her away from there! Right now!

Minnie:

Avanti! Ostate!

Minnie: (*keeping the miners back*)

Come on! Dare it!

Rance:

Finiamola!
Bisogna che giustizia sia fatta! Basta!

Rance: (*vehemently angry*)

Let's end it!
It's necessary that justice be done! Enough!

Minatori:

Basta! Al laccio!

Miners:

Enough! To the noose!

*Two men go behind Minnie and grab her by the shoulders.
She pulls away, presses closer to Johnson, and quickly raises her gun.*

Minnie:

Lasciatemi o l'uccido e m'uccido!

Minnie:

Leave me alone or I'll kill him and myself!

Sonora places himself between Minnie and the miners.

Sonora:

Lasciatela!

Sonora:

Leave her alone!

All step back. Rance sits down on a tree trunk. Sonora remains with Minnie and Johnson.

Minnie:

Non vi fu mai chi disse: “Basta”
quando per voi davo i miei giovani anni
quando, perduta fra bestemmie e risse,
dividevo gli affari e i disagi con voi!
Nessuno ha detto allora: “Basta”!

Minnie: (*trembling and angry*)

No one of you ever said: “enough”
when I sacrificed my youth for you,
when I shared your distress and discomforts,
and your swearing and quarrels!
No one said then: “enough”!

The miners are silent, touched by Minnie’s words.

Ora quest’uomo è mio come di Dio!
Dio nel ciel l’avea benedetto!
Se n’andava lontano verso nuovi orizzonti!
Il bandito che fu è già morto lassù,
sotto il mio tetto.
Voi non potete ucciderlo, no!

Now this man is mine, as if he is from God!
God in heaven had blessed him!
He was going far away, toward new horizons!
There, inside my cabin, the bandit in him
had died.
No, you cannot kill him!

The miners become emotional. No one protests to Minnie.

Sonora:

Ah, Minnie, più dell’oro ci ha rubato il tuo cuore!

Sonora: (*seemingly in tears*)

Ah, Minnie, more than robbing gold, he has robbed us of your heart!

Minnie:

Il mio Sonora buono sarà primo al perdono.

Minnie: (*with great affection*)

My good-hearted Sonora will be the first to forgive him.

Sonora:

Minnie!

Sonora:

Minnie!

Minnie:

Perdonerai come perdonerete tutti.

Minnie:

You’ll forgive him, as will all of you.

Minatori:

No! Non possiamo!

Miners:

No. We cannot!

Minnie:

Si può ciò che si vuole!

Minnie:

You can do it if you want to!

(*turning to Joe*)

E acnhe tu lo vorrai, Joe.

Joe, you also want to forgive him.

Non sei tu che m’offrivi i fiori simili a quelli delle tue brughiere?

Didn’t you offer me flowers just like those from your heaths?

Turning to Harry, caressing his hand.

Harry, e tu, quante sere t'ho vegliato
morente e nel delirio credevi vedere la tua
piccola Maud, la sorella che adori venuta da
lontano.

And you, Harry, there were so many
evenings when you were near death and I
cared for you, and in your delirium you
believed you saw little Maud, your sister far
away, whom you adore so much.

Harry begins to weep.

Sonora:

È necessario. Troppo le dobbiamo!

Sonora:

It's necessary. We owe her so much!

Minnie:

E tu, mio Trin, a cui ressi la mano quando
scrivevi le prime incerte lettere che partivan
di qui per San Domingo.

Minnie: (*to Trin*)

And you, my Trin, whose unsteady hand I
guided when you were writing your first
letters to San Domingo.

Sonora:

Deciditi anche tu!

Sonora: (*to a miner*)

You also decide!

Happy e Minatori:

Non possiamo!

Happy and Miners: (*shaking their heads*)

We cannot!

Sonora:

Tu taci! È nel suo dritto! È necessario!

Sonora: (*to Happy*)

You are silent! She's right! It's necessary!

Minatori:

E Ashby, che dirà?

Miners:

And what will Ashby say?

Sonora:

Dirà quel che vorrà!
I padroni siamo noi!
Andiamo! Non t'opporre, tu! Ragazzi!

Sonora:

He'll say whatever he wants!
We're our own bosses!
Come on, boys! Don't refuse!

Minnie:

E tu buon Happy, e tu, Bello,
che ha gl'occhi cerulli d'un bimbo.
E voi tutti, fratelli del mio cuore, anime rudi
e buone.

Minnie:

And you, good Happy, and you, Bello,
who has the blue eyes of a baby.
And all of you good and rough souls,
brothers within my heart.

Minnie throws down her gun.

Ecco! Getto quest'arma!
Torno quella che fui per voi,
l'amica, la sorella che un giorno v'insegno
una suprema verità d'amore!

Here! I'm throwing down this weapon!
I'm returning to being who I was for you:
the friend and sister who one day taught
you the supreme truth about love!

Minatori:

È una vilta!
Per dispetto a Rance non possiamo!
Tu lo vuoi?

Trin, Harry, Joe:

Non si può resistere!

Happy:

Rideran di noi!

Sonora:

Anche tu, su, via! Per me lo fate!
Guardate come l'ama!

Happy, Trin:

M'ha fatto piangere!

Harry, Joe, Happy, Minatori:

E come è bella!

Harry, Joe, Sonora:

Minnie merita tutto!

Minatori:

Resister non possiamo!

Minnie:

Fratelli, non v'è al mondo peccatore cui non
s'apra una via di redenzione!

Sonora:

Le tue parole sono di Dio.
Tu l'ami come nessuno al mondo!
In nome di tutti, io te lo dono!

Johnson:

Grazie, fratelli!

Sonora:

Va, Minnie, addio!

Minatori:

Mai più ritornerai, no mai più!
Addio!

Minnie, Johnson:

Addio mia dolce terra, addio mia California!

Miners:

It's cowardice!
Despite Rance, we cannot!
You want it?

Trin, Harry, Joe:

I can't resist her!

Happy:

They'll laugh at us!

Sonora: (to other miners)

You also, come on! Do it for my sake!
Look at how much she loves him!

Happy, Trin:

She's made me cry!

Harry, Joe, Happy, Miners:

And how beautiful she is!

Harry, Joe, Sonora:

Minnie deserves everything!

Miners:

We can't resist!

Minnie:

Brothers, there isn't a sinner in the world to
whom the path of redemption is not open!

Sonora:

Your words are from God!
You love him like no one in the world!
In the name of all of us, I give him to you!

Johnson: (clasping Sonora's hand)

Thank you, brothers!

Sonora: (weeping)

Go, Minnie, goodbye!

Miners: (except Rance)

You will never return again, no never!
Goodbye!

Minnie, Johnson:

Goodbye my sweet land, goodbye my
California!

Andante lento con anima
MINNIE and JOHNSON



Ad - dio mia dolce ter - ra, addio, mia Cali-for - nia!

Bei monti della Sierra, nevi, addio!

Lovely hills of the Sierra, snows, goodbye!

END OF OPERA

La rondine

(“The Swallow”)

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini

**Libretto by Giuseppe Adami, based on a German libretto by
Alfred Maria Willner and Heinrich Reichert.**

Premiere: Monte Carlo

March 27, 1917

Principal Characters in La rondine

Rambaldo Fernandez, a Parisian banker	Baritone
Magda de Cuivry, Rambaldo's mistress	Soprano
Lisette, Magda's maid	Soprano
Ruggero Lestocq, son of a friend of Rambaldo	Tenor
Prunier, a poet	Tenor
Friends of Rambaldo:	
Périchaud	Baritone
Gobin	Bass
Crébillon	Bass
Friends of Magda:	
Yvette	Soprano
Bianca	Soprano
Suzy	Mezzo-soprano
A Majordomo (Maitre d'Hotel)	Bass

Party guests, students, artists, grisettes, dancers, and waiters.

TIME: Circa 1860

PLACE: Paris and the French Riviera

Story Synopsis

Magda de Cuivry, mistress of the banker Rambaldo, hosts an afternoon party for friends at her sumptuous Parisian home. Prunier, a poet, informs the guests that romance and love have become the rage in Paris. Prunier reads Magda's palm and predicts that she will fly off over the sea, like a swallow seeking love.

Ruggero Lestocq arrives at the party, the son of an old friend of Rambaldo. Lisette, Magda's maid, suggests that since it is Ruggero's first visit to Paris, he should seek the joys and pleasures of Bullier's, a Parisian nightclub. Magda, recalling a youthful romantic adventure at Bullier's, decides to go to Bullier's that evening, but disguised as a grisette.

At Bullier's, Magda avoids young men who pursue her by sitting at Ruggero's table; Ruggero does not recognize the hostess from earlier in the day because she had been preoccupied with Prunier and the palm reading. Magda and Ruggero fall in love, for Magda, it is a romance that recaptures memories of a youthful romantic adventure.

Magda and Ruggero escape to the French Riviera, the bliss of love more important to Magda than the luxuries of courtesan life. Ruggero intends to marry Magda. He has sought his mother's consent, which he receives in a letter that insists that his future wife be virtuous. Magda fears that if she reveals the truth of her past courtesan life, it would become a scandal and ruin Ruggero. Magda confesses her past to Ruggero, and then leaves him, returning to Rambaldo and the courtesan life of Paris.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: Magda's elegant salon in Paris, circa 1860.

Rambaldo Fernandez and his mistress, Magda de Cuivry, host a late afternoon party for their respective friends: businessmen, and lively young women.

A light Andantino underscores their frivolous conversations.

Andantino:

Andantino



Prunier, at times poet, and at times philosopher, but always a wit and cynic who is at the center of attention, amusing the guests with his gossip and opinions. He informs them that as shocking and incredulous as it may seem, falling in love is not only becoming fashionable, but the rage in Paris: “Love reigns again in Paris.”

Love theme:

Andante sostenuto



Prunier's idealization of love irritates Lisette, Magda's maid. She scoffs at him, proclaiming that love is merely a whim of the moment, her coarseness repulsing the poet.

Prunier discusses love with Magda, Yvette, Suzy, and Bianca: that everyone in Paris is indulging in “amorous glances, embraces, kisses, sighs, but nothing more!” Magda's three friends respond to Prunier with exaggerated astonishment. However, Magda considers romantic love a serious matter; she reproaches them for joking, and orders the men, who have been discussing business affairs, to be silent so that Prunier can continue.

Prunier senses Magda's agitation. He inquires: “Does the idea intrigue you?” Magda is noncommittal, but urges Prunier to continue, the poet describing the latest rage as a “new affliction...epidemic, or perhaps better to say a folly that is wrecking the female population!”

Prunier continues: “It’s a tiny germ that whirls about in the air! It takes you by surprise, and the heart is defenseless!” “No one,” answers Prunier, “not even Doretta.”

Who is Doretta? She is Prunier’s latest idealized romantic heroine, whom he has attempted to immortalize in his new ballad: a charming young woman smitten by the affliction of true love. The ladies ask to hear the ballad, but Prunier is reluctant. Magda insists, calling everyone to be attentive, and ushering Prunier to the piano. Rambaldo, the benefactor of Magda’s present luxurious life, comments that sentimental love is “a bit passé!”, but Magda counters that love is always new and refreshing.

Prunier, seated at the piano, begins his ballad: “Chi il bel sogno di Doretta potè indovinar?” (“Who could guess the beautiful dream of Doretta?”)

“Chi il bel sogno di Doretta potè indovinar?”

Andantino
MAGDA



Chi il bel sogno di Doretta potè indovinar? Il suo mister come mai, come mai finì?
Who could guess the beautiful dream of Doretta? Why did its mystery end?

In Prunier’s ballad, Doretta has a dream in which a king, struck by her beauty, promises her all of his riches if she yields to him. But Doretta refuses the king’s offer” “for gold alone will not bring me happiness.”

Prunier suddenly stops, dispirited because the ending to the ballad has eluded him. He turns to Magda and challenges her to create an ending, promising to surrender his artistic glory to her if she succeeds. Magda yields to temptation and the challenge.

She seats herself at the piano next to Prunier, and sings the ballad. Her ending to the ballad enralls the guests: a young student kisses Doretta with such ardor that she learns the mystery of love, its intoxication and its passion.

“Folle amore! Folle ebrezza!”

Andante
MAGDA



Fol - le a - mo - re!
Mad love!

Fol - le eb - brez - za!
Mad intoxication!



Chi la sot-til ca - rez - za d'un bacio così ardente mai ridir po - trà?
Who can ever describe the subtleness of such an impassioned kiss?

Prunier and the guests are quite impressed and profoundly moved by Magda's exquisite poetry; Prunier compliments her by scattering rose petals at her feet. Magda explains that Doretta's dream represents the fulfillment of life: that riches are important, but love is the true ideal.

The ever-practical Rambaldo expresses his displeasure, announcing that he is armed with holy water to appease the devilish Prunier.

To emphasize the paradox of Magda's romantic meanderings, Rambaldo presents her with a luxurious necklace.

Magda's theme:



Magda expresses surprise at Rambaldo's extraordinary gift. But Doretta's ballad has awakened inner conflicts: Is happiness attained through love, or through riches?

Lisette, somewhat piqued, rushes into the salon to whisper to Rambaldo that a young man is eagerly waiting to meet with him, the son of a childhood friend. Rambaldo asks Magda's permission to see the young man, Magda replying that she is his mistress and he is her benefactor, and he should feel like he is in his own home.

Lisette dramatically describes the young man's comings and goings, her inane behavior annoying Prunier, who turns to Magda and suggests that she get rid of the insipid maid. Magda brushes his commentary aside, claiming that Lisette brings a little sunshine into her life.

Magda's friends express their envy of Magda's good fortune and Rambaldo's generous gift, but Magda refutes material luxuries, even though she has become so accustomed to them. She inquires of her friends if they have never dreamed of being happily in love, perhaps like a grisette?

Prunier joins the men on the terrace. Magda reminisces to her female friends about a cherished romantic adventure of long ago: she escaped one evening from the custody of her old aunt to Café Bullier. She met a student there and it became a moment of sudden romance and passion.

“Ore dolce e divine”

Larghetto
MAGDA

Or - e dol - ci e di - vi - ne di lie - ta ba - ra - - onda fra stu - denti e sartine d'una notte a Bul -
It was one night at Bullier's: sweet and divine hours of happy commotion among students

-lier! Come andai? Non lo so! Come uscii? Non lo so!
and seamstresses! How did I get there? I don't know! How did I leave? I don't know!

Yvette, Suzy, and Bianca, eagerly urge Magda to continue the story of her romantic episode. She recalls that after they danced, the young man sat with her. He shouted to the waiter, “Two bocks,” and then gave the waiter an extravagant tip of twenty sous. Then she wrote her name on the marble table-top. Amid the commotion and mayhem of Bullier’s, they stared profoundly into each other’s eyes, but said not a word. She suddenly fled from the intoxication of happiness and bliss, responding to a voice from the distance that warned her of the dangers of surrendering to love.

“Fanciulla, è sbocciato l’amore!”

Allegro moderato
MAGDA

"Fan - ciul - la, è sboc - ci - ato l'a - mo - re!"
"My girl, love is abloom!"

Di - fen - di, di - fen - di, di fen - di il tuo cuo - re!"
Protect your heart!"

That is Magda’s story of love. a memory that remains vivid in her heart.

The ladies call to the poet Prunier, suggesting that Magda’s fascinating adventure could provide a wonderful inspiration for a poetic subject: a story worthy of his artistic ideals. But Prunier seeks those ideal women of history and literature, refined, elegant, or even perverse: Gaitea (in Greek myth, the great love of Acis, who was crushed beneath a rock by the Cyclops of Polyphemus, his jealous rival, his blood transforming into water and becoming the river Acis); Berenice (in the second century BC, the woman who offered a lock of her hair to the gods if her husband Ptolemy returned victorious from the Syrian campaign, the lock of hair later transformed into a heavenly constellation); Francesca (the 13th century beauty from Ravenna who betrayed her husband with her

brother-in-law); and Salome (from the bible story in which Salome's dancing so enthralled her stepfather that he offered her anything in his kingdom, but she demanded and received the head of John the Baptist.)

Magda inquires how Prunier determines a woman's worth. He replies: "The destiny of every woman is marked in the palm of her hand." The ladies become intrigued and urge Prunier to read their palms. Prunier calls for a screen to separate the ladies and himself from the other guests.

Lisette bears a visiting card on a tray that introduces Ruggero Lestocq, the son of Rambaldo's childhood friend. The young man, shy and uneasy, presents Rambaldo with a letter of introduction from his father. Magda, concealed by the screen, does not see the young man.

Prunier studies Magda's palm and predicts a portentous and mysterious future for her: perhaps she will be like a swallow, destined to seek love by migrating across the seas toward a sun-filled land.

"Forse, come la rondine"

Andante mosso
PRUNIER

Fo - rse, come la rondine, migrerete oltre il ma - re, verso un chiaro pa-
Perhaps like the swallow, you will migrate across the seas toward a bright land

- e - se di sogno. Ver-so il so - le, ver - so l'Amore. E for - se...
of dreams, toward the sun, toward love. And perhaps...

Prunier tells Magda that her destiny is mysterious: that perhaps smiles await her future, or perhaps anguish.

Rambaldo learns that it is the young Ruggero's first visit to Paris. He interrupts Prunier's palm reading to inquire if he could recommend a place in Paris for Ruggero to spend a festive evening. Prunier sneers at Rambaldo, proclaiming that the magic of the first evening in Paris is but a myth.

Lisette protests to Prunier, assuring everyone that Paris is a city of fascination, surprises, and marvels. Prunier demands that the contentious maid behave herself; Magda protects Lisette and begs Prunier to forgive her.

"Tutta Parigi scintilla!"

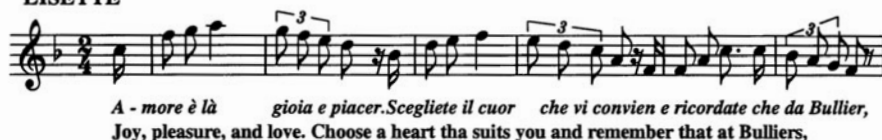
Tempo di Polka moderato
LISETTE, YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY

Tut - ta Parigi scintil - la! Tutta Pa - rigi sfa - villa!
All Paris ia aglitter! All Paris sparkles!

The guests consider various nightspots to suggest to Ruggero. Lisette's suggestion of Bullier's becomes their favorite, a place that Lisette describes as full of love, joy and pleasure.

“Amore è là, gioia e piacer”

Tempo di Polka moderato
LISETTE



The mention of Bullier's confounds Magda; her thoughts return to the mysterious romantic episode at Bullier's of many years ago; and Prunier's palm reading prophecy has likewise confounded her.

Ruggero leaves, unnoticed by Magda. Prunier, Rambaldo, and the other guests depart, leaving Magda alone. When Lisette returns from showing the guests out, Magda orders her to have a carriage ready for her. Lisette reminds her mistress that she has been given the rest of the evening off, and then leaves the room.

Magda's thoughts become preoccupied with Prunier's words: "Like a swallow I will migrate across the seas toward a sun-filled land of dreams." She notices the written list of nightspots that Ruggero left behind. As her thoughts turn to Bullier's, she erupts into a smile, and then rushes into her boudoir.

Prunier returns. He has come meet Lisette, their intimate relationship a strange blend of love and hate.

Andante un poco mosso



Prunier declares his love for Lisette, at the same time denouncing her as unworthy of a poet of his stature: "Only rich women can be loved by the likes of me. But instead I am yours!"

As they are about to leave, Prunier disapproves of Lisette's hat, which she defends as one of her mistress's finest; but he insists that she change it because it conflicts with the rest of her outfit. Alone, Prunier reflects on his affair with Lisette, a contradiction of personalities; he seeks forgiveness from the muses for a love in which emotion has overpowered reason.

Lisette returns; she is wearing a different hat. Prunier now disapproves of her coat, insisting that she wear the black silk cloak of the night before. And Prunier insists that she wear lipstick, mascara and blush. Afterwards, both slowly depart, each declaring their love for the other.

Magda emerges from her boudoir dressed in the simple clothes of a grisette. She reaches the door but becomes hesitant. She returns to look into the mirror, assuring herself that no one would recognize her. She departs quickly for Bullier's, her thoughts preoccupied with her romantic episode at Bullier's of years ago, Prunier's prophecy, and his ballad about Doretta's dream: thoughts of true love.

Act II: At Chez Bullier's.

A kaleidoscope of people indulge in merriment and pleasure at Bullier's: women sell flowers, champagne flows, couples dance, students drink and flirt with girls, grisettes discuss men and love, and lovers embrace and kiss.

Magda, disguised as a grisette, descends the stairs hesitantly. A group of students notice her, comment that she seems slightly bedraggled, but find her pretty and utterly charming. One student approaches her and offers his arm to her, which she declines. Other students cluster around her, but to avoid them, she informs them that she already has an engagement. The students offer to guide her to the man awaiting her. Magda notices a young man (Ruggero) sitting at a table; the students assume that he awaits her and they escort her to his table.

Magda excuses her intrusion, explaining that she has seated herself at his table in order to free herself from the students. Ruggero gestures that she remain, acknowledging that she seems quite different from the other girls at Bullier's. Pleased by the compliment, Magda remains at the table with the unknown young man.

Ruggero suggests that she reminds him of girls from Montauban, young women who exude youthful smiles as they merrily dance. Magda is flattered. He explains that the girls of Montauban are unlike the Parisian girls; like her, they are very beautiful, but humble and modest, satisfied to adorn their hair with a simple flower.

Magda expresses her wish that she could dance like the girls of Montauban, prompting Ruggero to invite her to dance with him.

"Nella dolce carezza della danza"



MAGDA

RUGGERO

Nella dol - ce ca - rezza della dan - za chiude gli oc - chi per so - gnar.
 I close my eyes to dream in the sweet caress of the dance.

As they dance, Magda and Ruggero seem lost in an intoxicating dream, enchanted by each other's presence.

“Vuoi tu dirmi che cosa più ti tormenta”

Tempo di Valzer
SOPRANOS and TENORS



The musical score is written for Soprano and Tenor voices. It is in 3/4 time, indicated by the 'Tempo di Valzer' marking. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the staff, with the Italian text on the first line and the English translation on the second line. The English translation is: 'Can you tell me what torments you more than love laughing so merrily?'. The score includes a first ending bracket with a '2' indicating a second ending.

Vuoi tu dir - mi che co - sa più ti tor - men-ta
 Can you tell me what torments you more than love laughing so merrily?

They dance to an exuberant Viennese-style waltz.

Viennese Waltz:

Col massimo slancio



The musical score is for a Viennese Waltz. It is in 3/4 time, indicated by the 'Col massimo slancio' marking. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Prunier and Lisette arrive at Bullier's. Prunier is ashamed of Lisette's rather unsophisticated behavior and urges her to be dignified and stop chattering incessantly. Lisette admits her love for Prunier, but that she is choked by his constant reprimands of her behavior. Prunier defends his admonitions, claiming that they are intended to help her improve. Lisette and Prunier disappear into the crowds.

Magda and Ruggero return to their table, both exhausted from dancing. Magda is thirsty and asks Ruggero to quickly order two bocks. She further requests that when the waiter returns, he tip him 20 sous and tell him to keep the change: Magda wants to repeat the mysterious romantic episode of years ago.

Ruggero is confounded by her rather strange request, but acquiesces. When the beers arrive, he toasts to her health, Magda replying, "to your loves!" Ruggero becomes defensive, telling Magda that if he were to love, it would be but one woman for as long he lives. Magda repeats his last words with a sense of yearning: "For your entire life!"

Ruggero inquires of his new friend's name. As she did many years ago, Magda writes "Paulette" on the tabletop. Likewise, Ruggero inscribes his name next to hers. Magda comments that now something of theirs will remain at Bullier's, but Ruggero corrects her: that it will soon be erased, but the mystery will always remain theirs. Magda announces that destiny has brought them together, prompting Ruggero to confess that although he knows nothing of her, he does not feel that she is a stranger, but the woman for whom his heart has been yearning.

“Io non so chi siate voi”

Andantino calmo
RUGGERO

Io non so chi sia - te voi, e per qual vi - a giungete fino a me, per - chè? Ma
I don't know who you might be, by which path you came, and why! But

pu - re sen - to strano un tormen - to dol - ce, infinito, nè so dir qua - l'è!
I feel a strange torture that I can't understand: sweet and infinite!

Magda is overcome, as if in a dream. Both embrace, kiss, and celebrate their newfound love.

Lisette recognizes Magda and shrieks in astonishment. Prunier indeed recognizes Magda, but tries to be discreet; he tells Lisette that she is wrong, the victim of too much wine. But Lisette is insistent, convinced that the woman is her mistress; she also recognizes that the young man with her had come to visit Rambaldo earlier that day.

Both approach the table where Magda and Ruggero are sitting. Prunier confirms that it is indeed the young man of earlier in the day, but tries to persuade Lisette that the young lady is not her mistress but a woman who resembles her. He again accuses Lisette of being drunk. Ruggero introduces his lady friend to them: “My friend, Paulette.” Prunier asks Lisette if she is now convinced of her mistake, and then introduces himself to the woman named Paulette.

Magda plays along with the charade. She inquires why Lisette continues to stare at her. Lisette replies that it is because she looks exactly like her mistress, although she is inelegantly dressed. Magda laughs, commenting that it is Lisette who is indeed elegantly dressed. Lisette explains that her clothes cost her little because they all belong to her mistress. Magda finds her impudent, prompting Prunier to laugh cynically. Magda becomes equally cynical and inquires if Lisette is Prunier’s Salome or his Berenice.

Ruggero orders champagne and then toasts to love: to Magda’s fresh smile, her profound desires, and the lips that have uttered his name. The two couples drink.

Magda is supremely happy, the evening becoming the fulfillment of a dream. Magda and Ruggero have yielded to love, and both pray that their love will remain an infinite passion. Lisette and Prunier also exchange thoughts of love, Prunier even admitting that Lisette is the first woman who has truly touched his heart.

Suddenly, Prunier notices Rambaldo. Magda urges Ruggero to leave, but Prunier takes command of the embarrassing situation by requesting that Ruggero take Lisette to a quiet corner; in this way, Prunier will be with Magda and protect her. Magda is unsure if Rambaldo has seen her. But Rambaldo heads toward their table, Prunier urges Magda to use discretion and leave, but she adamantly refuses, commenting that “one in love does not think!”

Rambaldo has her necklace, which she so casually left lying about in her salon. He asks to speak with Magda alone, seeking an explanation for her presence at Bullier's in disguise and with another man. Magda claims that she has nothing to add to what he has already seen.

Rambaldo asks Magda to leave with him, but she insists that she will remain at Bullier's, revealing that she is in love with the man she is with. Rambaldo concludes that Magda has become possessed by madness, but Magda admonishes him that he does not know what it is like to thirst for love and find love; she must surrender to the power of love, a reason to live. Magda offers her hand to Rambaldo to apologize if she has brought him sorrow. Rambaldo expresses his hope that she does not regret her decision.

Ruggero returns. Prunier, Lisette, and all the patrons of Bullier's have left. Ruggero reminds Magda that it is already morning, and inquires where they should go. He notices that Magda is disquieted. Magda reveals how much she loves him, and explains why she has become distraught: "See, I am afraid. I am *too* happy! It's my dream, do you understand? But I tremble and weep."

Again, Magda and Ruggero declare their love for each other, and then Magda becomes spellbound, astonished by her decision.

Act III: A seaside hotel on the French Riviera.

Ruggero and Magda have seemingly captured the ideal of contentment. They are enjoying a quiet afternoon on the terrace of their seaside escape on the French Riviera: the sea is tranquil, and the air is saturated with the intoxicating aromas of flowers.

"Senti? Anche il mare respira sommessò"

Moderato sostenuto
MAGDA



Sen - ti? Anche il mare respira sommes - so. L'aria bevo il profumo dei fior!
Listen! Even the sea breathes softly, the air saturated with the perfume of flowers.

Both confirm their love for each other. Magda expresses her hope that the solitude of seaside life will not bore Ruggero, he confessing that he is not alone because of her presence. Magda speaks of their love being born among the flowers, the flowers at Bullier's.

Ruggero announces that today Magda deserves something special. He reveals that he has written to his parents to request money. Magda blames herself for their financial troubles. Ruggero then reveals that in truth he wrote to ask his parents consent to their marriage. Magda responds in shock, while Ruggero proclaims if they love each other, it should be forever; Magda is not just his lover, but the ideal of love itself.

Ruggero invites Magda to accompany him home, a lovely house on a hill, with an orchard that wakes in the morning to the rays of the sun. With his mother, they will be protected from all pain. And perhaps they will have a child there.

“Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa”

Andante sostenuto
RUGGERO

Dim - mi che vuoi se - guirme alla mia casa che intorno ha un orto e in faccia la collina
Tell me that you want to follow me to my home, surrounded by a garden and opposite a hill

che si risveglia al sole, la matti - na ed è piena alla sera d'ombre strane!
that wakes to the sun in the morning, and is full of strange shadows in the evening!

Ruggero kisses Magda, and then leaves for the post office. Magda is bewildered and perplexed, seized by terror and unable to comprehend her destiny. Ruggero is earnest, but naive. Should she tell him about her past, or be silent?

Lisette and Prunier arrive, seeking Magda, but they are unsure if they have found the right place. Lisette berates Prunier for ruining her life; he wanted to transform her into an artist and urged her to become a singer. But her short career ended in disaster, and she can still hear the audience's hissing. Although Prunier protests Lisette's ingratitude, he promised her that he would do everything possible to help her return as Magda's maid.

They learn from the maitre d'hôtel (majordomo) that Magda indeed resides there. Prunier instructs him to simply announce that two friends from Paris await her. Lisette is extremely nervous, totally overwrought due to her failed stage experience. As Prunier and Lisette quarrel, Magda enters.

Magda is touched by the visit of her old Parisian friend. Prunier informs Magda that all Paris gossips about her estrangement from Rambaldo, and her escape in the name of true love; he adds that few believe it. Prunier inquires of Magda's new life, cynically commenting that illusions about love terminate in the grave. Magda becomes extremely hurt by Prunier's comments and cynicism; she quickly changes the subject, inquiring about the purpose of their visit.

Prunier explains that because Lisette failed at the theater in Nice, she wants to return as her maid. Magda acknowledges that she will be pleased to have her back. But Magda also learns that Prunier is acting on behalf of Rambaldo, who is aware of her financial plight and is ready to rescue her by taking her back. Magda remains firm in her convictions and ends the conversation: “No more!”

Just before leaving, Prunier asks Lisette what time she gets off from work that evening. He will be waiting. Lisette hurriedly goes to work, redeemed by her return to serving Magda.

Ruggero returns with the long-awaited letter from his mother. Magda suddenly becomes fearful and agitated. Ruggero presses the letter into her hands and urges her to read it aloud. Ruggero’s mother writes: “My son, you have told me that a sweet person has touched your heart. May she be blessed if she is sent by the Lord. With drenched tears in my eyes, I think that she will be the mother of your children. It is motherhood that sanctifies love. I know that she is good, humble, chaste, and virtuous, may she be blessed! While I anxiously await your return, your parents old home brightens with joy to welcome the chosen young lady. Give her my kiss.”

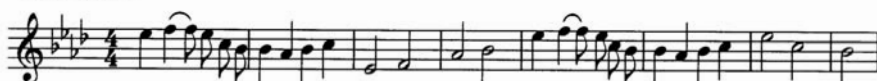
Ruggero attempts to kiss Magda for his mother, but Magda cannot accept it. Magda reveals that she has a tainted past that is inerasable, and therefore, she cannot enter his home. Ruggero proclaims that her past is unimportant to him: “I only know that you are mine.”

Magda confesses that she lived among shame and gold. She can be his lover, but never the wife that his mother wants or believes her to be. Ruggero begs her to stop; his life will be destroyed without her. But Magda persists, repeating that she is a shameful woman who cannot defile his home.

Because of her profound love for him, she cannot ruin his life with scandal. Ruggero continues to plead with her.

“*Ma come puoi lasciarmi*”

Andante mosso appassionato
RUGGERO



Ma come puoi lasciarmi se mi struggo in pianto, se disperatamente io m'aggrappo a te!
But how can you leave me when I'm tormented with tears, and cling to you in desperation!

Magda urges Ruggero not to despair: destiny has willed the end of their love, but the memory will remain. The sacrifice she is making is being made in the name of her love for Ruggero. She urges Ruggero to say no more; let the pain and grief be hers.

To the sound of distant chimes, the death-knell of their idyll, Magda leaves, Ruggero’s agony expressed by his tears and sobbing.

Commentary and Analysis

After the raging success of *La fanciulla del West*, Puccini was once again hunting for a libretto, eagerly seeking new and original subjects to dramatize on the lyric stage.

In October 1913, while visiting Vienna for the first Austrian production of *La fanciulla del West*, Puccini's close friend, the renowned operetta composer Franz Lehár, introduced him to Siegmund Eibenschütz, director of the Karltheater, and Emil Berté, a music publisher. Both were eager to lure Puccini into compose an operetta that would combine the gaiety and sentiment that he so magnificently captured in *La bohème*, with contemporary Viennese operetta traditions; the operetta would be a fusion of singspiel and French vaudeville in the style of Johann Strauss and Franz Lehár.

The Austrians flattered and cajoled Puccini. They made a handsome financial offer, and even limited the score to ten musical numbers, the rest spoken dialogue. Puccini admittedly enjoyed operetta, but hesitated to compose in the genre, a style of musical theater that was far from through-composed opera, or music drama. He also feared that he would tarnish his image as a composer of serious opera if he composed an operetta.

Nevertheless, after reading Alfred Maria Willner's sketches, Puccini emphatically declined the Austrians' offer, finding no dramatic interest in what he considered a banal plot. His real intent was to compose a complete opera for the Austrians, a comic opera that would transcend the humor of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*.

But the Austrians were undaunted in attempting to seduce Puccini into composing their operetta. Willner collaborated with Heinrich Reichert and delivered a new libretto to Puccini: *Die Schwalbe* (*La rondine* in Italian, *The Swallow* in English.), but again the plot failed to inspire Puccini: a hybrid plot containing evident similarities with certain elements of Verdi's *La traviata* and Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*.

Puccini also found the plot absurd, what he called a "porcheria," or trash. In particular, he questioned the plot's dramatic integrity: in its original conception, the young Ruggero meets Magda at a dance hall and is unconcerned about her background, but when he later learns about her courtesan profession, his impassioned love crashed instantly — as if the naïve young man thought he found her in a convent. In the end, Puccini asked the Austrians to send him a scenario with more substance and credibility.

Puccini also had difficulty composing a string of unrelated musical numbers united with spoken dialogue: in his operas, he strove for a seamless continuity of words and music, his most recent *La fanciulla* certainly a major advancement in Puccini's musico-dramatic development..

Under Giulio Ricordi, Casa Ricordi had published all seven of Puccini's operas. Giulio Ricordi had been Puccini's champion as well as surrogate father, an extremely cultured man possessing wisdom and diplomatic tact, and their relationship was built on profound mutual respect. Giulio Ricordi died in 1912, his son Tito taking the reins of the publishing company after his death.

Tito Ricordi was the opposite of his father, an unsympathetic and ruthless businessman lacking artistic sensitivity; personalities clashed immediately. But more importantly, Tito considered Puccini a dated composer, preferring to lavish his attention

on his new protégé, Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944). Puccini was insulted and had become anxious and doubtful about his future with Casa Ricordi.

A year later, a major feud erupted between Puccini and Casa Ricordi, Puccini becoming inflamed and furious because he believed that Tito failed to adequately provide supervision for a Vienna performance of *Tosca*. Tito also affronted Puccini by candidly expressing absolutely no interest in acquiring the rights to his operetta project, what he called “Puccini’s Austrian folly,” or “bad Lehár.” In revenge, Puccini deserted Ricordi and contracted with the Viennese to compose their operetta.

In July 1914, World War I engulfed Europe, and by May 1915, Italy and Austria were on opposite sides of the conflict. Liaison with the Austrian librettists, publishers, and translators during wartime became a nightmare, but the Austrians found the means to work with their Italian composer through neutral Switzerland.

Puccini found himself accused of being pro-German because of his contract with an Austrian theater. Puccini always claimed to be apolitical; he expressed neutrality about the war but indeed condemned its horrors. His indifference temporarily cost him his friendship with Toscanini, a fierce Italian patriot, as well as accusations that he feared affronting the Austrians and Germans because they would ban his operas in their respective countries. His affair with Josephine von Stengel did not help his patriotic image.

IN spite of the war, Puccini was legally obligated to fulfill his contract with the Austrians, although he had become patently unhappy with the libretto and uninspired by the operetta style. In a stroke of genius, he manipulated the Austrians into revising the contract, negotiating the right to compose a full-length, through-composed opera without spoken dialogue: in effect, he ceded one-half of his rights and gave the Austrians full rights to the score in Germany and Austria.

Casa Sonzogno, Ricordi’s publishing rival, had soared to phenomenal success during the verismo era, the publishers of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Leoncavallo’s *I pagliacci*. Ironically, Lorenzo Sonzogno, whose uncle Edoardo sponsored the one-act opera competition that rejected Puccini’s *Le willis* three decades earlier, bought the publishing rights to *La rondine*, including the rights for the premiere. Because of the war, Sonzogno convinced Puccini to mount the premiere in Monte Carlo, its French Riviera setting in the final act influencing his decision. *La rondine* is the only Puccini opera not published by Casa Ricordi.

Puccini now needed a librettist to revise the German operetta text and translate it into Italian. His friend, the journalist and playwright Giuseppe Adami came to the rescue, translating and adapting the German text for Puccini’s new purpose: a full-length opera in Italian. Adami would later provide the libretto for *Il tabarro*, co-author the libretto for *Turandot*, and write a biography of the composer.

The Austrian scenario lacked energy and emotion, and Adami had to elevate it to stage worthiness. Essentially, he replaced much of the Austrians’ excessive dialogue with lyrical verses, but he also made appropriate alterations to the plot and its characters, although it is not known how much of the original scenario was retained or excised in Adami’s version. Certainly, its Viennese venue was moved to Paris. But more importantly,

Puccini now had the essential ingredients of a full-length opera before him: an opera libretto well-tailored by Adami, a competent dramatist.

La *rondine*, Puccini's eighth opera, was completed in the spring of 1916. World War I impeded its immediate premiere, but it eventually took place in Monte Carlo on March 27, 1917, just before the war ended. The opera was a triumphant success, the critics unanimous in acclaiming its rich inspiration, its freshness, youthful charm, and its comic elements.

But despite *La rondine*'s initial success, the opera began to languish: negative and uncharitable — if not vituperative — criticism of the opera became the favorite sport of some critics, many of whom were unimpressed. But they truly jolted Puccini by accusing him of being old-fashioned and out of touch with the times.

La rondine's underlying story deals with the failure of love: the death of love, albeit bittersweet, perhaps too subtle for those who sought a more heightened sense of tragedy, the inspiration for some of Puccini's finest musical inventions.

Although Puccini later made revisions to *La rondine*, he never resolved what many critics and audiences considered the opera's inherent problems.

A major criticism of *La rondine* has been that many elements of its underlying story parallel Verdi's *La traviata*, Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, and even Puccini's own *La bohème*.

Its plot similarities with *La traviata* has earned it the epithet, "the poor man's *traviata*." Magda, like *La traviata*'s heroine Violetta Valery, is a courtesan who yearns for true love; Magda's lover becomes the young provincial Ruggero, Violetta's is Alfredo, also a young man from the provinces. In both operas, the lovers escape from the allure of Paris: the Parisian countryside in *La traviata*; the French Riviera in *La rondine*. However, Alfredo knows that Violetta is a courtesan before he declares his love for her, but Ruggero is innocent of Magda's past until her confession at the end of the opera.

Verdi's heroine surrenders love because of the intervention of Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, but Magda leaves Ruggero fearing that knowledge of her past would produce a scandal that would destroy him. Prunier's palm-reading scene recalls the fortune-telling at Flora's party in *La traviata*. *La traviata* concludes with profound tragedy whereas *La rondine* has a bittersweet conclusion, more regret than the gravity of sorrow.

There are also parallels between the plots of *La rondine* and Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. In *Die Fledermaus*, Rosalinda's maid, Adele, just like Magda's maid Lisette in *La rondine*, secretly dresses in her mistress's clothes for an evening of amusement: Adele at Prince Orlovsky's party; Lisette at Chez Bullier's.

Both *La bohème* and *La rondine* are set in Paris: *La bohème* in the 1830s of Louis Philippe, and *La rondine* some twenty years later, during the reign of Louis Napoleon III. There are hypotheses — however remote — that suggest that *La rondine* is Puccini's sequel to *La bohème*, citing the subtle similarities of the tempestuous romance of the maid Lisette and the poet Prunier with the romance of the singer Musetta and the painter Marcello; obviously Puccini did not share that comparison, failing to endow Lisette with a show-stopper aria like Musetta's Waltz to reveal her character. Yet, the Parisian

bohemians who carouse and seek love at Chez Bullier can indeed recall the carefree ambience of the Café Momus in Act II of *La bohème*. But the greatness of *La bohème* remains its magnificent blend of comedy and pathos, its humor generated by the variety and wholeness of its carefree bohemian characters, contrasted against the tragedy of Mimì's death. Essentially *La rondine* and *La bohème* share but one characteristic; they are both set in Paris, although some 20 years apart.

Plot similarities aside, *La rondine* should be viewed as a unique invention. Puccini's objective was to create a work possessing sheer sentiment blended with light comic touches, perhaps an antidote to a world indulging in the madness of war, or musically, his reaction to the emerging harmonic adventurism that was negating and destroying tonality.

Puccini was continually making harmonic advancements that served to broaden his lyrical horizons. He began expanding his arsenal of harmonic ideas in *Madama Butterfly*, which developed to even greater maturity in *La fanciulla del West* and *La rondine*: the use of the whole-tone scale, unresolved chords and suspensions, and chromaticisms; great strides to modernity from the composer of *La bohème*.

Until its final act, *La rondine*'s action flows in vivid and rapidly moving scenes, each melodious and with sustained lyricism. The dialogue and recitative elements are integrated into the score with brilliance, in particular, the light conversational interchanges at the beginning of Act I that possess a naturalism that captures the pace and inflections of spoken drama.

Puccini relished the opportunity to provide exoticism and ambience by composing in different musical idioms. His musical style in *La rondine* was eclectic, reminiscent of Bernstein's score for the more recent *Candide*. The score abounds with a variety of dance rhythms: in Act I, "Tutta Parigi scintilla! Tutta Parigi sfavilla!" ("All Paris is aglitter! All Paris sparkles!") is an exuberant polka that underscores the ladies' description of scintillating Paris; a tango rhythm is the leitmotif associated with Prunier; Ruggero's narration about the girls at Montauban is a one-step dance; and the Act II Magda/Ruggero duet, "Perché mai cercate" is a slow fox-trot.

But the waltz is the most characteristic and prevalent dance rhythm of *La rondine*, Puccini's attempt to evoke the ambience of the Second Empire by means of the waltz's pace, although some of those waltzes anachronistic for the 1860s. Magda's leitmotif is a theme built on a waltz, the motive first heard in Act I underscoring Prunier's announcement that "Love reigns again in Paris." The waltzes tend to echo the slower French-style waltz, or "valse lente," rather than those of the classical Viennese tradition. Nevertheless, in the Act II revelry at Bullier's, Puccini recalls Vienna and the Strauss waltz kings in an exuberant and sprightly waltz, his marking, "Col massimo slancio."

Like *La bohème*'s Café Momus and the choral scenes of *La fanciulla*, Act II's crowds at Bullier's provided Puccini an opportunity to again demonstrate his ingenious craftsmanship in ensemble writing.

Prunier fuels the engine of the drama; the poet and drawing-room philosopher applies cynicism to entertain and enliven Magda's salon.

Prunier is resigned to his failed artistic destiny, realizing that his poetry will never become immortal. The final verses of his ballad of Doretta evade him, Magda providing its ending, which serves to kindle her nostalgic thoughts of love and romance. After Rambaldo presents Magda with the luxurious necklace, Magda flirts with the idea that money is secondary to true love, prompting Prunier's cynicism: "The Doretta of my imagination was not troubled, but it seems to me that the real Doretta is yielding!"

In the Act I Palm Reading scene, Prunier becomes the catalyst whose prediction rouses Magda's suppressed thoughts of love to consciousness, a critical turning point in the drama: "Forse, come la rondine, migrerete oltra il mare, verso un chiaro paese di sogno, vero il sole, verso l'amore." ("Perhaps like the swallow, you will migrate across the sea towards a bright land of dreams, towards the sun, towards love.") Magda becomes engulfed by thoughts of love, her transformation into the metaphorical swallow of the opera's title, who yearns to migrate from the nest in search of love.

The maid Lisette is a principal character, but Puccini did not provide her with musical substance. In Act I, she has a short aria that extols Paris: "Amore è là, gioia e piacer." ("Joy, pleasure, and love is there.") Lisette and her poet-lover Prunier have an alluring duet near the conclusion of Act I, "T'amo! Menti!", a fascinating interchange of two disparate personalities, in which the poet admits that his romance with a maid is a compromise: that he has finally abandoned his quest for the ideal woman.

But Prunier attempts to transform Lisette into his ideal woman by infusing her with sophistication, wisdom, and aesthetics. He has goaded her to become a singer; the fiasco of her "debut" is revealed in Act III and becomes the catalyst for Lisette's return to the simplicity — and security — of serving Magda.

Prunier and Lisette provide the lighter elements of the plot, the comic foils to the sentimental lovers, Magda and Ruggero. Nevertheless, notwithstanding Prunier's cynicism, *La rondine* is not a comic opera. Puccini would later compose *Gianni Schicchi*, a pure comedy in the grand tradition of Italian opera buffa.

Magda is the archetype of the unhappy woman, the words of Lescaut in Act II of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* seemingly appropriate to describe her dilemma: "Una donna che s'annoia è cosa da far paura!" ("A young woman bored with pleasure flirts with danger!")

Magda is a courtesan, the mistress of Rambaldo, a wealthy banker. She fears ageing, the time when her charms will fade and she will be cast aside. She nostalgically recalls that youthful episode at Bullier's when she experienced love: as her thoughts turn to ageing, she wonders if there will ever be another opportunity.

In Act I, Magda provides the conclusion to Doretta's dream: "Folle amore! Folle ebbrezza! Chi la sottile carezza d'un bacio così ardente maid ridir potrà?" ("Mad love! Mad intoxication! Who can ever describe the subtleness of such an impassioned kiss?") Magda has revealed her soul, her dreams and yearnings: a kiss kindled Doretta's passions and intoxicated her with love. At the end of Act I, "Folle amore!" is the sublime musical underscoring to Magda's decision to seek adventure and romance at Bullier's.

The heroine Magda is always at the center of the drama. Her vocal role is demanding and encompasses a two-octave range, often adorned with several dramatic high C's. In Act I, after Rambaldo presents the necklace, she expresses her yearning for love, which is underscored with the waltz that has become her leitmotif. "Denaro! Niente altro che denaro" ("Money! There's nothing else but money!") seemingly expresses sentimental and lighthearted frivolity, but it reveals Magda's inner anxiety: that love and romance are more significant than money.

Magda reminisces about her infamous romantic adventure at Bullier's of years ago. Her music begins languidly and then transforms into a charming waltz as she repeats the words of the "warning" theme: "Fanciulla, è sbocciato l'amore! Difendi, difendi il tuo cuore!" ("My girl, love is abloom! Protect, protect your heart!")

Puccini composed some of his most inspired music for the Act II duet of the two lovers: gentle music with undulating melodic lines in thirds that recall the "Flower Duet" of *Madama Butterfly*: "Nella dolce carezza della danza chiude gli occhi per sognar." ("I close my eyes to dream in the sweet caress of the dance.") And then the chorus elegantly echoes their melodies in waltz rhythm: "Vuoi tu dirmi che cosa più ti tormenta quando ride giocondo amor?" ("Can you tell me what still torments you more than love laughing so merrily?") Afterwards, the waltz tunes of Act II contrapuntally combine in a large ensemble, perhaps the lyrical pinnacle of the opera.

The final act of *La rondine* transforms the opera's sense of gaiety and romance into pathos: Magda's poignant soliloquy; her reading of the letter from Ruggero's mother; and the renunciation of her affair with Ruggero

Puccini provided the tenor Ruggero with a poignant aria in Act III: "Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa" ("Tell me that you want to follow me to my home.") After Magda renounces their love, Ruggero erupts into an impassioned explosion of despair reminiscent of des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut*: "Ma come puoi lasciarmi se mi strugge in pianto" ("But how can you leave me when I'm tormented with tears.") His plaintive "Non lasciarmi mai!" is underscored with Puccini's lush and sumptuous orchestration that can rival the intensity of any previous Puccini work.

Magda's final farewell is a broad but delicate flowing melody that is accompanied by soft arpeggios, the distant sound of bells, and Ruggero's sobs; a sublime conclusion far different from Puccini's characteristic orchestral explosions expressing grief and despair.

*L*a *rondine* has never solidly implanted itself into the standard repertoire, despite fine productions and casts; it is most probably the least performed among Puccini's mature operas. (*Le villi* and *Edgar* are distinctly the works of a young and budding talent.) Puccini had a particular affection for the score and made three attempts at revision, but he failed to elevate its fortunes.

Critics have condemned *La rondine* as a hybrid, neither opera nor operetta, and that it does not contain enough substance in either idiom to appeal to audiences. Whether *La rondine* is a good or bad opera is a matter of conjecture. Like any other work of art that does not immediately capture an audience, it must stand the test of familiarity.

There is greatness in *La rondine*, a magnificent score that can become an affliction and an addiction. The opera is elegantly and fastidiously composed, and it certainly reveals a composer exploiting a different side of his musical personality: delicate, gentle, and subtle.

Puccini's craftsmanship and attention to details in *La rondine* can rival any of his previous operas. There is a considerable diversity of fine and engaging music, as well as moments of intense passion, reserved for Ruggero's despairing explosion in the final act. Act II contains exceptionally strong concerted music that can rival the greatest of ensembles. The orchestration is sparkling, sophisticated and exquisitely subtle; and the score's many leitmotifs are brilliantly unified by Puccini's exceptional and imaginative symphonic ingenuity.

Magda, the metaphorical "swallow" of the opera's title, has a momentary flight into the world of true love and romance, and then returns to her golden nest as mistress of Rambaldo, the wealthy Parisian banker.

Essentially, *La rondine* relates the story of a woman in mid-life crisis, a woman sentimentally yearning for a second chance at love. In that sense, it is a very human story, its heroine's characterization evoking comparisons to other opera heroines: the Marschallin in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* who fears ageing; and *La traviata*'s Violetta, who yearns for love.

Puccini was not disingenuous: he knew well that *La rondine* shared certain plot elements with *La traviata*, *Die Fledermaus*, and even perhaps his own *La bohème*. Nevertheless, his inspiration in *La rondine* was to narrate a different type of story in musico-dramatic terms: a story of love failing, but with a bittersweet conclusion rather than with impassioned perorations of heartbreak and tragedy.

LIBRETTO

La rondine

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Act I

Paris. About 1860. Friends have gathered at Magda's sumptuous apartment. There is a covered verandah, and a large window overlooks the Tuilleries garden. A marble fireplace is surmounted by a large mirror, and there are tastefully arranged chairs, sofas and other seating. Tapestries and valuable objects d'art hang on the walls, some are on tables. Flowers and ornaments are everywhere.

A large piano is covered with a rich brocade, and a large vase of roses sits on the piano. Lamps and shades of different colors are on the tables, their light intimate and subdued.

The last rays of the sun illuminate the room.

Rambaldo talks with friends: Périchaud, Gobin, Crébillon, Yvette, Bianca and Suzy.

The poet Prunier is nearby, leaning on the piano, and involved in lively gossip.

Magda pours coffee: Lisette, her maid, is extremely animated as she passes the coffee from one group to another.

Prunier converses with Yvette and Bianca, and then Magda joins their conversation.

Andantino**Yvette:**

Ah! No! No!

Yvette:

Ah! No! No!

Bianca:

Non dite questo!

Bianca:

Don't say that!

Prunier:

Signore! Vi contesto il dritto sul serio!

Prunier:

Ladies! I resent your laughing!

Yvette:

E noi quello di parlar sul serio!

Yvette:

And we resent your seriousness!

Prunier:

È pura verità!

Prunier:

It's pure truth!

Magda:

La verità sarebbe?

Magda: *(interrupting them)*

What might the truth be?

Prunier:

Una cosa assai grave: a Parigi si ama!
Imperversa una moda nel gran mondo
elegante: l'amor sentimentale!

Lisette:

Ma non dategli retta!
Amor sentimentale?
Storie! Storie! Si vive in fretta.
"Mi vuoi?" "Ti voglio."
È fatto!

Prunier:

Il suo contegno mi ripugna!

Magda:

Poeta, perdonate!
In casa mia l'anormale è una regola.
Tu via!

Lisette:

Io ritorno al mio servizio se del mio giudizio
non si sa che far!

Prunier:

A serious matter: in Paris, love is in bloom!
A fashion rages in the great elegant world:
sentimental love!

Lisette:

Don't believe his nonsense!
What's sentimental love?
Nonsense! Nonsense! One lives in a frenzy.
"You're willing?" "I want you."
That does it!

Prunier: (to Magda, about Lisette)

Her behavior repulses me!

Magda:

Poet, you must forgive Lisette!
In my house, the abnormal is the norm.
(to Lisette) Now run along!

Lisette: (with a curtsey)

I'm returning to my work since no one pays
attention to my opinions!

Lisette hurries off.

Magda:

Dunque, raccontavate?

Magda: (sitting next to Prunier)

Now then, you were saying?

Prunier:

Che la moda è romantica: sguardi amorosi,
strette furtive, baci, sospiri ma niente più!

Prunier:

That romance is in fashion: amorous glances,
furtive embraces, kisses, sighs, but nothing more!

Yvette, Bianca and Suzy comment to Prunier with exaggerated gestures of languor.

Yvette:

Amore!

Yvette:

Love!

Andante sostenuto**Suzy:**

O cielo!

Suzy:

Oh heavens!

Yvette:

Io struggo!

Yvette:

I'm suffering!

Bianca:

Svengo!

Bianca:

I'm swooning!

Suzy:
Io cedo!

Yvette:
Io muoio!

Bianca:
Il languisco tutta!

Yvette:
Consolami, poeta!

Suzy:
Assistimi, fortuna!

Bianca:
Dammi un chiaro di luna...

Yvette:
...e un verso del Musset!

Magda:
Non scherzate!

Prunier:
La moda v'interesa?

Magda:
Può darsi! Continue.

Meanwhile, Crébillon has found interest in a newspaper article, which he shows to others; they gather around him and begin an animated discussion.

Prunier:
La malattia, diciamo epidemia,
o meglio è dir follia,
fa strage nel mondo femminile!

Others gather around Prunier attentively.

È un microbo sottile che turbinella nell'aria!
Vi prende di sorpresa, e il cor non ha difesa!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
È un microbo sottile che turbinella nell'aria?
Ci prende di sorpresa?
Ah! Nessuno può salvarsi,
tanto è oscura l'insidia!
Mai nessun si salverà!
Mai più! Nessuna!

Suzy:
I give in!

Yvette:
I'm dying!

Bianca:
I'm languishing totally!

Yvette:
Console me, poet!

Suzy:
Fortune, help me!

Bianca:
Give me clear moonlight...

Yvette:
...and a verse by Musset!

Magda: *(interrupting them)*
Stop joking!

Prunier: *(struck by Magda's demeanor)*
Does the idea intrigue you?

Magda:
Perhaps! Continue.

Prunier:
This new affliction, let's say, epidemic,
or perhaps it is better to say folly,
is wrecking the female population!

It's a tiny germ that whirls about in the air!
It takes you by surprise, and the heart is
defenseless!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy: *(almost serious)*
Is it a subtle germ that whirls through the air?
Does it take us by surprise?
Ah! No one can save himself,
the snare is so insidiously dangerous!
No one can save himself!
Never! No one!

Prunier:

Nessuna, nessuna!
Anche Doretta.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Doretta? Chi sarebbe?

Prunier:

La mia nuova heoina - una cara donnina che
fu presa dal male e immortal ai tal quale
nell'ultima canzone.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Lo vogliamo sentir!

Prunier:

Ne potreste soffrir!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Non fatevi pregar!

Magda:

V'impongo di cantar!

Prunier:

No one, no one!
Not even Doretta.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Doretta? Who is she?

Prunier:

My new heroine - a dear young lady who
was seized by the illness, and who became
immortalized in my latest ballad.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

We want to hear it!

Prunier: *(with mock irony)*

You could suffer from it!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Don't make us beg you!

Magda:

I order you to sing your song!

Magda turns to the men.

E voi, laggiù, silenzio!
Il poeta Prunier, gloria della nazione,
degna le nostre orecchie d'una nuova canzone!

You, there, be quiet!
The poet Prunier, pride of our nation,
wants to entertain us with a new song of his!

Rambaldo:

Argomento?

Rambaldo:

And what is the subject?

Prunier:

L'amore!

Prunier:

It's love!

Rambaldo:

Il tema è un po' apassito!

Rambaldo:

That theme is a bit passé!

Périchaud, Gobin and Crébillon agree.

Magda:

L'amore è sempre nuovo!
Su, poeta!

Magda:

But love is always new!
Let's hear it!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Su, poeta!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Let's hear it!

Prunier:

Mi provo!

Prunier:

I'll try!

Prunier sits at the piano and strikes the first chords. All listen attentively.

Chi il bel sogno di Doretta
potè indovinar?
Il suo mistero nessun mai scoprì!
Un bel giorno il re la bimba volle avvicinar:
“Se tu a me credi, se tu a me cedi, ti farò
ricca!”

“Ah! Creatura! Dolce incanto!
La vana tua paura, il trepido tuo pianto
ora sparirà!”
“No, mio sire! No, non piango!
Ma come son, rimango,
chè l’oro non può dare la felicità!”

Magda:
Perchè non continuate?

Prunier:
Il finale mi manca.
Se voi l’indovinate, vi cedo la mia gloria!

Magda:
La conquista mi tenta, e la semplice istoria!

Who could guess the beautiful dream of
Doretta?
No one ever discovered her mystery!
On a beautiful day the king approached her:
“If you believe in me, if you yield to me, I
will make you rich!”

“Ah! Child! Sweet enchantment!
Your vain fears, and your warm tears, will
now vanish!”
“No, your Highness, I’m not crying!
But I will remain as I am, for gold alone will
not bring me happiness.”

Magda: (*approaching Prunier*)
Why don’t you continue?

Prunier:
The ending eludes me.
If you can guess it, I’ll surrender my glory!

Magda:
The challenge tempts me, as well as the
simple story!

Andantino
MAGDA



Chi il bel sogno di Doretta potè indovinar? Il suo mister come mai, come mai finì?

Chi il bel sogno di Doretta
potè indovinar?
Il suo mister come mai finì?
Ahimè! Un giorno uno studente in bocca la
baciò, e fu quel bacio rivelazione:
fu la passione!

Who could guess the beautiful dream of
Doretta?
Why did its mystery end?
Alas! One day a student kissed her on her
lips, and that kiss was a revelation:
it was passion!

Andante
MAGDA

Fol - le a - mo - re! Fol - le eb - brez - za!

Chi la sot-til ca - rez - za d'un bacio così ardente mai ridir po - trà?

Folle amore! Folle ebbrezza!
Chi la sottile carezza d'un bacio così ardente
mai ridir potrà?

**Yvette, Bianca, Suzy, Périchaud, Gobin,
Crébillon:**
Deliziosa, deliziosa!

Magda:
Ah, mio sogno!

Gli Altri:
È squisita, è squisita!

Magda:
Ah, mia vita!
Che importa la ricchezza se alfin è rifiorita la
felicità!
O sogno d'or, poter amar così!

Mad love! Mad intoxication!
Who can ever describe the subtleness of
such an impassioned kiss?

**Yvette, Bianca, Suzy, Périchaud, Gobin,
Crébillon:**
How delightful!

Magda:
Ah, my dream!

The Others:
It's exquisite!

Magda:
Ah, my life!
Riches are unimportant if happiness has
blossomed!
It's a golden dream to find love like that!

Prunier takes roses from a vase and scatters them at Magda's feet.

Prunier:
Ai vostri piedi tutte le grazie della primavera!

Magda:
No, adesso non burlatemi.

Périchaud, Crébillon, Gobin, Rambaldo:
Vi ripeto: squisita! Che arte!
Che finezza! Che calore!

Magda:
Come? Anche voi, l'uomo "pratico"?

Rambaldo:
La corrente trascine!

Prunier:
Let me place all the graces of springtime at
your feet!

Magda: *(smiling)*
No, now don't make fun of me.

Périchaud, Crébillon, Gobin, Rambaldo:
I repeat: exquisite! What art!
What delicacy! What warmth!

Magda: *(to Rambaldo)*
What? Are you also a practical man?

Rambaldo: *(with resignation)*
The current sweeps me along!

Magda:

Merito di Prunier, nostra rovina!

Magda:

Thank Prunier, our ruination!

Prunier:

Non sono io! Nel fondo d'ogni anima c'è un diavolo romantico ch'è più forte di me, di voi, di tutti!

Prunier:

It's not me! There's a romantic devil in the depths of every soul that is stronger than me, than you, than all of us!

Rambaldo:

No! Il mio diavolo dorme!

Rambaldo:

No! My devil is asleep!

Yvette:

Che peccato! Perché!

Yvette:

What a shame! Why?

Rambaldo:Mi armo d'acqua santa e lo sconfiggo.
Lo volete vedere? Ecco!**Rambaldo:**

I defeat him by arming myself with holy water. Shall I show you? Here!

*Rambaldo takes a jewel case from his pocket.
It contains a pearl necklace. He presents it to Magda.*

Tempo di Valzer
MAGDA

Magda:

A me?

Magda:

For me?

Rambaldo:

Certo! La mia intenzione era d'offrirvelo prima di pranzo; me ne dimentica, ma l'occasione sembra inventata apposta!

Rambaldo:

Of course! My intention was to present it to you before dinner; I forgot about it, but this occasion seems quite appropriate!

Magda:

Ho una sola risposta: non cambio d'opinione.

Magda:

I have but one response: I won't change my opinion.

Rambaldo:

Non l'esigo!

Rambaldo:

I don't demand that!

*Rambaldo withdraws. Others gather around Magda and admire the necklace,
and then pass it among themselves as if trying to determine its value.
Afterwards, they go out to the verandah to smoke.*

Prunier:

La Doretta della mia fantasia non si tuba,
ma, in verità, mi pare che vacilli
quella della realtà!

Lisette:

Un momento, scusi, ecco:
quel signore giunse ancora.
Gli risposi: "Calma! Aspetti!"
Mi rispose: "Già da un'ora sto in istrada
passeggiando in attesa d'un comando.
Che mi dica se non può!"

Rambaldo:

Non ho capito una parola!

Lisette:

Auff! Quel signore che le dissi la cercava
poco fa.

Rambaldo:

Ebbene?

Lisette:

Non si muove, non la smette.

Rambaldo:

Ebben?

Lisette:

Sette volte già tornò!

Rambaldo:

Sette volte?

Lisette:

Sette! Sette!
Le ripeto: Non la smette, fra un minuto
tornerà.

Rambaldo:

Scusate, Magda; mi permettete
di ricever qui il figli d'un mio compagno
d'infanzia?
Son già due ore che m'aspetta.

Prunier: (to himself)

The Doretta of my imagination was not
troubled, but it seems to me that the real
Doretta is yielding!

Lisette: (whispering to Rambaldo)

Excuse me a moment, listen:
that man arrived again.
I answered him: "Relax! Wait!"
He replied: "I've been walking around on
the street for an hour waiting for you to tell
me that I can see him!"

Rambaldo:

I can't understand a word you're saying!

Lisette:

Uff! That gentleman that I told you about a
while ago was looking for you.

Rambaldo:

Well?

Lisette:

He just stood there, and didn't move.

Rambaldo:

Well?

Lisette:

He's come back seven times already!

Rambaldo:

Seven times?

Lisette:

Seven! Seven!
Again: he won't quit. In a minute he'll be
back again.

Rambaldo: (to Magda)

Excuse me, Magda, will you permit me to
receive the son of a childhood friend of
mine?
He's been waiting for me for two hours.

Lisette:

Due ore!

Lisette:

Two hours!

Magda:

Ma fate pure!

Siete in casa vostra.

Magda:

Well go ahead!

You should feel at home here.

Rambaldo:

Grazie.

Rambaldo:

Thank you.

(to Lisette)

Ditegli allora che passi pure qui.

Then tell him to come in.

*As Lisette runs out, Rambaldo joins the other men on the verandah.***Prunier:**

Come fate a sopportarla?

È un mulinello!

Prunier: *(to Magda about Lisette)*

How do you stand her?

She's a whirlwind!

Magda:No. È una brava ragazza, forse, invadente,
ma divertente - un po' di sole nella mia vita!**Magda:**No. She's a terrific girl, perhaps a little
meddlesome, but amusing - she's a bit of
sunshine in my life!*Prunier goes off to join the other men.***Bianca:**

La vita è invidiabile!

Bianca:

Your life is enviable!

Yvette:

Rambaldo generoso!

Yvette:

Rambaldo is so generous!

Bianca:

Credi a me che nessuna ebbe la tua fortuna.

Bianca:

Believe me that no one has your good fortune.

Suzy:

La vita è assai difficile!

Suzy:

Life is very difficult!

Bianca:

Costa tanto il denaro!

Bianca:

Money is so precious!

*Magda sits in an armchair, encircled by all the women.***Magda:**

Denaro! Nient'altro che denaro!

Ma via! Siate sincere!

Son persuasa che voi m'assomigliate
e spesso rimpiangete la piccola "grisette"
felice del suo innamorato!**Magda:**

Money! There's nothing else but money!

But come now! Be truthful!

I'm convinced that you're like me and often
feel sorry for that little "grisette" who is
happy with her boy friend!

Bianca:

Sono sogni!

Bianca:

Those are dreams!

Magda:

Può darse!

Ma che non si dimenticano più!

Ah, quella sera che son scappata alla mia

vecchia zia! Mi pare ieri!

Perchè non potrebbe essere ancora domani?

Perchè?

Magda:

Perhaps!

But dreams that can never be forgotten!

Ah, that evening that I ran away from my old aunt! It seems like yesterday!

Why couldn't it still happen tomorrow?

Why not?

Larghetto**MAGDA**

Ore dolci e divine di lieta baraonda

fra studenti e sartine

du'una notte a Bullier!

Come anda? Non lo so!

Come uscii? Non lo so!

Cantava una lenta canzone la musica strana,
e una voce lontana diceva così:It was one night at Bullier's: sweet and
divine hours of happy pandemonium among
the students and seamstresses!

How did I get there? I don't know!

How did I leave? I don't know!

It was the strange music of a slow ballad,
and a distant voice that said:**Allegro moderato****MAGDA**

"Fanciulla, è sbocciato l'amore!

Difendi, difendi il tuo cuore!

Dei baci e sorrisi l'incanto si paga con stille
di pianto!"

"Girl, love is blooming!

Protect, protect your heart!

The spell of kisses and smiles is paid for with
floods of tears!"

Quando ci sedemmo, stanchi, estenuati dall
danza, la gola arsa,
ma l'anima piena d'allegrezza, mi parve che
si schiudesse tutta una nuova esistenza!
"Due bocks," egli disse al garzone!
Stupita fissavo quel grande scialone!
Gettò venti soldi.
Aggiunse: "Tenete!"

Yvette:
Che gesto da Cresò!

Bianca e Suzy:
Che nobile gesto!
Che lusso! Che sfarzo!

Yvette:
C'è tutto compreso?

Bianca e Suzy:
La birra ed il resto?

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
Vogliamo la chiusa!
Vogliamo la fin!

Magda:
"Piccola adorata mia,
il tuo nome vuoi dir?"
Io sul marmo scrissi; egli accanto il nome suo
tracciò.
E là, fra la mattana di tutta quella gente,
ci siamo guardati ma senza dir niente.

Yvette:
Oh, strano! Senza dir niente?

Bianca:
E allora?

Magda:
M'impaurii? Non lo so!
Poi fuggi! Più non so!
Cantava una triste canzone la musica strana,
e una voce lontana diceva così:

"Fanciulla, è sbocciato l'amore!
Difendi, difendi il tuo cuore!

When we sat down, fatigued and exhausted
from dancing, my throat was parched, but
my soul was full of happiness; it seemed that
a whole new existence had opened for me!
"Two bocks," he said to the waiter!
I stared in amazement at that big spendthrift!
He threw twenty sous on the table, and then
added, "Keep it!"

Yvette:
Croesus could have done no more!

Bianca and Suzy:
What a noble gesture!
What luxury! What pomp!

Yvette:
Was everything included?

Bianca and Suzy:
The beer and all the rest?

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
We want to hear the conclusion!
We want to hear the ending!

Magda:
"My little darling, will you tell me your
name?"
I wrote it on the marble tabletop; he wrote
his name beside it.
And there, amid that mayhem of people, we
looked at each other, but did not say a word.

Yvette:
Oh, how strange! You said nothing?

Bianca:
And then?

Magda:
Was I frightened? I don't know!
Then I fled! I know no more!
There was the strange music of the sad
ballad, and a faraway voice said:

"Girl, love has blossomed!
Protect, protect your heart!

Dei baci e sorrisi l'incanto
si paga con stille di pianto!"
Potessi rivivere ancora la gioia d'un ora!

Yvette:

E poi?

Magda:

Basta. È finito.

Bianca:

Finito così?

Magda:

Il profumo squisito della strana avventura,
amiche, è tutto qui.

Bianca:

Poeta, un argomento!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Storia d'un puro amor fra Magda giovinetta
e un ignoto signore.
Incontro ed abbandono in meno di due ore.

Prunier:

Due ore? È quanto basta!

Bianca:

No, l'avventura è casta.

Prunier:

Ed i particolari!

Bianca:

Una fuga, una festa, un po' di birra....

Yvette:

...a casa, tutta sola, la vecchia zia che
aspetta....

Bianca:

...e due baffetti bruni che fan girar la testa!

Yvette:

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, che fan girar la
testa!

The spell of kisses and smiles is paid for
with floods of tears!"
If I could only relive that joy for one hour!

Yvette:

And then?

Magda:

That's all. There's nothing more.

Bianca:

Finished just like that?

Magda:

The exquisite intoxication of that strange
adventure is always with me.

Bianca: *(to the approaching Prunier)*

Poet, here's a subject!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

A story about pure love between a young
Magda and an unknown gentlemen.
A meeting and abandonment in less than two
hours.

Prunier:

Two hours? That's all that is needed!

Bianca:

No, is was a chaste adventure.

Prunier:

And the details!

Bianca:

An escape, a feast, a little beer...

Yvette:

...at home, all alone, the old aunt was
waiting...

Bianca:

...and a dark mustache to make the girl's
head spin!

Yvette:

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, to make a girl's
head spin!

Prunier:

La zia coi baffi bruni che beve dall birra?
Curiosa! Non m'attira!

Magda:

V'attira la nipote?

Prunier:

Può darsi, ma qualora essa risponda ai miei
gusti d'artista!
La donna che conquista dev'esser raffinata,
elegante, perversa degna insomma di me:
Galatea, Berenice, Francesca, Salomè!

Yvette:

Che uomo difficile!

Bianca:

Che uomo complicato!

Prunier:

Non ne ho colpa.
Son nato per le grandi avventure!

Magda:

Ma come le scoprite tante virtù, poeta?

Prunier:

È semplice. La mèta d'ogni donna sta
segnata nel palmo della mano.

Magda:

Davver?

Bianca, Yvette:

O strano!

Prunier:

Se volete provate, esigo un gran mistero.
Il paravento!

Bianca:

Presto!

Prunier:

Un angolo appartato.

Laggiù il volgo profano!
E qui, bellezza e scienza!

Prunier: (*intentionally missing the point*)

An aunt with a dark mustache who drinks
beer? Odd! She doesn't attract me!

Magda: (*smiling*)

Does the niece attract you?

Prunier:

Perhaps, provided she conforms to my
artistic tastes!
The woman who conquers me must be
refined, elegant, contrary, and worthy of me: a
Galatea, Berenice, Francesca, Salomè!

Yvette:

What a difficult man to please!

Bianca:

What a complicated man!

Prunier:

It's not my fault.
I was born for great romantic adventures!

Magda:

But poet, how do you discover a woman's
many virtues!

Prunier:

It's simple. The destiny of every woman is
marked in the palm of her hand.

Magda:

Really?

Bianca, Yvette:

How strange!

Prunier: (*pointing to the screen*)

If you wish to try, I demand a great mystery.
The screen!

Bianca:

Quickly!

Prunier:

A sheltered corner.
(*pointing to the men on the verandah*)
The profane rabble is over there!
And here, beauty and science!

Magda:

Vi prego, serietà!
Son pronta! Dite!

Magda: *(offering her right hand)*

I beg you, please be serious!
I'm ready! Tell me all!

Bianca:

Svelateci!

Bianca:

Reveal it all to us!

Yvette:

Scroprite!

Yvette:

Unveil the truth for us!

Suzy:

Anch'io voglio saper!

Suzy:

I also want to know!

Lisette enters carrying a visitor's card, which she hands to Rambaldo.

Rambaldo:

Ah! Ruggero Lastouc. Fate passare.

Rambaldo:

Ah! Ruggero Lastouc. Show him in.

Lisette accompanies Ruggero, and then leaves. Rambaldo greet Ruggero.

O mio giovine amico, dovete perdonare.

Oh, my young friend, you must forgive me.

Ruggero:

Son io che chiedo scusa.
Ecco con questa lettera mio padre mi
presenta.
Vi scrivo, leggerete.

Ruggero: *(embarrassed and timid)*

It is I who asks forgiveness.
Here, my father introduces me with this
letter.
He has written to you. Please read it.

Rambaldo:

Vi prego, sedete.

Rambaldo: *(begins to read the letter)*

Please, sit down.

Prunier:

Vi siete rivelata!
L'avvenire è grave e misterioso.

Prunier: *(after reading Magda's palm)*

You've revealed yourself!
The future is portentous and mysterious.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Sentiamolo!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Let's hear it!

Prunier:

Non oso! È troppo sibillino.

Prunier:

I don't dare! It's too Sibylline.

Magda:

Non turbatevi. Osate.

Magda:

Don't be upset. Be daring.

Prunier:

Vi trascina il destino!

Prunier: (*seriously*)

You are swept by destiny!

Andante mosso
PRUNIER

Fo - rse, come la rondine, migrerete oltre il ma - re, verso un chiaro pa-
- e - se di sogno. Ver-so il so - le, ver - so l'Amore. E for - se...

Forse, come la rondine,
migrerete oltre il mare,
verso un chiaro paese di sogno,
verso il sole, verso l'amore.
E forse...

Perhaps, like the swallow,
you will migrate across the sea
towards a bright land of dreams,
towards the sun, towards love.
And perhaps...

Magda:

Un cattivo presagio?

Magda:

A bad omen?

Prunier:

No. Il destino ha un duplice viso:
Un sorriso o un'angoscia? Mistero!

Prunier:

No. Destiny is two-faced:
is it a smile or anguish? A mystery!

Rambaldo:

Ed è la prima volta che venite a Parigi?

Rambaldo: (*to Ruggero*)

And is this your first visit to Paris?

Ruggero:

La prima...

Ruggero:

The first...

Prunier:

A voi la folta contorsione dei segni
suggerisce "Et ultra!"

Prunier: (*after reading Bianca's palm*)

For you, the thick signs suggest "et ultra!"

Bianca:

Significa?

Bianca:

Which means?

Prunier:

Più avanti!
Chi più offre la vince su tutti gli aspiranti.

Prunier:

Ever onward!
Whoever offers the most is the victor over all
other suitors.

Lisette enters and places a glass of champagne before Ruggero.

Rambaldo:

Poeta raffinato, dite un po', dove si può
mandare un giovinotto che vuol passar la
sera allegramente?

Prunier:

A letto!

Rambaldo:

Non scherzate.

Prunier:

È verità.
La prima serata a Parigi non è che una vana
leggenda.
È tempo ormai di sfatarla!

Lisette:

No! No! Mille volte no!
No! Non è vero!

Prunier:

Storie!

Lisette:

Io sono parigina nell'anima e difendo il
regno dell donna!

Rambaldo:

Tell me, cultured poet, where one can send a
young man who wants to spend a festive
evening?

Prunier:

To bed!

Rambaldo:

Don't joke.

Prunier:

It's the truth.
The first evening in Paris is nothing but an
empty legend.
By now, it's time to expose it!

Lisette:

No! No! A thousand times no!
No! It's not true!

Prunier:

Nonsense!

Lisette:

In my soul, I am a Parisian, and I defend the
realm of womanhood!

*The women observe Ruggero with curiosity. Magda remains aside in conversation with
Périchaud, Gobin and Crébillon, who are intrigued by Lisette's outburst.*

Prunier:

Ma che!

Lisette:

Non ascoltatelo!
Parigi è piena di fascini, di sorprese, di
meraviglie!

Yvette, Biana, Suzy, Gobin, Crébillon:

Brava!

Lisette:

La prima sera a Parigi...

Prunier:

Esigo un contegno!

Prunier:

Come now?

Lisette:

Don't listen to him!
Paris is full of fascination, of surprises, of
marvels!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy, Gobin, Crébillon:

Absolutely!

Lisette: (avoiding Prunier)

The first evening in Paris...

Prunier: (furious)

I demand that she behave herself!

Lisette:

È come vedere il mare per la prima volta!

Prunier:

Storie! Storie!

Lisette:

Mai s'è immaginato niente di più grande e di più bello!

Prunier:

Basta! Basta! Mettetela alla porta!

Lisette:Lasciatelo ai suoi sdegni!
Aiutatemi voi!**Prunier:**

Essa è troppo insolente!

Magda:

Compatite, poeta!

Lisette:

It's like seeing the sea for the first time!

Prunier:

Nonsense!

Lisette:

One could never imagine anything more grand and more beautiful!

Prunier:

Enough! Show her to the door!

Lisette:Let him be angry!
All of you help me!**Prunier:**

She is too insolent!

Magda:

Forgive her, poet!

Magda follows Prunier towards the verandah, trying to placate him.

Rambaldo:

Avanti, dunque! Indica tu la mèta!

Ruggero:

Vi ringrazio!

Lisette:

Dove lo mandiamo?

Bianca:

Ora penseremo.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

Ci vuole una trovata degna di nio!

Suzy:

Lisette, tocca a voi!

Bianca:

Tocca a voi!

Lisette:

Tocca a me?

Rambaldo: *(to Lisette)*

Then go on! Tell us your goal!

Ruggero: *(to Rambaldo)*

Thank you!

Lisette: *(to the others)*

Where shall we send him?

Bianca:

Now let's think.

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:

We need to find a place worthy of us!

Suzy:

Lisette, it's up to you!

Bianca:

It's up to you!

Lisette:

It's up to me?

Lisette hands Ruggero a paper and pencil.

Prendere nota, mio signor!
Scrivete qua.
Presto! Sù!

Sir, make a note!
Write here.
Quickly! Come on!

Yvette:
La Bal Musard!

Yvette:
Le Bal Musard!

Bianca:
A Frascati!

Bianca:
Frascati!

Suzy:
No, da Cadet!

Suzy:
No, Cadet's!

Yvette:
Pré Catelan!

Yvette:
Pré Catelan!

Tempo di Polka moderato
LISETTE, YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY



Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
Tutta Parigi scintilla!
Tutta Parigi sfavilla!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
All Paris is aglitter!
All Paris sparkles!

Lisette:
No! Da Bullier!

Lisette:
No! To Bullier's!

Yvette, Bianca:
Sì! Da Bullier, va ben!

Yvette, Bianca:
Yes! Bullier's is fine!

Suzy:
Scelta più bella non c'è!

Suzy:
That's the best choice!

Lisette:
Qua! Segnate!

Lisette:
Here! Write it down!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
E andate!

Yvette, Bianca, Suzy:
And off you go!

Ruggero rises, says goodbye to Rambaldo, and begins to leave.

Tempo di Polka moderato**LISETTE****Lisette:**

Amore è là, gioia e piacer.
Scegliete il cuor che vi convien,
e ricordate che da Bullier, fra le risa, luci e
fior canta più ardente amor!

Lisette:

There, there is joy, pleasure, and love.
Choose a heart that suits you, and remember
that at Bullier's, amid laughter, lights, and
flowers, love sings more passionately!

Ruggero leaves, followed by Lisette. Magda enters from the verandah with Prunier.

Magda:

No, povero figliuolo!
Un poco di pietà.
Me l'avete intontito!

Magda:

No, poor lad!
A little pity.
You've rather confused him!

Rambaldo:

Laggiù si svegliera!

Rambaldo:

He'll wake up down there!

Bianca:

Bullier fa dei miracoli!

Bianca:

Bullier's works miracles!

Magda looks at her necklace, and casually drops it on the table.

Magda:

Bullier?

Magda:

Bullier's?

Prunier:

Avea tutto il profumo della sua gioventù.
L'aria è pregna di lavanda.

Prunier:

He had all the perfume of youth.
The air is full of lavender!

(Smelling the air comically)

Non sentire?

Don't you smell it?

Rambaldo:

Sento, e scappo!
Buona sera.

Rambaldo: (to Magda)

I smell it, and I'm off!
Good evening.

Magda:

Buona sera.

Magda:

Good evening.

Périchaud:

Vi ringrazio.

Périchaud:

I thank you.

Yvette, Bianca:

A domani.

Yvette, Bianca:

Till tomorrow.

Gobin, Crébillon, Prunier, Suzy:

Buona sera.

Gobin, Crébillon, Prunier, Suzy:

Good evening.

*After Magda sees them out, she falls into an armchair.
She rings a bell, and Lisette enters.*

Magda:

La carrozza.

Magda:

The carriage.

Lisette:

Va bene.

Lisette:

Very well.

Magda:

No, Lisette. Non esco.

Accendere di là!

Magda:

No, Lisette. Don't go.

Light the lamp over there!

Lisette:

Ricordo all signora che più tardi non mi troverà. È mia serata d'uscita.

Lisette:

May I remind Madame that later I will be going out. It's my evening off.

Magda:

Andate pure.

Magda:

Then go, of course.

Lisette:

Grazie.

Lisette:

Thank you.

Lisette turns down the lights and leaves.

Magda:Forse come la rondine migrerò verso il mare,
verso un chiaro paese di sogno,
verso il sole!**Magda:**Perhaps I'll migrate across the sea like the
swallow, toward a sun-filled land of dreams,
toward the sun!

*Magda goes to the table where Ruggero had been sitting. She notices that he forgot to take
the paper with the names of the cabarets. She picks it up, and then drops it.*

Bullier!

Bullier's!

*Magda's face lights up with a smile.
She runs into her boudoir and shuts the door behind her.
Lisette enters, carrying a straw hat and silk shawl. She tiptoes toward the boudoir,
listens at the door, and comes back to meet Prunier,
who is dressed in overcoat and top hat. Prunier kisses her.*

Andante un poco mosso**Prunier:**

T'amo!

Prunier: (*while embracing her*)

I love you!

Lisette:

Menti!

Lisette: (*struggling with him*)

Liar!

Prunier:

No! Tu sapessi a quale prezzo ti disprezzo!

Tu non sai che la mia gloria vuole orpello e falsità?

Non può amar che donne ricche un poeta come me!

Io lo dico, c'è chi crede, ed invece son per te!

Prunier: (*with ironic emphasis*)

No! You ought to know that in truth I despise you!

Don't you understand that my glory demands tinsel and deception?

A poet like me can only love rich women!

I admit it, there are those who believe me, but instead, I am yours!

Lisette:

Che silenzio!

Lisette:

How quiet it is!

Prunier:

Che mistero!

Prunier:

What mystery!

Lisette:

M'ami?

Lisette:

Do you love me?

Prunier:

T'amo!

Prunier:

I love you!

Lisette:

T'avvilisce?

Lisette:

are you degrading yourself?

Prunier:

Ne son fiero!

Prunier:

I'm proud of it!

Lisette:

Ora andiamo! Tutto tace!

Lisette: (*putting on her hat*)

Now let's go! All's quiet!

Prunier:

Il cappello non mi piace!

Prunier:

I don't like that hat!

Lisette:

Non ti piace? È il suo migliore!

Lisette:

You don't like it? It's her best one!

Prunier:

Non s'intona con il resto!

Lisette:

Cambio?

Prunier:

Cambia! Ma fa presto!

Prunier:

It doesn't blend with the rest!

Lisette:

Shall I change it?

Prunier:

Change it, but hurry up!

Lisette runs off, dropping her purse.

Nove Muse, a voi persono se discendo così

in basso!

L'amo, l'amo, e non ragiono!

Nove Muse, a voi perdono!

You Nine Muses, I ask your forgiveness

because I have sunk so low!

I love her and I cannot reason!

You Nine Muses, I ask your forgiveness!

Lisette:

Questo è meglio?

Lisette: *(returning with a different hat)*

Is this one better?

Prunier:

È originale!

Prunier:

It's original!

Lisette:

E il mantello?

Lisette:

And the coat?

Prunier:

Non è tale da strapparmi un'ovazione.

Prunier:

It's not worthy of an ovation from me.

Lisette:

Vuoi che metta quella cappa che indossavo

l'altra sera?

Lisette:

Do you want me to put on the cape that I

was wearing the other evening?

Prunier:

Sì, la cappa in seta nera!

Prunier:

Yes, the black silk cape!

Nove Muse, a voi perdono se mi abasso a

consigliarla,

ma da esteta quale sono, no, non posso

abbandonarla!

You Nine Muses, I ask your forgiveness if I

have lowered myself to advise her,

but as the aesthetic man that I am, I cannot

abandon her!

Lisette returns with a new cloak and shows it off to Prunier.

Lisette:

Son completa?

Lisette:

Am I complete now?

Prunier:

Sei squisita!

Prunier:

You're exquisite!

Lisette:
La borsetta?

Prunier:
Eccola qua.

Lisette:
Vuoi rossetto sulle labbra?

Prunier:
Il tuo labbro fiorirà!

Lisette:
Sulle gote?

Prunier:
Sian due rose!

Lisette:
Nero agl'occhi?

Prunier:
Pochi tocchi!

Lisette:
Ecco!

Prunier:
Fatto?

Lisette:
Fatto!

Prunier:
Là!

Lisette:
Che silenzio!

Prunier:
Che mistero!

Lisette:
Chi ci chiama?

Prunier:
Il nostro amore!

Lisette:
My purse?

Prunier: (*retrieving it for her*)
Here it is.

Lisette: (*begins to make herself up*)
Do you want me to put lipstick on?

Prunier:
Your lips will bloom!

Lisette:
And my cheeks?

Prunier:
Let them be two roses!

Lisette:
Mascara for the eyes?

Prunier:
Just a touch!

Lisette:
There!

Prunier:
Done?

Lisette:
Done!

Prunier: (*sighing with satisfaction*)
There!

Lisette:
How quiet it is!

Prunier: (*putting his arm around her*)
What mystery!

Lisette:
Who is calling me?

Prunier:
Our love!

Lisette:
Chi mi ama?

Prunier:
Questo cuore!

Lisette:
Chi mi bacia?

Prunier:
Il labbro mio!

Lisette:
Perchè bacia? Di'. Perché?

Prunier:
Per ridirti: Io sono te!
Io sono te, sono te!

Lisette:
Sono te, sono te!

Lisette:
Who loves me?

Prunier:
This heart!

Lisette:
Who kisses me?

Prunier:
My lips!

Lisette:
Why do you kiss me? Tell me why?

Prunier:
To tell you again: I am yours!
I am yours, I am yours!

Lisette:
I am yours, I am yours!

They kiss once more and then leave. The boudoir door opens and Magda appears, dressed in the simple clothes of a grisette, her hair arranged so that she is almost unrecognizable. She takes a rose from the vase and goes toward the mirror.

Magda:
Ch mi riconoscerebbe?

Magda: (placing a flower in her hair)
Who would recognize me?

Magda drapes a shawl over her shoulder and starts towards the door.

“Chi il mistero di Doretta potè indovinar?”

“Who could guess the mystery of Doretta?”

Magda reaches the door, hesitates, and then returns to look into the mirror.

Ma sì! Chi mi riconoscerebbe?

But really! Who would recognize me?

Magda quickly leaves.

END OF ACT I

Act II

At Bullier's.

There is the bustling of crowds, all seeking amusement and pleasure: students, grisettes, mondaines, customers, and curiosity-seekers. Some sit at tables scattered throughout the hall; others, in groups or alone, enter from a handsome staircase, while others go up the staircase to the loge.

There is a garden in the back, lit by lamps.

There are two large arched windows from which the outside street can be seen. There is a great profusion of flowers on the many tables. Flower-girls roam through the crowd selling their wares, and waiters scurry from one table to another.

Ruggero sits alone at a table.

Le Fioraie:

Fiori freschi! Fiori freschi!
Le violette? Belle rose?

Due Donne:

Scegli! Su! Coraggio!
Io son grassa! Sono magra!
Sono oca! Sono scaltra!

Un Giovane:

È grave!
Per avere l'equilibrio, io vi scelgo l'una e l'altra!

Un Gruppo di Bevitori:

Presto! Presto! Cameriere!
Qui da bere! Cameriere! Birra!
Via, da bere! Cameriere!

Alcune Donne:

Dove andate?
Ch cercate?
Una cena. Un mecenate.

Un Giovane:

Vuoi, tu bionda?

Alcune Donne:

Paghi? Paghi?
Grazie!

Alcuni Studenti:

Paghi? Pago!

Flower Girls:

Fresh flowers!
Violets? Lovely roses?

Two Women:

Choose! Come on! Be courageous!
I'm the fat one! I'm the thin one!
I'm like a goose! I'm clever!

A Young Man:

It's serious!
To be fair to you girls, I'll choose both of you!

A Group of Drinkers:

Quickly! Waiter!
Something to drink here! Waiter! Beer!
Come on, a drink! Waiter!

Some Women:

Where are you going?
Who are you looking for?
A supper. A patron.

A Young Man: *(offering flowers to a blonde, who takes them and goes on.)*
Do you want these, blonde lady?

Some Women:

Are you paying?
Thanks!

Some Students:

Are you paying? I'm paying!

Alcuni Uomini:

Via, non fate le ritrose!
Sulla loggia o nel giardino?

Alcune Donne:

In giardino già si balla!
Voi restate? Noi veniamo!

Già la danza ferve e snoda il suo ritmo e la sua grazia.

Clienti:

Cameriere, dammi il resto!
In giardino già si balla!
Oh, la strana baraonda!

Some Men: (*as they follow some girls*)

Come on, stop playing the shy ones!
On the balcony or in the garden?

Some Women:

They're already dancing in the garden!
Are you staying? We're coming!

The dance is already raging, releasing its rhythm and its grace.

Customers: (*at the tables*)

Waiter, give me change!
They're already dancing in the garden!
Oh, the confusion is so strange!

To the impatient women.

Un momento! Che paghiamo!

One moment! We're paying!

Rapping on the table.

Cameriere! Presto! Il conto!

Waiter! Quickly! The bill!

Alcuni Uomini:

Senza te la vita era troppo amara, ma con te la vita costa troppo cara.

Some Men: (*surrounding a prostitute*)

Life was too bitter without you, but too expensive with you.

Due Amanti:

Non far scena! Sono stanca!
Mi vuoi dir cosa ti manca?
Vieni! Resto! No, ti prego!

Two lovers: (*quarreling*)

Don't make a scene! I'm tired!
Will you tell me what you want?
Come! I'm staying! No, I beg you!

La Folla:

Qui si trinca!
Là si balla!

The Crowd:

Here they're guzzling!
There they're dancing!

Un Gruppo di Studenti:

The students grab a model and pass her from one to another.

A chi tocca, tocca!
Dammi la tua bocca!

A Group of Students:

Whoever touches her, gets her!
Give me your lips!

Un Gripo di Bevitori:

Fino a che non spunta il giorno,
guai a chi farà ritorno!
Nel bicchiere è l'ideal!

Group of Drinkers:

Until daybreak,
woe to him who turns back!
The ideal is in a glass of liquor!

Un Gruppo di Pittori:

Siete voi de nostri?

Alcune Donne:

Sì! Siete voi che page?

Pittori e Donne:

Sì! Scorra a fiumi lo champagne!

Pittori:

Qua, ragazze! Cose pazze!

Pittori e Donne:

Su, beviamo! Su, danziamo!

Giovinezza, eterno riso, fresco fiore che
incorona delle donne il dolce viso!

Sei divina se incateni le illusioni degli
amanti!

A Group of Artists:

Are you one of us?

Some Women:

Yes! Are you the one who is paying?

Artists and Girls:

Yes! Let the champagne flow in the rivers!

Artists:

Here, girls! What craziness!

Artists and Girls:

Come, let's drink! Come, let's dance!

Youth, eternal laughter, and a fresh flower
that crowns the sweet face of women!

You're divine if you can restrain the illusions
of the lovers!

*As the crowd scatters into the garden, Georgette and Gabriella emerge from the garden.
A young man is with them, and Georgette points to his shirt.*

Georgette:

Questa è una perla vera?

Un Giovane:

Vera come il Vangelo!

Gabriella:

Siete ricco?

Un Giovane:

Talvolta!

Georgette e Gabriella:

A noi basta stasera!

Georgette:

Is this a real pearl?

A Young Man:

As real as the Gospel!

Gabriella:

Are you rich?

A Young Man:

Sometimes!

Georgette and Gabriella:

Tonight is enough for us!

*The girls leave the young man and approach the table where Ruggero is seated.
Lolette and other grisettes join them.*

Lolette e Amici:

Che guardate?

V'attira la conquista?

Lolette and Friends:

What are you looking at?

Does the conquest attract you?

Georgette, Gabriella e Grisettes:

Che pena! Così solo!

È funebre! Rattrista!

Georgette, Gabriella and Grisettes:

What a shame! So alone!

He's gloomy! He seems sad!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, Amici:

È un solitario. Un timido.
Un giglio. Una mimosa.
Non degna d'un sorriso, d'uno sguardo!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, Friends:

He's a loner! A timid one.
A lily. A mimosa.
What a look! He doesn't offer a smile!

Ruggero looks at them, half surprised, half annoyed.

Su via! Come ti chiami?
Armando? No? Abelardo?
Marcello? Enrico?
Alberto? Tommaso?
Ernesto? Dario?
Domenico? Giovanni?
Carlo? Mario?
Santi del calendario, fornite l'inventario.

Come on! What's your name?
Armand? No? Abelard?
Marcel? Henry?
Albert? Thomas?
Ernest? Dario?
Domenick? John?
Carl? Mario?
Saints of the calendar, furnish us with the list of names!
If the name wasn't found, you tell us!

Ruggero gestures that he is irritated. The girls, repressing their mocking laughter, move on.

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette:

È un principe che viaggia in cognito stretto!
Vien da remota spiaggia!
Rifiuta il nostro letto!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette:

He's a prince who is traveling strictly incognito! He comes from far away shores!
He refuses our bed!

Cliente:

Presto! Presto! Presto qua!
Qua, cameriere, da bere, qua!

Customers:

Quickly! Come here quickly!
Here, waiter, a beer!

Lolette:

Non avresti per caso un po' di cipria?
Ho rosso il naso!

Lolette: (to a friend)

Would you by chance have some powder?
I have a red nose!

The friend takes powder from her bag and hands it to Lolette, who then powders her nose.

*Magda appears at the top of the staircase and descends halfway down.
She stops and looks around with uncertainty. Several students notice her and approach her.*

Alcuni Studenti:

Chi è? Mai vista!
Esita! Una donna per bene?
Dimessa, ma graziosa!
Nuova per queste scene!

Some students:

Who is she? I've never seen her!
She hesitates! Is she a respectable woman?
Humble, but pretty!
She's new to these scenes!

Un Studente:

Posso offrirti il mio braccio?

A Student: (going to meet Magda)

May I offer you my arm?

Magda:

No, grazie.

Alcuni Studenti:

Siam studenti, gaudenti.

Un po' audaci, molto loquaci.

Ricchi di gioia! Prodighi di baci!

Molto più rari sono i denari!

Se non trova di meglio, non faccia complimenti!

Magda:

Grazie. Non posso.

Un Studente:

C'è un impegno?

Magda:

Ecco. Precisamente.

Alcuni Studenti:

E il luogo del convegno?

Magda:

Siete troppo curiosi!

Alcuni Studenti:

Siam gelosi!

Magda:

Di già?

Alcuni Studenti:

Noi si fa presto!

Indicate l'eletto!

Magda:

Non so. V'ho detto.

Alcuni Studenti:

Se il mistero ci svelate alla metà vi guidiamo!

Magda:

Che dire?

Magda:

No, thanks.

Some Students: *(surrounding Magda)*

We're students and playboys.

A bit audacious, very talkative.

Rich in joy! Generous in kisses!

Money is much rarer!

If you can't find better, don't stand on ceremony!

Magda: *(now at the bottom of the stairs)*

Thanks. I can't.

A Student:

Do you have another engagement?

Magda:

That's it, precisely.

Some Students:

And where is the engagement?

Magda:

You're too curious!

Some Students:

We're jealous!

Magda:

Already?

Some Students:

We work fast!

Show us the chosen one!

Magda:

I don't know. I've told you.

Some Students:

If you reveal the mystery to us, we'll guide you to your goal!

Magda: *(to herself)*

What shall I say?

*Magda looks around and notices Ruggero.
The students notice that Ruggero is looking at her.*

Alcuni Studenti:

Eccolo là!

Some Students:

There he is!

The students draw Magda towards Ruggero's table. Ruggero is amazed.

Amante, godete la giovine vita!

Lovers, enjoy your young life!

The students go off laughing.

Magda:

Scusatemi, scusate, ma fu per liberarmi di loro, che volevano invitarme a danzare, risposi: "Sono attesa."

Magda: (*hesitatingly*)

Excuse me, but it was to free myself from them; they wanted to invite me to dance, so I answered: "I'm expected."

Han creduto che voi m'aspettavate.
Ora, quando non vedono, vi lascio.

They believed that you were expecting me.
Now, while they're not looking, I'll leave.

Ruggero:

No, restate, restate. Siete tanto graziosa e mi sembrate così diversa da tutte.

Ruggero: (*motioning that she sit down*)

No, stay, you're so pretty, and you seem to me to be so different than all these women.

Magda:

Veramente?

Magda: (*sitting down*)

Really?

Ruggero:

Veramente.

Ruggero:

Really.

Magda:

Perchè?

Magda:

Why?

Ruggero:

Così timida e sola assomigliate alle ragazze di Montauban, quando vanno a ballar, alla carezza d'un musica vecchia, tutto sorriso e tutto giovinezza.

Ruggero:

You're so timid and lonely; you resemble the girls of Montauban when they go to dance to the caress of some old music, full of smiles and youth.

Magda:

Ne sono lusingata!

Magda:

I'm flattered!

Ruggero:

Cercate di capirmi.
Le ragazze laggiù son molto belle e semplici e modeste. Non sono come queste; basta al loro ornamento un fiore nei capelli-come voi.

Ruggero:

Try to understand me.
The girls there are very beautiful, simple and modest. They're not like these: just like you, a flower in their hair is a sufficient ornament.

Magda:

Se sapessi ballar come si balla Montauban!

Magda:

If I only knew how to dance as they dance in Montauban!

Ruggero:

Volete che proviamo?

Ruggero: (*offering his arm*)

Do you want to try?

Magda:

Proviamo, ma se poi vi mancassi alla prova?

Magda:

Let's try, but what if I should fail the test?

Ruggero:

No, no. Ne son certo ballate meglio voi!

Ruggero:

No! I'm certain that you dance better!

Magda:

L'avventura strana come nei dì lontani.

Magda: (*to herself*)

A strange adventure, like long ago.

Ruggero:

Che dite?

Ruggero:

What are you saying?

Magda:

Come son contenta d'essere al braccio vostro!

Magda:

How happy I am to be on your arm!

MAGDA

RUGGERO

Nella dol - ce ca - rezza della dan - za chiude gli oc - chi per so - gnar.

Magda e Ruggero:

Nella dolce carezza della danza
chiudo gli occhi per sognar.
Tutto è ormai lontano,
niente mi può turbar, e il passato
sembrami dileguar!

Magda and Ruggero:

I close my eyes to dream in the sweet caress
of the dance.
Nothing can upset me; everything is far
away,
and the past seems to fade away!

Tempo di Valzer
SOPRANOS and TENORS

Vuoi tu dir - mi che co - sa più ti tor - men-ta

La Folla:

Vuoi tu dirmi che cosa più ti tormenta
quando ride giocondo amor?

The Crowd:

Can you tell me what is more tormenting
than love laughing so merrily?

Quando lo stesso petto chiude lo stesso
cuor?
Quando un bacio brucia d'uguale ardor!

When the same breast encloses the same
heart?
When a kiss burns with equal ardor!

Baci lieve e tremanti,
baci folli e vibranti,
son vita per gli amanti!
Dammi nel bacio la vita,
e vivi per baciare!

Kisses light and trembling,
kisses mad and vibrant,
are the essential life for lovers!
Give me life in your kiss,
and live to kiss!



Magda e Ruggero:
Dolcezza! Ebbrezza!
Incanto! Sogno!
Per sempre! Eternamente!

Magda and Ruggero: (*from the garden*)
Sweetness! Intoxication!
Enchantment! Dream!
Forever! Eternally!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, e La Folla:
O profumo sottil d'una notte d'April!
L'aria è tutta piena di primavera e languor!
Sboccian fiori ed amor di primavera al tepor!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, and Crowd:
Oh subtle perfume of an April night!
The air is full of springtime and languor!
The flowers blossom and love has the
warmth of springtime!

Magda e Ruggero:
Come batte il tuo cuor!
O primavera d'amor!

Magda and Ruggero:
How your heart is beating!
Oh springtime of love!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, e La Folla:
Vuoi tu dirmi che cosa più ti tormenta
quando ride giocondo amor?
Quando lo stesso petto' chiude lo stesso
cuor?
quando un bacio brucia d'uguale ardor!

Georgette, Gabriella, Lolette, and Crowd:
Can you tell me what is more tormenting
than love laughing so merrily?
When the same breast encloses the same
heart?
When a kiss burns with equal ardor!

Prunier:
Ti prego: Dignità, grazia, contegno!

Prunier: (*with exaggeration*)
Please: be dignified, graceful, reserved!

Lisette:
Ti voglio bene, anche t'ammiro,
ma se mi agito, se guardo, giro,
ballo, scodinzolo, rido, saluto,
ecco il tuo monito come una morsa,
prendimi, stringimi nella mia corsa!

Lisette: (*with irritation*)
I love you, and I also admire you,
but if I'm too lively, turning, dancing,
wiggling, laughing, or too friendly, then
warn me and take me in your vise, and grasp
me in my flight!

Prunier:

Se mi confondo a dar lexione,
 è per rifarti l'educazione!
 Quest'è il mio compito.
 Sarà un miracolo;
 solo chi ama non guarda ostacolo.
 Ti rifarò!

Prunier:

If I confuse myself in giving you a lesson,
 it's to redo your education!
 This is my task.
 It will be a miracle;
 only he who loves doesn't look at obstacles.
 I'll do you over!

Prunier and Lisette join the dancing crowd.

Magda and Ruggero return, hot and tired from dancing, but beaming with happiness.

Magda fans herself with a handkerchief.

Magda:

Che caldo! Che sete!

Magda:

What heat! What thirst!

Ruggero:

Due bocks!

Ruggero: *(to a waiter)*

Two bocks!

Magda:

Presto! Presto!

Magda: *(happily, as if reliving a memory)*

Quickly! Quickly!

(to Ruggero)

May I ask you for a favor?

Ruggero:

Tutto quello che volete!

Ruggero:

Anything you want!

Magda:

Dategli venti soldi, e lasciategli il resto!

Magda: *(pointing to the waiter)*

Give him twenty sous and leave him the change!

Ruggero:

Tutto qui? Che strana idea!

Ruggero: *(unable to understand)*

All that? What a strange idea!

Magda:

È un piccolo ricordo d'una zia lontana.
 "Una fuga, una festa, un po' di birra!
 A casa, tutta sola,
 la vecchia zia che aspetta,
 e due baffetu bruni
 che fan girar la testa!"

Magda:

It is a remembrance to a distant aunt.
 "A flight, a party, a bit of beer!
 At home, all alone,
 an old aunt waits,
 and there is a dark mustache
 that makes your head turn!"

Ruggero:

Che andate dicendo?

Ruggero:

What are you talking about?

Magda:

Fantasie! Fantasie!

Magda:

Fantasies!

The waiter brings the beers.

Ruggero:
Alla vostra salute!

Ruggero: (*raising his glass*)
To your health!

Magda:
Ai vostri amori!

Magda: (*raising her glass*)
To your loves!

Ruggero:
Non ditelo!

Ruggero:
Don't say that!

Magda:
Perchè?

Magda:
Why?

Ruggero:
Perchè se amassi, allora sarebbe quella sola,
e per tutta la vita!

Ruggero:
Because if I loved, then it would be only one
love for my entire life!

Magda:
Ah! "Per tutta la vita!"

Magda:
Ah! "For your entire life!"

Ruggero:
Siamo amici, e non so ancora il vostro nome.
Qual'è?

Ruggero:
We're friends, and yet I don't know your
name. What is it?

Magda:
Volete che lo scriva?

Magda:
Do you want me to write it?

Ruggero gives her a pencil and she writes on the marble table top.

Ruggero:
"Paulette." Mi piace.

Ruggero: (*reading as she writes*)
"Paulette." I like it.

Magda:
E il vostro?

Magda:
And yours?

Ruggero:
Io mi chiamo Ruggero.

Ruggero:
My name is Ruggero.

Magda:
Qualche cosa di noi che resta qui!

Magda: (*pointing to names on the table*)
Something of us remains here!

Ruggero:
No. Questa si cancella.
In me resta ben altro!
Resta il vostro mistero.

Ruggero:
No. This gets erased.
Something different remains for me!
Your mystery remains.

Magda:
Perchè mai cercate di saper ch'io sia e quale
il mio mister?

Magda:
Why do you try so hard to know who I am
and what my mystery is?

Non vi struggete, e m'accogliete come il
destin mi portò!

Don't torture yourself, and welcome me as
someone brought from destiny!

Andantino calmo
RUGGERO



Ruggero:

Io non so chi siate voi, e per qual via
giungete fino a me, perchè?
Ma pure sento strano un tormento dolce,
infinito, nè so dir qual'è!

Ruggero: *(taking her hands)*

I don't know who you might be, by which
path you came, and why?
But I feel a strange agony that I can't
understand: sweet and infinite!

Sento che tu non sei un'ignota, ma sei la
creatura attesa dal mio cuor!

I don't feel that you are a stranger, but the
person that my heart has been awaiting!

Magda:

Parlami, ancora, lascia ch'io sogni.
Mio a....

Magda: *(closing her eyes)*

Speak to me again, let me dream.
My lo...

Ruggero:

Sei la creatura attesa dal mio cuor!
Ah! Questa è la vita, e questa è realtà!
Mio a...

Ruggero:

You are the person chosen by my heart!
Ah! This is life, and this is reality!
My lo...

Magda and Ruggero kiss, remaining clasped in a long embrace. Rabonnier and young men return from the garden, observe the two lovers, and stop and point them out to one another.

Giovani:

Zitti! Non disturbiamoli!

Young Men:

Hush! Let's not disturb them!

Rabonnier:

Due cuori che si fondono!

Rabonnier:

Two hearts that are becoming fused!

Giovani:

Non facciamo rumore!

Young Men: *(to three girls)*

Let's not make noise!

Tre Ragazze:

Rispettiamo l'amore!

Three Girls: *(quieting down)*

Let's respect love!

Giovani:

Zitti! Non disturbiamoli!

Young Men:

Hush! Let's not disturb them!

Rabonnier, Giovani, Ragazze:

Non facciamo rumore!

Rispettiamo l'amor!

Rabonnier, Young Men, Girls:

Let's not make noise!

Let's respect love!

Lisette and Prunier join the others.

Lisette:

Dio! Lei!

Lisette: *(staring at Magda)*

God! She!

Prunier:

Chi?

Prunier:

Who?

Lisette:

Guardala! La padrona!

Lisette:

Look at her! My mistress!

After hearing Lisette, Magda and Ruggero unclasp. Magda sees Prunier and makes a gesture that he be quiet. Prunier acknowledges with a gesture that he has understood.

Prunier:

È il vino che ti ha dato alla testa!

Prunier: *(to Lisette)*

The wine has gone to your head!

Lisette:

Eppure, è tutta lei.

Lisette:

Still, she looks just like her.

Prunier:

Ne vuoi la prova?

Prunier:

Do you want proof?

Prunier drags Lisette towards Magda and Ruggero.

Lisette:

E l'altro è lui. Non sbaglio!

Lisette: *(recognizing Ruggero)*

And the other is him. I'm not wrong!

Prunier:

Buona sera!

Prunier: *(greeting Ruggero)*

Good evening!

Sì, lui te lo concedo, ma l'amica che per lei, non è lei!

No, no! Guardala bene!

(to Lisette)

Yes, I will grant you that it is him, but his friend looks like her, but it isn't her.

No. Look at her well!

Lisette:

Sono o non sono la sua cameriera?

Lisette: *(to herself)*

Am I, or am I not her maid?

Prunier:

Lo sei ma non di lei che non è lei, ma sembra lei.

Ubriaca sei!

Prunier:

You are, but she is not your mistress; she just looks like her.

You're drunk!

La mia amica Lisette vuol sapere se il suo consiglio vi portò fortuna.

Ruggero:

Lo vedete!

Prunier:

È carina!

Volete presentarmela?

Ruggero:

La mia amica Paulette!

Prunier:

Sei convinta, Lisette?

Ruggero:

Il signore è un poeta, amico d'un amico di mio padre.

Prunier:

E quindi amico vostro!

Ruggero:

Ne son proprio onorato!

Magda:

Che cosa v'ha turbato?

Continuate a guardarmi.

Lisette:

Non so raccapezzarmi.

(to Ruggero)

My friend Lisette wants to know if her advice brought you luck?

Ruggero: *(pointing to Magda)*

You see it!

Prunier:

She's pretty!

Would you like to introduce her to me?

Ruggero:

My friend Paulette!

Prunier: *(to Lisette)*

Are you convinced, Lisette?

Ruggero: *(to Magda)*

The gentleman is a poet, a friend of a friend of my father.

Prunier:

And therefore a friend of yours!

Ruggero:

I am truly honored!

Magda: *(to Lisette)*

What has upset you?

You continue to look at me.

Lisette: *(to herself)*

I can't figure it out.

Lisette sits next to Magda and speaks to her in confidence.

Ma c'è una persona che pare il vostro ritratto!

Magda:

E chi sarebbe?

Prunier:

Ma no!

Lisette:

La mia padrona!

But there is a person who looks like your portrait!

Magda: *(enjoying the game)*

And who might that be?

Prunier: *(motioning that Lisette be silent)*

No!

Lisette: *(not paying attention to Prunier)*

My mistress!

Prunier:

È una sua fissazione!

Ruggero:

La padrona è carina?

Lisette:

Come lei se lei fosse elegante!

Magda:

S'io fossi elegante!

Voi elegante lo siete!

Lisette:

Ah! Non mi costa fatica!

Magda:

Che bel cappello!

Lisette:

È il suo?

Magda:

Ma davvero?

Lisette:

Tutto ciò che ammirate ho sottratto abilmente!

Magda:

Non lo dite, che è troppo imprudente!

Prunier:

It's one of her fixations!

Ruggero: (*interested*)

Is the mistress pretty?

Lisette: (*pointing to Magda*)

She is elegant like her!

Magda: (*admiring Lisette's clothing*)

If I were so elegant!

You certainly are elegant!

Lisette:

Ah! I expend no effort!

Magda:

What a lovely hat!

Lisette:

It's hers!

Magda: (*feigning surprise*)

Oh, really?

Lisette:

I've cleverly stolen all that you are admiring!

Magda: (*gracefully admonishing her*)

Don't say it, because it's too imprudent!

Prunier bursts into laughter.

Lisette:

No! Prunier, non ridete!

Lisette: (*offended*)

No! Prunier, don't laugh!

Ruggero calls a waiter to the table and whispers to him.

Prunier:

Rido, non so di che cosa!

Magda:

È Salomè, Berenice?

Prunier:

Siate pietosa!

Magda:

Può Lisette l'un l'altro a sua scelta imitar!

Prunier:

I'm laughing, but I don't know why!

Magda:

Is she Salome, Berenice?

Prunier:

Be merciful!

Magda:

Lisette can imitate one or the other as she chooses!

The waiter brings champagne.

Ruggero:

Già che il caso ci unisce inneggiamo
all'amore!

Tutti:

Inneggiamo alla vita che ci donò l'amor!

Ruggero:

Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso, bevo al tuo
sguardo profondo, alla tua bocca che disse il
mio nome!

Magda:

Il mio cuore è conquiso!

Ruggero:

T'ho donato il mio cuore,
o mio tenero, dolce mio amore!
Custodisci gelosa il mio dono,
perchè viva sempre in te!

Magda:

È il mio sogno che s'avvera!
Se potessi sperare che questo istante non
muore,
che il mio rifugio saran le tue braccia,
il tuo amor, sarei troppo felice,
nè più altro vorrei dalla vita,
che godere l'ebbrezza infinita
che il tuo bacio mi può donar!
Fa che quest'ora si eterni!

Vedi son tua, e per sempre!

Ruggero:

Piccola ignota t'arresta!
No, questo istante non muore,
a me ti porta
il clamor d'una festa
ch'è una festa d'amore e di baci!
Nè più altro vorrei dalla vita
che godere la gioia infinita
che il tuo bacio mi può donar!
Deve quest'ora segnar l'avvenire d'amore e
per sempre, sempre con te!

Ruggero:

Since fate unites us, let's praise love!

All:

Let's praise life, which gave us love!

Ruggero: (*raising his glass to Magda*)

I drink to your fresh smile, I drink to your
profound gaze, and to your lips, that spoke
my name!

Magda:

My heart is conquered!

Ruggero:

I have yielded my heart to you,
my tender and sweetest love!
Guard my gift jealously,
so that it will live eternally within you!

Magda:

It is my dream that has come true!
If I could only hope that this moment does
not die,
that my refuge will be in your arms,
and with your love, I would be so happy,
I would want nothing more from life,
than to enjoy this infinite bliss
that your kiss can give me!
Let this hour become eternal!

Look, I am yours, and forever with you!

Ruggero:

Stop, little unknown girl!
No, this moment cannot die,
because you have been brought to me by the
sounds of a celebration,
a celebration of love and of kisses!
I would want nothing more from life,
than to enjoy this infinite bliss
that your kiss can give me!
Let this hour mark the future of love, and I
will always be with you!

Lisette:

Dimmi le dolci parole
che la divina tua musa ricama
per colorire di grazia la trama
di gioconde canzoni.
Non son quelle le parole che il mio cuor
sospirò?
Dille ancora! Ah, dille ancor!
Le mie virtù son poche, te lo dono,
felice per sempre sarò con te!

Prunier:

Ogni tu bacio è una strofa
ogni tuo sguardo è una facile rima.
Tu sei la sola perchè sei la prima
che ha parlato al mio cuore.

Le tue virtù le raccolgo e più poeta sarò.
L'anima mia ne ravvolgo,
e più poeta sarò con te!

La Folla:

Guarda! Fermo! Vedi là!
È l'amor che non ragiona!
Che non nasconde!
Fate piano! State attenti!
Al poeta, la corona!
Per le muse, la ghirlanda!
Non lasciamoci scoprire!
Sugli amori fiori e fronde!
Siam sorpresi nel momento
del più dolce giuramento,
sull'amore fronde e fior!

Intrecciamo i quattro cuori con i fior, con i fior!
Soffochiamo i quattro amor con i fior!

Prunier:

Rambaldo!

Magda:

Ah! M'aiutate!
Ruggero allontanate!

Prunier:

Ci penso io!

Lisette! Attenta! C'è il padrone!

Lisette:

Tell me the sweet words
that your divine muse embroiders
in order to add color and charm to happy
songs.
Are they not the words that my heart has
sighed for?
Say them again! Ah, say them again!
My virtues are few, I gave them to you,
I'll always be happy with you!

Prunier:

Every kiss of yours is a stanza,
every glance of yours an easy rhyme.
Because you are the first, you are the only
one who has spoken to my heart.

I will be more of a poet when I gather your
virtues. My soul envelops your virtues and
makes me a better poet!

The Crowd:

Look! Stop! Look there!
It's love without reason!
It doesn't hide!
Be quiet! Be careful!
The crown to the poet!
The garland to the muses!
Let's not be discovered!
Flowers and fronds on the lovers!
We're surprised in the moment of the sweet
vow,
of the flowers and fronds of love!

Let's weave the four hearts with flowers!
Let's smother four hearts with flowers!

Prunier: (to Magda)

Rambaldo!

Magda:

Help me!
Take Ruggero away!

Prunier:

I'll take care of it!

to Lisette

Lisette! Watch out! There's the master!

Lisette:
Dov'è? Dov'è?

Lisette:
Where is he?

Prunier:
Sta ferma!

Prunier:
Be still!

The crowd laughs as it begins to leave. Some are helped into their overcoats by waiters; others pay. Prunier points out Lisette to Ruggero.

Ve l'affido, portatela laggiù!

I entrust her to you! Take her over there!

Ruggero:
Fidatevi di me, non dubitate!

Ruggero:
Trust me, don't worry!

Prunier:
Tu trattienlo laggiù, mi raccomando.

Prunier: (*aside to Lisette*)
You keep him down there, I urge you.

Ruggero takes Lisette by the arm . They go quickly into the garden and disappear.

Magda:
M'ha vista?

Magda: (*to Prunier*)
Has he seen me?

Alcune Ragazze:
Se ci accompagnate, ci intenderem!

Some Girls: (*to an unwilling man*)
If you accompany us, we'll understand one another!

Prunier:
S'avvicina! Io resto. Voi andate!

Prunier: (*watching Rambaldo*)
He's approaching! I'll stay. You go!

Le Ragazze:
Perchè non vuoi venir?

The Girls: (*to the man*)
Why don't you want to come?

Magda:
Non mi muovo di qua!

Magda:
I'm not moving from here!

Prunier:
Incauta! Non pensate!

Prunier:
Reckless girl! You're not thinking!

Magda:
Che ama non pensa!

Magda: (*rising*)
One in love does not think!

Alcune Donne:
È tardi, quasi l'alba.

Some Women:
It's late, almost dawn.
to the waiter

Pagherem doman!

We'll pay tomorrow!

Prunier:

Prunier:

Prunier approaches Rambaldo, trying to conceal Magda from his view.

Buona sera, Rambaldo.

Good evening, Rambaldo.

Rambaldo gives him his hand. Prunier takes his hand and looks at his ring.

Che grosso smeraldo!

What a large emerald!

Rambaldo:

Lasciatemi, vi prego!

Rambaldo:

Please leave me!

Prunier departs, leaving Magda to face Rambaldo.

Che significa questo?

Mi volete spiegare?

What does this mean?

Would you explain it to me?

Quattro Donne:

Che sonno, ahimè!

Non mi reggo più!

Four Women:

How sleepy!

I can't stand it any longer!

Magda:

Non ho niente da aggiungere a ciò che avete visto.

Magda:

I have nothing to add to that which you have seen.

Rambaldo:

Dunque, niente di grave, una scappata.

Andiamo!

Rambaldo:

Then it is nothing serious: an escapade:

Let's go!

Tre Studenti:

Che aspettate ancor?

Three Students:

What are you still waiting for?

Tre Ragazze:

Sol voi altri tre!

Three Girls:

Only the three of you!

The hall and the garden are almost completely empty of people.

Magda:

Inutile! Rimango!

Magda:

Useless! I'm staying!

Rambaldo:

Restate?

Rambaldo:

You're staying?

Magda:

L'amo! L'amo! L'amo!

Magda:

I love him!

Rambaldo:

Che follia vi travolge?

Rambaldo:

What madness has overcome you?

Magda:

Ma voi non lo sapete cosa sia aver sete d'amore e trovar l'amore, aver voglia di viver e trovar la vita?

Ah! Lasciatemi seguire il mio destino!

Lasciatemi! È finita!

Magda:

But don't you know what it is to thirst for love and find love: to have a reason to live and find life?

Ah! Let me follow my destiny!

Leave me! It's over!

Rambaldo stares at Magda in amazement. Magda, suddenly moved to compassion, offers her hand to Rambaldo.

Alcuni Clienti:

Ah! Viva Bullier!

Qui soltanto regna la felicità!

Some Customers: (as they leave)

Ah! Long live Bullier!

Here, happiness only reigns!

Magda:

Perdonate, Rambaldo, se vi reco un dolore,
ma non posso, non posso,
è più forte il mio amore!

Magda:

Forgive me, Rambaldo, if I bring you
sorrow, but I can't, I just can't;
my love is stronger!

Rambaldo:

Possiate non pentirvene!

Rambaldo:

May you not regret it!

Rambaldo bows stiffly and leaves, following the last guests out.

Magda drops limply into a chair.

The hall is deserted and the garden lights are extinguished.

*The first light of day appears through the window; there is a disarray of tables,
and withered flowers are scattered on the floor amid broken glasses.*

From the street, a young girl is heard singing, the first sign of a reawakening city.

Una Ragazza:

Nella trepida luce d'un matin
m'apparisti ricinta di rose,
e ti vidi leggera camminar,
seminando di petali il ciel.

Mi vuoi dir chi sei tu?

Son l'auror a che nasce per fugar
ogni incanto di notte lunar!

Nell'amor non fidar!

A Girl: (from the street)

In the demure morning light you appeared to
me, decked in roses,
and I saw you walking softly,
sowing the petals to the sky.

Will you tell me who you are?

I am the dawn that is born to dispel every
enchantment of a moonlit night!

Don't trust love!

Ruggero:

Paulette! I nostri amici son già partiti.

Sai, è l'alba.

Vuoi che andiamo?

Ruggero: (approaching Magda)

Paulette! Our friends have already gone.

You know, it's dawn.

Do you want to leave?

Magda:

Un momento.

Magda: (as if awakening from a dream)

One moment.

Ruggero:

Che hai?

Ruggero:

What's the matter?

Magda:

Niente, niente.

Ti amo, ti amo!

Ma tu non sai, tu non sai!

Vedi, ho paura!

Magda:

Nothing, nothing.

I love you, I love you!

But you don't know!

See, I'm afraid!

Son troppo felice!
È il mio sogno, capsci?
Ma io tremo, tremo e piango.

Magda e Ruggero:
Mia vita, mio amor!

I am too happy!
It's my dream, do you understand?
But I tremble and weep.

Magda and Ruggero:
My life, my love!

Magda and Ruggero leave arm in arm.

END OF ACT II

Act III

*The small summer house of Magda and Ruggero on a hill
on the coast of the French Riviera.*

Flights of swallows can be seen in the distant skies.

*Magda and Ruggero sit intimately at a table having tea, both enjoying the beautiful late
afternoon spring day and the magnificent view of the sea and landscape.*

Moderato sostenuto
MAGDA



Sen - ti? Anche il mare respira sommes - so. L'aria bevo il profumo dei fior!

Magda:

Senti? Anche il mare respira sommesso.
L'aria beve il profumo dei fior!

Magda:

Can you hear? Even the sea breathes softly.
The air is saturated with the perfume of flowers!

Magda rises and hands Ruggero a cup of tea she has just poured.

So l'arte strana di comporte un filtro che
possa rendere vana ogni tua stanchezza.

I know the magic art of brewing a potion that
can conquer your fatigue.

Dimmi che ancora, sempre ti piaccio!

Tell me again that I always please you!

Ruggero:

Tutto, amore, mi piace di te!

Ruggero:

Everything about you, my love, pleases me!

Magda:

La solitudine, di', non ti tedia?

Magda:

Tell me, does this solitude bore you?

Ruggero:

Non son più solo coll'amore tuo che si
risveglia ogni giorno più ardente, più
intenso, più santo!

Ruggero:

With your love, I'm not alone. Every day it
becomes more impassioned, more intense,
and more holy!

Magda embraces Ruggero.

Ecco, il tuo braccio lieve mi circonda come
un dolcissimo laccio che nessuno spezza!

See, your arm around me is like a gentle
bond that no one can break!

Magda:

Ah, ti riordi ancora il nostro incontro laggiù?
T'ho visto e ho sognato l'amor!

Magda: (*hugging Ruggero more tightly*)

Ah, do you still remember when we met?
I saw you and dreamed of love!

Ruggero:

E siamo fuggiti qui per nascondarlo!

Magda:

Il nostro amor è nato fra i fiori!

Ruggero:

Tra i fiori i vivo!

Magda:

Inghirlandato di canti e danze!

Ruggero:

Inghirlandato di primavera!

Ruggero:

And we fled here to hide our love!

Magda:

Our love was born among the flowers!

Ruggero:

And I live among flowers!

Magda:

Crowned with songs and dances!

Ruggero:

Crowned with springtime!

Magda gather some roses, and then throws some petals on Ruggero.

Magda:

Oggi lascia che ancor il nostro amore
inghirlandi!

Lascia che ti avvolga tutta la mia tenerezza!
Senti la mia carezza trepida come il mio
cuore?

Benedetto l'amor e benedetta la vita!

Magda:

Today, let our love again be crowned by
Spring!

Let yourself be enveloped by my tenderness!
Do you feel my humble caress as my heart
does?

Blessed be love and blessed by life!

Ruggero:

La tua grazia squisita,
e tua fiorente beltà!

Ruggero:

Your robust beauty and compassion are
profound!

Magda:

Taci. Non parlate.

Taci. Stringimi a te, stringimi a te!

Magda:

Hush. Don't talk.

Hush. Hold me close to you!

Ruggero:

Benedetto il tuo amor!

Ruggero:

Blessed be your love!

Ruggero:

Oggi meriti molto!

Ruggero:

You deserve something special today!

Magda:

Un premio?

Magda:

A reward?

Ruggero:

No. Un segreto.

Ruggero:

No. A secret.

Magda:

Un segreto?

Magda:

A secret?

Ruggero:

Nascosto con ogni precauzione.
Non volevo parlarne se prima non
giungeva la risposta paterna.
Ma la risposta tarda.

Magda:

Hai scritto?

Ruggero:

Son tre giorni domandavo il denaro per
levarci d'impiccio.
In ogni tasca, guarda, c'è una richiesta, un
conto.

Magda:

Per colpa mia!

Ruggero:

La colpa va divisa!
È una pioggia insistente. Anche l'albergatore
ha la faccia un po' scura.

Magda:

Pover mio Ruggero!

Ruggero:

Andremo a mendicare.
"Chi vuole aprir le porte a due amanti
spiantati?"

Magda:

Non dire!

Ruggero:

Che importa!
Il segreto è più grande!

Magda:

Parla, dimmi, fa presto!

Ruggero:

Non l'hai indovinato?

Magda:

Che posso dirti?

Ruggero:

I was so careful that I didn't want to speak to
you about it before I received an answer
from my father.
But his answer is taking a long time.

Magda:

Did you write to him?

Ruggero: *(taking papers from his pocket)*

It's been three days since I asked for money
to relieve our burdens.
Look, in every pockets I have bills, requests
for payment.

Magda:

It's all my fault!

Ruggero:

We're both at fault!
It's an persistent deluge. Even the innkeeper
puts on a grim face.

Magda:

My poor Ruggero!

Ruggero: *(with a carefree laugh)*

We'll go begging:
"Who wants to open their doors to two
homeless lovers?"

Magda:

Don't say that!

Ruggero:

What does it matter!
The secret is much bigger!

Magda:

Speak, and tell me quickly!

Ruggero:

Haven't you guessed it?

Magda:

What can I say to you?

Ruggero:

Ho scritto per avere il consenso del nostro matrimonio!

Magda:

Ruggero, hai fatto questo?

Ruggero:

Perchè? Non vuoi?

Magda:

Che dirti?

Non so, non m'aspettavo, non sapevo, pensavo...

Ruggero:

Che io non lo facessi?

Magda:

No. Non so.

Dimmi tutto!

Ruggero:

Non c'è altro di più.

Se t'amo e m'ami, voglio che sia per sempre!

Magda:

"Per sempre!"

Mi ricordo, lo dicesti laggiù!

Ruggero:

E laggiù non sapevo ancora chi tu fossi, tu che non sei l'amante, ma l'amore!

Ruggero:

I've written in order to get my parents consent for our marriage!

Magda:

Ruggero, you did that?

Ruggero:

Why! Isn't that you wish?

Magda:

What can I tell you?

I don't know, I didn't expect, I didn't know, I thought...

Ruggero:

That I wouldn't do it?

Magda:

No. I don't know.

Tell me everything!

Ruggero:

There's nothing else.

If I love you, and you love me, I want it to be forever!

Magda:

"Forever!"

I remember, you said it down there!

Ruggero:

And down there I didn't yet know who you were: not the lover, but love!

Ruggero draws Magda close to him.

Andante sostenuto
RUGGERO

Dim - mi che vuoi se - guirme alla mia casa che intorno ha un orto e in faccia la collina

che si risveglia al sole, la matti - na ed è piena alla sera d'ombre strane!

Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa che
intorno ha un orto e in faccia la collina
che si risveglia al sole, la mattina
ed è piena, alla sera, d'ombre strane!

Il nostro amore troverà un quell'ombra
la sua luce più pura e più serena,
la santa protezione di mia madre
sopra ogni angoscia e fuori d'ogni pena!

E chi sa che a quel sole mattutino
un giorno non si tenda lietamente
la piccola manina d'un bambino.
E chi sa che quell'ombra misteriosa
non protegga i giocondi sogni d'oro
della nostra creatura che riposa.
E chi sa? E chi sa?

Tell me that you want to follow me to my
home, surrounded by a garden and opposite
the hill that wakes to the sun in the morning,
and is full of strange shadows in the evening!

In that shadow so pure and serene, our love
will find the holy protection of my mother,
transcending anguish and devoid of every
troubles and sorrows!

And who knows, perhaps one day the little
hand of a baby will be happily outstretched
in that morning sun.
And who knows if that mysterious shadow
will not protect the happy, golden dreams of
our resting child.
And who knows?

*Magda sobs quietly. Ruggero kisses her tenderly on her forehead and leaves abruptly.
Magda follows him with her eyes, and is then seized by terror,
unable to comprehend her destiny.*

Magda:
Che più dirgli?
Che fare?
Continuare a tacere, o confessare?
Ma come lo potrei?
Con un solo mio gesto far crollare sogni,
felicità, passione, amore!
No! Non devo parlare!

Non tacere io posso!
Continuare l'inganno per conservarmi a lui?
O mio povero cuore!
Quant'angoscia! Che pena!

Magda:
What more can I say to him?
What am I to do?
Continue my silence, or confess?
But how can I do it?
With a single stroke everything collapses: my
dreams, happiness, passion and love!
No! I must not speak!

Nor can I keep silent!
Shall I continue the deception in order to
keep him for myself? Oh my poor heart!
How much anguish! What torment!

*Grieving, Magda enters the house.
The voices of Prunier and Lisette are heard approaching the house.*

Lisette:
È qui?

Prunier:
Non so!

Lisette:
La rivedrò?

Lisette:
Is she here?

Prunier:
I don't know!

Lisette:
Will I see her again?

Prunier:

Speriam!

Prunier enters the terrace. Lisette follows, extremely nervous and frightened.

Avanti, vile! Vieni! Fa presto!
Il padiglione? Eccolo. È questo.
Che fai? Che temi?
Esagerate! Non c'è nessuno!

Lisette:

M'hai rovinata!

Prunier:

Non mi stupisce la ricompensa!
Volli innalzar la mia conquista
improvvisandoti canzonettista.
Ma non appena scoperto, l'astro morì, si
spense!

Lisette:

Dio! Che disastro!
Sempre mi pare di risentire il sibilate di
quella gente!

Prunier:

Che conta un fischio?
Che vale? Niente!
Ora dimentica. Qui tutto tace.

Lisette:

Dammi la pace.

Prunier:

La gloria, donna, volevo darti!

Lisette:

No, no. Ti upplico non esaltarti.

Prunier:

Io m'illudevo, in una sera, di soffocate la
cameriera!

Lisette:

Pur di non essere così fischiate anche la vita
l'avrei donata!

Prunier:

Let's hope so!

Come forward, coward! Come! Hurry!
The pavilion! Here it is. This is it.
What are you doing? What do you fear?
You exaggerate! There's no one here!

Lisette:

You've ruined me!

Prunier:

I'm not stunned by the reward!
You wanted to honor my conquest by
becoming a singer.
But the star was hardly discovered when it
died and exhausted itself.

Lisette:

God! What a disaster!
I'm going to hear the hissing of those people
forever!

Prunier:

What's a whistle of disapproval?
What's it worth? Nothing!
Now forget it. It's very quiet here.

Lisette:

Give me peace.

Prunier:

I wished to give you glory!

Lisette:

No. I beg you not to get excited.

Prunier:

In one evening, I had illusions of
transforming the maid!

Lisette:

I would have given my life rather than be
booed off the stage like that!

Lisette suddenly becomes frightened.

Guarda! Non vedi?
Laggù. Qualcuno!

Look! Don't you see?
Down there! There's someone!

Prunier:

Ma no, vanegii!
Non c'è nessuno!

Lisette:

Di proseguire più non m'arrischio!

Ahimè! Non senti?

Prunier:

Che cosa?

Lisette:

Un fischio!

Prunier:

Decisamente vittima sei dei nobilissimi
consigli miei!

Lisette:

Dimmi, dovremo girare ancora per ritrovar la
mia signora?

Prunier:

E se ciò fosse?

Lisette:

Non lo potrei!

Prunier:

Bisogna vincersi!

Lisette:

Prima vorrei frugare ogni angolo, esser
sicura che qui nessuno può far paura.

Prunier:

Ti riconduco all tua mèta!
In questa placida casi segreta gli amanti
tubano fuori del mondo!
Lontana è Nizza. Nizza è là in fondo!
La solitudine, vedi, è completa!

Lisette:

No! Non m'ingano!
Laggiù c'è un uomo.

Prunier:

Why no, you're delirious!
No one's there!

Lisette:

I don't dare to go on any further!

Lisette grows pale.

Alas! Don't you hear?

Prunier:

What?

Lisette:

A whistle!

Prunier:

You are unquestionably the victim of my
most noble counsels!

Lisette:

Tell me, must we proceed any further in
order to find my mistress?

Prunier:

And if it was necessary?

Lisette:

I couldn't do it!

Prunier:

You must control yourself!

Lisette:

First I'd like to search every corner to be
certain that no one can frighten me.

Prunier:

I lead you again to your calling!
In this serene, secret oasis, the lovers coo
far away from the world!
Nice is far away, there, down there!
Solitude, you see, is complete!

Lisette: (*again suddenly terrified*)

No! I'm not mistaken!
There's a man down there.

Prunier:

Lo riconosco: È il maggiordomo.

The Majordomo enters carrying several letters. Prunier advances to meet him.

Majordomo:

Disidera che avverta la signora?

Prunier:

I recognize him. He's the Majordomo.

Majordomo:

Do you wish me to inform Madame?

Prunier:

Le direte soltanto così:

Un amico e un'amica di Parigi l'aspettano
qui.

Prunier:

Only tell her this:

A gentlemen and lady friend from Paris
await her here.

The Majordomo bows and then enters the house.

Lisette:

Hai fatto male!

Io non son sua amica!

Lisette:

You were wrong!

I'm not her friend!

Prunier:

Che soca sei?

Prunier:

What are you?

Lisette:

Lo vedrai prima di sera!

Lisette:

You'll find out before evening!

Prunier:

Quali stolte intenzioni ti passan per la testa?

Prunier:

What nonsense is passing through you head?

Lisette:

Alla fine m'hai seccato!

Troppe, troppe osservazioni!

Non me sono ribellata ma tramontan

le illusioni!

Sono stanca di tutto!

Lisette: (flaring up)

You've finally annoyed me!

Too many criticisms!

I'm not rebelling but the illusions are

fading!

I'm tired of everything!

Prunier:

Quali sono i tuoi sogni?

Prunier: (ironically)

What are your dreams?

Lisette:

I miei sogni?

Che t'importa!

So ben io quel che sogno!

Voglio la calma!

Di star sola ho bisogno!

Non intrometterti nella mia sorte!

Lisette:

My dreams?

What do you care!

I know full well what I dream!

I want peace!

I need to be alone!

Don't interfere in my fate!

Prunier:

La gratitudine mon è il tuor forte!

Misera sorte! Povera mèta!

Prunier:

Gratitude is not your forte!

Wretched fate! Poor destiny!

Lisette:

Ah, los so bene! Grande poeta!

Prunier:

M'insulti?

Lisette:

Ti sprezzo!

Lisette: (*spitefully*)

Ah, I know it well! Great poet!

Prunier:

Are you insulting me?

Lisette:

I scorn you!

Magda appears, followed by the Majordomo, who bows, and then departs.

Prunier and Lisette hurriedly run to meet her.

Magda:

Ma come voi?

Vi ricordate ancora la cecchia parigina?

Magda:

What, you?

Do you still remember the old Parisienne?

Lisette:

Mia signora!

Lisette:

Madame!

Prunier:

Siam venuti a turbare il vostro nido. Siete dunque felice?

Prunier:We've come to disturb your nest.
Are you very happy?**Magda:**

Interamente!

Magda: (*slightly sad*)

Completely!

Prunier:

Se ne parla, a Parigi.

Si ricorda!

È devo dirvi tutto?

Non si crede.

Prunier:

They talk about it in Paris.

They remember!

Must I tell you everything?

They don't believe it!

Magda:

Non si crede? Perché?

Magda:

They don't believe it? Why?

Prunier:Perché la vostra vita non è questa,
fra piccole rinuncie e nostalgie,
con la visione d'una casa onesta che chiuda
l'amor vostro in una tomba!**Prunier:**Because this isn't your lifestyle,
living amid little sacrifices and nostalgia, with
visions of an upright home that terminates
your love in a grave!**Magda:**

No, Prunier.

Non sapete quanto male mi fate a dir così!

Magda:

No, Prunier.

You don't know how much you hurt me by
talking like this!

Or parliamo di voi.

Che fate qui?

Now let's talk about you two.

What brings you here?

Prunier:

Il teatro di Nizza ier sera decretò
che Lisette non ha stoffa per la gloria,
e perciò io che vedo e capisco ve la
restituisco!
L'artista d'una sera tornerà cameriera!

Lisette:

Sarò quella d'allora, se volete!

Magda:

Ma certo!

Lisette:

Finalmente!

Prunier:

È una donna felice. Lo vedete?
Torna l'anima antica a palpitare.
Anche voi, come lei, Magda, dovrete se non
oggi abbandonare una illusione che credete via.

Magda:

Tacete.

Prunier:

È mio dovere.
Ho avuto quest'incarico e lo compio!

Magda:

Da chi?

Prunier:

Da chi v'aspetta, sa dei vostri imbarazzi, ed è
pronto a salvarvi in ogni modo!

Magda:

Non più! Non più!

Prunier:

Mi basta. Ho detto tutto!
Addio per sempre.

Magda:

Ve ne andate?

Prunier:

Last night, the theater in Nice determined
that Lisette doesn't have the right talent, and
therefore, since I see and understand, I'm
giving her back to you!
The artist of one evening returns to maid-
serving!

Lisette: *(to Magda)*

I'll be what I was before, If you wish!

Magda:

Why, of course!

Lisette: *(relieved)*

Finally!

Prunier: *(to Magda, pointing to Lisette)*

Can't you see that she's a happy woman?
The old spirit begins to beat again.
Magda, you should be like her and one day
abandon the illusion that you believe is life.

Magda:

Be quiet.

Prunier:

It's my duty.
I have this duty and I'm fulfilling it!

Magda:

From whom?

Prunier:

From someone who awaits you, knows of
your difficulties, and is ready to save you in
every way possible!

Magda:

No more!

Prunier:

That's enough. I've said everything!
Goodbye forever.

Magda:

You're leaving?

Prunier:

Parto. Con certa gente non ho più a che fare.

Prunier:

I'm going. With certain people I have nothing more to do.

*Prunier kisses Magda's hand.***Lisette:**

Ne son felice!

Lisette: (to Prunier with a curtsy)

I'm glad!

Prunier:

Solo una preghiera.

Prunier: (to Lisette)

I have but one request.

Lisette:

Dite pure. Vi ascolto.

Lisette: (with exaggerated graciousness)

Then tell me. I'm listening to you.

Prunier:

Permettete, signora?

Prunier:

Will you allow me, Madame?

Whispering to Lisette.

A che ora lei libera stasera?

At what time are you free this evening?

Lisette:

Alle dieci.

Lisette:

At ten.

Prunier:

Ti aspetto!

Prunier:

I'll be waiting for you!

*Prunier leaves with an air of great dignity.***Lisette:**

Mi dia da fare subito!

Chi sa quanto disordine ci sarà senza di me!

Lisette: (throwing off her coat and hat)

Give me something to do right away!

Who knows what disorder there must be here without my services!

Magda:

Davvero t'ho rimpianta!

Magda:

I've truly missed you!

Lisette:

La scena è un precipizio!

Ma la follia passò!

Ora, immediatamente,

verrà, rimedierò...

un grembiolino bianco e riprendo servizio!

Lisette:

The stage was a failure!

But my folly is over!

You'll see right away how I'll make it right... a white apron, and I resume my service to you!

*As Lisette curtsies and enters the house, Ruggero emerges, bearing a letter.***Ruggero:**

Amore mio! Mia madre!

È mia madre che scrive!

Ruggero:

My love! My mother!

My mother who has written!

Magda:
Tua madre?

Magda: (*trembling*)
You mother?

Ruggero:
Perchè tremi?
Non lo sai che acconsente?

Ruggero:
Why are you trembling?
Don't you know that she consents?

Magda:
Tua madre! Tua madre!

Magda:
Your mother!

Ruggero:
Leggi tu stessa:

Ruggero:
(*enthusiastically handing Magda the letter*)
Read it yourself!

Ruggero forces Magda to sit down. He sits next to her.

Così. Vicina a me.
No, più vicina, che il tuo viso mi sfiori!

Here. Near me.
No, closer, so that your face touches mine!

Magda:
Tua madre!

Magda:
Your mother!

Ruggero:
Leggi! Leggi!

Ruggero:
Read it!

Magda:
“Figliulo, tu mi dici che una dolce creatura
ha toccato il tuo cuore.
Essa sia benedetta se la manda il Signore.”

Magda: (*with supreme effort*)
“My son, you have told me that a sweet
person has touched your heart.
May she be blessed if the Lord sent her.”

Magda bows her head, deeply moved.

Ruggero:
Continua. Leggi, leggi!

Ruggero:
Continue to read it!

Magda:
“Penso con occhi umidi di pianto ch'essa
sarà la madre de tuoi figli.
È la maternità che rende santo l'amore.

Magda:
“With drenched tears in my eyes, I think that she
will be the mother of your children.
It is motherhood that sanctifies love.”

Ruggero:
Amore mio.

Ruggero:
My love.

Magda:
“Se tu sai che essa è buona, mite, pura, che
ha tutte le virtù, sia benedetta!
Mentre attendo con ansia il tuo ritorno, la
vecchia casa onesta dei tuoi vecchi si
rischiara di gioia per accogliere l'eletta.
Donale il bacio mio.”

Magda:
“If you know that she is good, humble,
chaste, and virtuous, may she be blessed!
While I anxiously await your return, your
parents' old home brightens with joy to
welcome the chosen young lady.
Give her my kiss!”

Ruggero:

Il bacio di mia madre!

Magda:

No! Non posso riveverlo! Non posso, no!

Ruggero:

Non puoi?

Magda:

No! Non devo ingannarti!

Ruggero:

Tu? Tu?

Magda:

Ruggero!

Il mio passato non si può scordare.

Nella tua casa io non posso entrare!

Ruggero:

Perchè? Perchè?

Ah! Chi sei? Che hai fatto?

Magda:

Sono venuta a te contaminata!

Ruggero:

Che m'importa!

Magda:

Ah! Non sai tutto!

Ruggero:

So che sei mia!

Magda:

Tu non sai tutto!

Ruggero:

Che m'importa!

Magda:

Trionfando son passata tra la vergogna e l'oro!

Ruggero:

Non dirmi più!

Non voglio! Non dirmi più!

Ruggero: (*drawing Magda close to him*)

A kiss from my mother!

Magda: (*drawing back suddenly*)

No! I can't receive it! I can't, no!

Ruggero:

You can't?

Magda:

No! I must not deceive you!

Ruggero:

You? You?

Magda:

Ruggero!

My past cannot be forgotten.

I cannot enter your home!

Ruggero:

Why?

Ah! Who are you? What have you done?

Magda:

I came to you tainted!

Ruggero:

It's not important!

Magda:

Ah! You don't know everything!

Ruggero:

I only know that you are mine!

Magda:

You don't know everything!

Ruggero:

It's not important!

Magda:

I have passed amid shame and glitter triumphantly!

Ruggero:

Don't tell me any more!

I don't want you to!

Magda:

Tu m'hai dato un tesoro la tua fede, il tuo amore, ma non devo ingannarti!

Ruggero:

Quale inganno?

Magda:

Posso esser l'amante, l'amante non la sposa che tua madre vuole e crede!

Ruggero:

Taci! Le tue parole son la mia perdizione!
Che farò senza te che m'hai svelato quanto si possa amare?
Ma non sai che distruggi la mia vita?

Magda:

E non sai che il mio strazio è così grande che mi par di morire?
Ma non devo più esitare:
Nella tua casa io non posso entrare!

Ruggero:

No! Non dir questo! No!
Guarda il mio tormento!

Magda:

Tua madre offi ti chiama!
E devo abbandonarti perchè t'amo.
Non voglio rovinarti!

Ruggero:

No! Non lasciarmi solo! No!

Magda:

You gave me a treasure: your trust and love.
But I must not deceive you!

Ruggero:

What deception?

Magda:

I can be your lover, but not the wife that your mother wants and believes I am!

Ruggero:

Quiet! Your words are my damnation!
What will I do without you, the woman who revealed how much one can love?
But don't you know that you are destroying my life?

Magda:

And don't you know that my agony is so great that I feel that I am dying?
But I must not hesitate any longer:
I cannot enter and defile your home!

Ruggero:

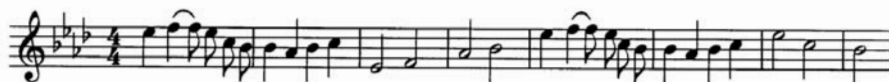
No! Don't say that! No!
Look at my anguish!

Magda:

Today, your mother calls you!
And I must abandon you because I love you!
I don't want to ruin you!

Ruggero: (holding Magda close to him)

No! Don't leave me alone! No!

Andante mosso appassionato**RUGGERO**

Ma come puoi lasciarmi se mi struggo in pianto, se disperatamente io m'aggrappo a te!

Ma come puoi lasciarmi se mi strugge in pianto,
se disperatamente io m'aggrappo a te!
O mia divina amante,
o vita di mia vita, non spezzare il mio cuor!

But how can you leave me when I'm tormented with tears,
and cling to you in desperation!
Oh my divine love,
Oh life of my life, don't break my heart!

Magda:

Non disperare, ascolta:
Se il destino vuole che tutto sia finito
pensa ancora a me!
Pensa che il sacrificio che compio in questo
istante io lo compio per te!

Ruggero:

No! Rimani! Non lasciarmi solo!

Magda:

Non voglio rovinarti!

Magda:

Don't despair, listen:
If destiny wills that our love is over, still
think of me!
Think that the sacrifice that I am making is
being made for you!

Ruggero:

No! Stay! Don't leave me alone!

Magda:

I don't want to destroy you!

Magda takes Ruggero's face in her hands and looks at him intensely.

L'anima mia che solo tu conosci,
l'anima mia è con te, con te per sempre!
Lascia ch'io ti parli come una madre al suo
figliuolo caro.

Quando sarai guarito, te ne ricorderai.
Ti ritorni alla casa tua serena,
io reprendo il mio volo e la mia pena.

Ruggero:

Amore.

My soul is the only one you know,
and my soul is with you forever!
Let me speak to you as a mother speaks to
her beloved son.

When you recover, you will remember our
love, and return to your serene home.
I will again fly away with my sorrows.

Ruggero:

My love.

Magda:

Non dir niente, che sia mio questo dolore.

Magda:

Don't say anything. Let all the grief be mine.

*Ruggero falls into a chair, grief stricken. Lisette emerges from the house. Magda glances at
Ruggero tenderly, and while holding on to Lisette, leaves.*

END OF OPERA

Il trittico

(“The Triptych”)

Three one-act operas in Italian

An Overview

It was Puccini’s idea to compose three one-act operas, each a profound contrast to the other. The three operas were given the generic title *Il trittico* (“The Triptych”); but contrary to a triptych, which is united thematically, the three operas form no narrative sequence.

As such, imaginations have been stirred to find some underlying unity or relationship between the three operas.

Gianni Schicchi was taken from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, Canto XXX of the *Inferno*. It has been suggested that the entire *Il trittico* can be related to *The Divine Comedy*: *Il tabarro*’s horror can suggest the *Inferno*; the Divine grace of *Suor Angelica* hints at *Purgatory*; and *Gianni Schicchi*’s story suggests redemption, a relation to *Paradise*.

As such, *Il trittico*, like Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, suggests a gradual rise from darkness to light.

That said, within each of the three operas, there is an unequivocal link to children: in *Il tabarro*, Giorgetta’s unhappiness and eventual adultery is sparked by her child’s death; in *Suor Angelica*, Angelica commits suicide to join her son in Heaven; and in *Gianni Schicchi*, the hero Schicchi overturns the Donati family’s hopes — and greed — to secure a dowry for his beloved daughter Lauretta.

In each opera of *Il trittico*, a parent’s love of child becomes the essential dramatic force of the opera, if not its very soul.

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 14, 1918

Principal Characters in Il tabarro

Giorgetta, Michele's wife, (age 25)	Soprano
Michele, a barge skipper (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.

Story Synopsis

Michele despairs because the flames of intimacy in his marriage have extinguished. He yearns to rekindle its earlier passions, but his young wife Giorgetta has become indifferent, spurning his desires. She has resolved her unhappiness with a secret lover, the stevedore Luigi.

Michele suspects that he is being cuckolded. At night, he discovers Luigi sneaking aboard. He seizes him by the neck and forces him to confess that he loves Giorgetta. Afterwards, he strangles him to death, covering the body with his cloak.

When Giorgetta joins him on deck, he unveils the dead Luigi and savagely pushes her onto her lover's corpse.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

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

The Seine River motive:

Andante moderato calmo



Michele, skipper of the barge, is seated near the tiller, gazing pensively at the magnificent September sunset, his unlighted pipe hanging from his lips.

Stevedores move to and from the barge, their backs struggling under the weight of heavy bags of cement. They complain about the burdensome work, a languorous toil they must endure in order to survive. The whistles of passing tugs are heard from the river; automobile horns are heard in the distance.

Giorgetta emerges from the cabin. She removes hanging laundry, and then draws a bucket of water from the river to water flowers. She hides her eyes from the sun with her hands as she calls to Michele, who sits motionless by the tiller. She inquires if he is not tired from gazing blankly into the bright sunset. Michele remains pensive and introspective, his response short and terse.

Michele inquires about the stevedore's progress in unloading the barge. Giorgetta confirms that the hold will soon be emptied, and they will be ready to take on new cargo tomorrow. Giorgetta expresses compassion for the hard-working stevedores, asking Michele if she could offer wine to the hard-working laborers. Michele assents, complimenting her heart of gold for others, but to himself, he laments that she has no compassion for him.

Michele approaches Giorgetta and gently places his arm about her waist, telling her that his pipe may be extinguished, but that his desire for her is aflame. He attempts to kiss her, but she turns away from him. Disappointed, Michele leaves, disappearing into the hold of the barge.

The stevedore Luigi complains that the work of unloading the barge has been interminable. Giorgetta sympathetically offers him wine. As she walks toward the cabin, she exchanges covert, expressive glances with him. Tinca emerges from the hold, his fellow stevedore Talpa urging him to hurry so they can have supper. Talpa wipes perspiration from his brow while complaining about the endless drudgery.

Giorgetta approaches the stevedores with a pitcher of wine and glasses, urging them to raise their spirits with wine. They surround Giorgetta, who graciously pours them wine.

Tinca raises his glass and toasts, praising the good wine that erases melancholy thoughts.

An Organ-Grinder appears on the wharf playing an off-key waltz.

Organ-Grinder's Waltz:**Tempo di Valzer moderato**

Accompanied by the waltz, Tinca dances with Giorgetta, the others laughing because of his clumsy steps. Luigi intervenes, taking Giorgetta in his arms and holding her tightly. As they dance, Giorgetta becomes languid, completely abandoning herself to Luigi.

Talpa immediately alerts Giorgetta and Luigi that Michele is emerging from the cabin; they stop dancing. Luigi throws coins to the Organ-Grinder, and then joins the other stevedores to resume unloading cargo from the barge.

Michele approaches Giorgetta; she is busily rearranging her disheveled hair. She inquires about their plans to sail. Michele's response is vague. Their conversation is interrupted by the shrill whistle from a distant tug, and the voice of a song peddler from afar.

Giorgetta and Michele resume their conversation. She inquires if he plans to retain the stevedores Tinca, Talpa, and Luigi; he is noncommittal, cold, evasive.

Giorgetta praises the beautiful crimson September sunset, commenting that as night approaches, there is a chill in the air.

"Gia discende la sera"**GIORGETTA**

Già di - scen - de la se - ra
Night has already descended.

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

The song-peddler appears on the quay alongside the barge. He is followed by a group of enthusiastic female milliners, who have emerged from of a nearby shop to hear his song.

The new song relates the story of Mimi; the Mimi of his song was abandoned by her lover in the spring, and then died.

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 concludes his song with music quoted from Puccini's *La bohème*: "*È la storia de Mimì!*" ("It is the story of Mimì!"), but adds the ominous verse, "*Chi ha vissuto per amore per amore morì*" ("One who lives for love dies for love").

Giorgetta watches Michele fixedly, inquiring why he seems so strange, silent and pensive. He responds by asking her if he treats her well and gives her proper attention. She confirms that he does not abuse her, but complains that she would prefer that he be more extroverted; she becomes uneasy and anxious when he is moody and pensive. As Michele walks away from her, Giorgetta's eyes follow him intently. She senses that something bothers him and insists that he tell her what it is. Michele replies tersely: "*Ma nulla! Nulla!*" ("Why nothing! Nothing!")

The song-peddler finishes his song and disappears into the distance, the female milliners heard echoing the verses of the song.

Frugola appears on the wharf, ironically greeting Michele and Giorgetta as "*Eterni innamorati*" ("Perennial lovers"). She mounts the gangplank and jumps onto the barge. She is a dirty, ragged woman, a scavenger whose shoulder knapsack is filled with rubbish that she has collected by rummaging through garbage. Michele greets Frugola, bids her goodnight, and then enters the cabin.

Frugola has come for her husband Talpa, and inquires if the stevedores have finished their work. She reveals that the laborious work has caused Talpa excruciating pain, which she has attentively soothed with rubdowns and good rum.

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

"Se tu sapessi gli oggetti strani"

Allegro energico
FRUGOLA



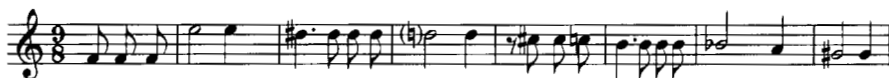
Se tu sa - pessi gli oggetti stra - ni che in questa sacca so - no racchiusi!
If you knew the strange objects that are gathered in this sack!

Frugola removes a jewel-studded comb and presents it to Giorgetta. Then she proceeds to display 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 immediately approaches Luigi, inquiring if he is available tomorrow to unload the heavy steel bars that remain in the hold. Luigi acknowledges his availability.

Tinca appears, followed by other stevedores. They wish Michele a goodnight, and then scatter on the wharf. Talpa expresses his desire to join his fellow stevedores in drink, but Frugola forbids him. Michele descends into the cabin.

Tinca insists that he wants more wine to drown his sorrows and repress his thoughts. Luigi responds with bitter resentment, condemning their cruel fate: a life of arduous labor for meager wages; a life without hope for salvation.

“Hai ben ragione”**Allegro moderato con moto****LUIGI**

Hai ben ragione; meglio non pensare, piegare il capo ed incurvar la schiena.
 You are right. It's better not to think about it, with bended heads and broken backs.

Tinca suggests to Luigi that he also drown his sorrows in drink; he then disappears on the wharf.

Frugola expresses her dream for a cottage in the woods: a pastoral home with a garden with roses and trees.

“Ho sognato una casetta”**Allegretto mosso****FRUGOLA**

Ho sognato una ca - set - ta, con un piccolo orticello.
 I dreamed of a small house, with a small rose garden.

Giorgetta's dreams are different: she was born in Belleville, and she is homesick, yearning to return to the vibrant life of the suburbs.

“È ben altro il mio sogno!”**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 is my joy,

Giorgetta denounces her vagrant life on a barge as an indecent life for a woman; she yearns to return to the suburban village of Belleville where she was born. Luigi was also born there, and he — like Giorgetta — yearns to escape from life on the river. Giorgetta and Luigi invoke reminiscences of Belleville: bright shops, dining in the open air, and amorous intimacies.

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

Frugola observes them, cynically commenting that life is seemingly quite different on board a barge. Talpa, disinterested in Giorgetta's dreams, asks Luigi to join them for supper. Luigi declines, explaining that he is waiting to speak with Michele. Talpa and Frugola leave, Giorgetta wishing them goodnight.

In a low, fervid voice, Giorgetta reminds Luigi of the ecstasy they shared last night. She suddenly becomes fearful when her thoughts turn to Michele; if he knew of their affair he would kill both of them. Luigi thunders that death is more welcome; he can no longer endure their separation, nor share Giorgetta with Michele any longer.

The lover's guilt:

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 cabin. He expresses his surprise in seeing Luigi, and immediately inquires why he still remains on board the barge. Luigi explains that he wanted to thank the skipper for providing work, but that it is not enough for him. He requests that Michele leave him at Rouen, where he believes more work is available. After Michele convinces him that there is no work in Rouen, Luigi agrees to remain in Paris.

Michele leaves to light the evening lanterns, and then descends into the cabin. Luigi rushes to Giorgetta: both explode into impassioned yearning and desire; they are consumed by each other, confounded by their joy amid ecstasy and fear.

“È la gioia rapita fra spasimi e paure”

LUIGI



È la gio - ia ra - pit - ta fra spasimi e pa - u - re.
A seductive joy, amid ecstasy and fear.

Giorgetta and Luigi plan their rendezvous as they did the night before. Luigi will return in an hour, and Giorgetta will leave the gangplank for him. When it is safe to board, she will light a match. Fearing Michele, Giorgetta insists that Luigi leave the barge immediately.

As Luigi departs, Michele emerges from the cabin.

Michele's despair:

Andante molto moderato



Michele suggests that Giorgetta go to bed, but she claims that she is not tired yet. Giorgetta is concerned that there may not be enough work for the stevedores; she wants to be sure that Michele keeps Luigi employed. She suggests that Michele dismiss Tinca because of his excessive drinking, Michele cynically commenting that he drinks to drown the sorrow of a man having a faithless wife.

Giorgetta becomes silent, Michele's response arousing her anxiety. Michele approaches Giorgetta with impassioned determination, consumed to rekindle their former love.

"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 recalls the past: it was just a year ago that the three of them (with their infant child) shared intimacies in the dark cabin during cool nights. Giorgetta pleads with Michele to be silent; the mention of her dead child is painful. Michele nostalgically reminds her how he would wrap her in his cloak when the breeze was too brisk: that they were so happy together, but the flames of that intimacy have suddenly extinguished.

Giorgetta acknowledges her love for Michele: that he is a kind and honest man. But as Michele advances toward Giorgetta, she spurns him, excusing herself by claiming that she is tired, weary, and must go to sleep, even though it is stifling and suffocating in the cabin. Michele reminds her that she never sleeps; it is her sleeplessness and her disappearance from the cabin in the evenings that have aroused his suspicions of her fidelity.

Michele tries to embrace Giorgetta, but she remains cold and indifferent. She claims that they are getting older and that she no longer feels those youthful passions. When Michele tries to kiss her, she escapes from him. She abruptly runs off and wishes him good night.

Michele follows her fixedly with his eyes, muttering savagely: "Sgualdrina!" ("Whore!")

Michele wonders why Giorgetta rejects him: Is it because he has aged? Does Giorgetta have a lover? Does she feign sleeplessness to escape to a secret lover?

On the boulevard along the Seine, the shadows of embraced lovers are seen as they exchange endearments to each other. Taps echoes from a nearby-by barracks.

The Seine River becomes the metaphor for Michele's unhappiness and the anguish that has become etched in his soul: the mysterious silent waters flow endlessly, like the sorrows

in his broken heart; he yearns to die in peace in those silent waters, the end of his tears and bitter sorrows.

In the silence of the dark night, Michele throws his big black cloak over his shoulders. 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!

Michele is convinced that Giorgetta has a lover, but who?

“Chi? Chi? Forse il mio sonno!”

Andante grave

MICHELE



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

Michele removes his pipe from his pocket, places it in his mouth, and lights it. As the match flares, Luigi, who has been hiding on the wharf awaiting Giorgetta's signal, cautiously mounts the gangplank and jumps onto the barge. Michele becomes startled by a man's shadow and hides in the darkness.

Michele recognizes Luigi; he jumps on him and seizes him by the throat. Luigi struggles in vain to free himself, but he is powerless against Michele's overpowering clutches. Michele cautions him not to scream. He demands to know why Luigi has returned, suggesting that he is seeking his wife, which Luigi denies. Michele insists that he is lying and demands the truth. Luigi tries to draw a knife from his pocket, but Michele overpowers his arms. Michele curses Luigi and warns him that he will kill him and throw him into the river unless he confesses that he loves his wife; if he confesses, he will free him.

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.

Giorgetta is heard calling to Michele from inside the cabin. Michele hears her voice, and then throws his cloak over Luigi's corpse. He sits down, appearing casual, as if nothing had happened. Giorgetta approaches Michele anxiously. Michele calmly and cynically reminds her that he told her that she would not be able to sleep.

Giorgetta meekly apologizes for being cold to him, and coquettishly begs his forgiveness. She asks Michele if he wants her near to him, perhaps under his cloak like they did so often in the past. 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, thundering that sometimes a cloak hides a crime, or sometimes a murder. He invites Giorgetta to come beneath his cloak. As he opens the cloak, Giorgetta shrieks in horror as Luigi's dead body falls at her feet. Michele seizes her and throws her violently upon the corpse of her dead lover.

Commentary and Analysis

Il tabarro was adapted from *La Houpelande* (“The Cloak”) (1910), a one-act play by the French dramatist Didier Gold: a *pièce noire*, a dark and grim drama set amid the wretched social conditions of the Parisian lower classes; the play strongly echoed naturalism, its story dealing with irrational passions of adultery, violence, and murder.

The Grand Guignol Theater, the large puppet theater, emerged in Paris in 1897. (The theater was closed in 1962.) Eventually, the puppet-plays were replaced with live performances of works by famous playwrights and authors: Dickens, Kipling, Poe, Stevenson, and Mark Twain.

Within a short time, new owners brought a different genre to the theater: gruesome and unimaginable horror plays that were a blend of the sordid and the sensational. The melodramas terrified their audiences with gory portrayals of brutal human violence: stabbings, mutilations, beheadings, gougings, tortures, dismemberments, and blood-soaked murders that were presented in such graphic detail that audiences became shaken and horrified; actors would calculate their success according to the evening’s faintings, and at times, the cobble-stoned alley outside the theater was peopled with hyperventilating and vomiting playgoers; it was said that a doctor was always in attendance at performances.

Gold’s *La Houpelande* ran for several years at the Grand Guignol. Puccini became fascinated by its atmosphere of gloom and doom, its stark realism, and its brutal passions: fuel to kindle his macabre imagination.

To achieve an authentic atmosphere of naturalism, Gold presented coarse characters speaking in slang, and using vulgar language. He endowed three of his characters with nicknames that might be common among Parisian bargemen or the lower social and economic classes: the first stevedore is Goujon, a fool (Puccini’s Tinca); the second stevedore La Taupe, or mole (Talpa in the opera); and Taupe’s wife is La Furette, the “rag-picker” (Puccini’s La Frugola), the latter, a weird example of the Parisian “Lumpenproletariat,” a group estranged from the economic and social classes.

Gold even provided the characters’ respective ages: Michel (age 50), Georgette (age 25), and Louis (age 20), the disparity of age between Michel and Georgette suggesting her motivation to adultery.

Gold compressed his drama into two hours: from sunset to complete darkness. Tension and suspense gradually build through the insertion of seemingly incidental and accidental details, an integral part of the machinery of French melodrama: the play begins with the subtle detail of Michel seen with a pipe hanging from one corner of his mouth; when it is lit at the conclusion of the drama it becomes the young stevedore’s deathtrap. The love triangle is gradually exposed through a succession of plot details: Louis arrives at the exact moment when Michel tries to kiss his wife; as she spurns him, she stares intensely at the young stevedore, the revelation of their secret intimacy.

In Gold’s play, the frustrated Georgette seduces Louis, their secret love affair haunting the young stevedore with anxiety and guilt. Puccini added an additional twist to his young stevedore’s character: Luigi is a more ardent lover, who wants to transplant himself in Rouen to abandon Georgetta not because of moral scruples, but because he cannot cope with sharing Georgetta with her husband.

La Houpelande concluded with two simultaneous crimes of passion: Goujon, a stevedore married to a prostitute, stabs his wife to death, emerging from a quayside tavern while brandishing a bloodstained knife; at that exact moment, Michel, who had just strangled his

wife's lover Louis, opens his cloak that covers her dead lover, and violently thrusts his wife onto the corpse.

Puccini's muse was more often than not inspired by his profound macabre and Neronic instincts, but strangely, he altered the plot by suppressing Gold's double murders, Puccini considering Goujon's knifing of his strumpet wife irrelevant to the main thrust of the dramatic action. Ironically, the cloak is the archetypal symbol of male protection of the female.

I *Il tabarro* is in one act, but structured in virtually two equal halves: the first half introducing all the characters and establishing the tediousness and drudgery of barge life; the second half featuring Giorgetta, Michele and Luigi, and the love triangle that leads to a horrific crime of passion.

The first scene immediately establishes the ambience of river life: Giorgetta is busy with trivialities of laundry and watering plants; the stevedores are unloading the barge; and Michele is seated immobile by the helm while pensively watching the sunset, a seemingly anguished man engrossed by his inner thoughts, and consumed by his unhappiness. The musical underscore is the "River" motive, a gloomy, melancholy theme suggesting the fatigue of soul-destroying river life, a theme that is tonally ambiguous; it rises and falls within a two octave range to suggest the river's flow, infinite depth, and awesome power.

Puccini's vivid vignettes provide contrast and diversion, detours urgently needed to relieve the play's almost unrelenting mood of oppressive gloom and heightened dramatic tension: Luigi's short drinking song; the amusing out-of-tune Organ-Grinder's waltz that serves to expose the intimacy between Luigi and Giorgetta; and the Song-Peddler's wistful "Primavera" that concludes ominously with the verse, "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. The refrain of the Song-Peddler's song 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 music from his earlier *La bohème*. Nevertheless, in this story of Mimi, the heroine dies in springtime of a broken heart, not of consumption.

Puccini provided Luigi with much declamatory music that was so typical of the verismo genre: extremely impassioned music expressing despair, oppression, and drudgery. Puccini seems to reveal a social conscience in *Il tabarro*, perhaps vindicating his failure to express more profound Enlightenment ideals at the conclusion of *Tosca*. Luigi denounces his destiny as an indigent laborer, Puccini and librettist Giuseppe Adami expounding Marxist ideology, the Bolsheviks rise to power coinciding with the premiere of *Il tabarro* in 1917: "Hai ben ragione" ("You're right; it's better not to think, just bow your head and bend your back.") is a powerful exposition of working class despair.

Puccini seemed to be fascinated by the fantastic and grotesque La Frugola; he provided her with more generous music than the heroine Giorgetta. The rag-picker has her own leitmotif that underscores her hobbling along with a sack full of rubbish on her shoulder, and 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 patter, like her purring cat's "ron, ron" ("Purr, purr") that delineates her philosophy: "It's better to feed on two slices of heart than wear out one's own with love!"

Frugola's air "Ho sognato una casetta" explains her longing to escape from life's burdens to a small country cottage where she and her husband — and her cat — will peacefully await death. Frugola's yearning for pastoral peace becomes the springboard for the lover's

impassioned duet, which Giorgetta begins: *È ben altro il mio sogno!* (“My dream is different!”) The secret lovers were born and bred in the same Parisian suburb of Belleville, so both, unlike the skipper Michele, pulse with the excitement and fascination of suburban life and the city lights of Paris, the antithesis of the unsettling nomadic life on a river barge, and one of the underlying reasons for Georgette’s unhappiness and rebellion.

The first half of the opera establishes the conflicts and tensions of the drama: weary, smoldering, and pathetic creatures poised to explode into violent passions.

The second half of *Il tabarro* is dominated by the three principal characters: Michele, Giorgetta, and Luigi.

Giorgetta and Luigi are passionately in love, but are racked with guilt and fear. Giorgetta describes how her hand always trembles before she lights the match, the signal to Luigi for their clandestine meetings; her revelation underscored with the “Lover’s Guilt” motive.

Michele confronts Giorgetta: “Perchè, perchè non m’ami più?” (“Why don’t you love me anymore?”), an energetic and powerful explosion of a despairing man longing to resurrect a lost love. He recalls intimacies they shared with their young child, all warmed by his protective cloak, the underscoring music the themes of Michele’s “Despair” and the “Cloak Theme.” Michele concludes explosively, “Resta vicina a me!” (“Stay close to me!”), thundering his tormented desires to the indifferent Giorgetta.

Giorgetta refuses to discuss the tragedy of their son’s death. When Michele mentions it, she becomes anxious and rushes away, the spurned Michele cursing her as she disappears into the cabin: “Sgualdrina!” (“Whore!”), muttered between clenched teeth.

After the shadows of two lovers fade into the distance, and a bugle sounds taps from the local barracks, there is an eerie calm; the full horror of the drama is about to unfold.

Puccini humanized Michele, a tragic man tortured by a loveless marriage, suspicions of his wife’s infidelity, and the melancholy of ageing. Originally, Michele’s final monologue was “Scorri, fiume eterno!” (“Flow, eternal river!”), a poignant meditation on the destructive power of the river. But after a Bologna revival in 1921, Puccini replaced it with the more powerful “Nulla! Silenzio!”, a sinister and terrifying portrait of a beast of prey lying in wait for his victim.

Michele broods about his suspicions of his wife’s infidelity, his jealousy gradually mounting to murderous passions that culminate in his thunderous outcry of despair, “La pace è nella la morte!” (“Peace exists only in death!”) The skipper wishes to resolve the agony of his loveless marriage by ending his life in the Seine’s waters, the grave that will resolve his unhappiness and liberate his misery; his desire for peace through death is rendered potently and energetically by Puccini’s orchestra. (In Gold’s play, Michel expresses his agony at the same moment that Goujon passes en route to the Belle Musette to kill his wife.) Michele’s monologue is a portrait of a somber, sinister, and morose man that is underscored with the “Cloak” theme, first heard in the preceding duet with Giorgetta.

Michele’s ponders who his wife’s lover might be: “Chi? Chi? Forse il mio sonno!” (“Who? Perhaps I am dreaming!”), which captures his raging humiliation and jealousy. He speculates about each of the three stevedores, each a potential adulterer who passes in review in his mind: Talpa? Too old; Tinca? No, he drinks. But just before he is about to utter Luigi’s name, Puccini inserts a brief pause, the hesitation indicating Michele’s doubt about the young stevedore. But Michele reminds himself that Luigi had just requested to disembark at Rouen, Puccini’s orchestra echoing the “Lover’s Guilt” motive, a truth revealed to the audience like the commentary of a Greek chorus.

Michele sits in the darkness and silence, wrapped in his cloak. He lights his pipe. As Luigi sneaks aboard, he emerges from the shadows, seizes him, and strangles him to death, the “Cloak” theme thundering in the orchestra as he wraps the corpse in his cloak.

Afterwards, calm again engulfs the scene. Giorgetta emerges from the cabin, pretending to be remorseful, but she is really worried about Luigi, betrayed by the orchestra recalling the “Lover’s Guilt” theme.

In the final coup de theatre, Michele unveils the cloak and thrusts Giorgetta on the corpse of her murdered lover, Puccini’s orchestra recalling the “Cloak” theme in a savage fortissimo that expresses the full horror of the moment.

I *Il tabarro*’s characters smolder with intense passions: the suspicious Michele, the possessive Luigi, and Giorgetta, yearning for love to resolve her unhappiness..

Puccini was at the height of his musico-dramatic powers at the time of *Il tabarro*, totally capable of providing the completeness of a full-length opera in a one-act structure. His harmonic textures take full advantage of the expansive capabilities of the whole-tone scale, the “Cloak” theme perhaps influenced by Stravinsky, but reflecting Puccini’s conscientious vigilance in keeping abreast of contemporary harmonic developments.

Puccini again exhibited his penchant for musical realism, those impressionistic urges to portray *piccole cose*,” little things, such as the musical effects for the fog horn, auto horn, and taps heard from the barracks. And his somber orchestral colors reflect the music drama’s inherent bleakness.

Il tabarro is an opera with perfectly balanced ambience, action, and characterization: Giorgetta is both a shrew and an adulteress; Luigi is a brusque, volatile character, his explosive fury in deploring the horrible conditions of the under classes equal to his passion for Giorgetta; and Michele is a true verismo personality, easily transformed from loving husband to a jealous savage ready to commit a violent crime of passion.

Il tabarro represents vintage Puccini, a powerful music drama featuring the agony and torment of despairing characters, a late flowering of the verismo genre, but a towering representation of the genre’s inner soul, produced by an ingenious master of the opera art form.

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 leave with the 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,
so fold your weary arms,
and Margot 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 gazing fixedly 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!

Michele:

Han finito laggiù?

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:

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

Michele: (*pointing to the hold*)

Have they finished down there?

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!

Luigi: (*emerging from the hold*)

It's stifling here!

Giorgetta:

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

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.

Luigi:

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

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: *(pointing to Giorgetta)*

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!

Giorgetta:

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

Il Talpa:

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

Giorgetta:

Se ne volete ancora!

Il Talpa:

Non si rifiuta mai!

Giorgetta:

Avanti coi bicchieri!

Luigi:

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

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

Giorgetta: *(laughing)*

How fanciful he speaks!
But anyway, wine for everyone!
Here, Talpa!
For you, Tinca! For you! Take some!

Talpa:

We drink to wish you good health!
Raise your glasses! Cheers!
Much happiness from the joys of wine!

Giorgetta:

Have another one!

Talpa:

I never refuse!

Giorgetta: *(to the others)*

Bring over your glasses!

Luigi: *(pointing to a passing organ grinder)*

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!

Sentirete che artista!

Luigi: (*to the organ grinder*)

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

Now you'll hear a real artist!

Tempo di Valzer moderato



Giorgetta:

Io capisco una musica sola: quella che fa
ballare.

Giorgetta:

The only music I understand is music for
dancing.

Il Tinca:

Ma sicuro!
Ai suoi ordini sempre, e gamba buona!

Tinca: (*approaching Giorgetta*)

Of course!
I'm at your service, and a good dancer!

Giorgetta:

To'! Vi prendo in parola.

Giorgetta: (*laughing*)

I'll keep you to your word.

Il Tinca:

Ballo con la padrona!

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!

Luigi:

The music and the dance go together.
(*to Tinca*)

You look as though you're polishing the floor!

Giorgetta:

Ahi! Mi hai pestato un piede!

Giorgetta:

Ouch! You stepped on my foot!

Luigi:

Va! Lascia! Son qua io!

Luigi: (*pushing Tinca aside*)

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?

Giorgetta: (*arranging her hair and
addressing Michele with forced calmness*)

What are you thinking?
Are we leaving here next week?

Michele:

Vedremo.

Michele: (*vaguely*)

We'll see.

Giorgetta:

Il Talpa e il Tinca restano?

Giorgetta:

Will Talpa and Tinca stay with us?

Michele:

Resterà anche Luigi.

Michele:

Luigi will stay too.

Giorgetta:

Ieri non lo pensavi.

Giorgetta:

You didn't think so yesterday.

Michele:

Ed oggi, penso.

Michele:

But today, I think so.

Il Venditore di Canzonette:

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

Song Peddler: (*in the distance*)

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

Giorgetta:

Perchè?

Giorgetta: (*nearing Michele*)

Why?

Michele:

Perchè non voglio ch'egli crepi di fame.

Michele:

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

Giorgetta:

Quello s'arrangia sempre.

Giorgetta:

He always manages.

Michele:

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

Michele:

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

Giorgetta:

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

Giorgetta: (*annoyed*)

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

Michele:

Chi lavora si tiene.

Michele: (*simply*)

We keep a man if he works.

GIORGETTA



Giorgetta:

Già scende la sera.

Oh che rosso tramonto di settembre!

Che brivido d'autunno!

Giorgetta:

It's evening already.

What a red September sunset!

The autumn air is so chilly!

Il Venditore di Canzonette:

Con musica e parole, chi la vuole?

Song Peddler: (*coming nearer*)

Who wants my ballad, with music and words?

Giorgetta:

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

Giorgetta:

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

(*Giorgetta points to the wharf*)

Guarda laggiù la Frugola! La vedi?

Cerca di suo marito. Non lo lascia!

Look, there's Frugola. You see her?

She looking for her husband and won't leave him!

Michele:

È giusto. Beve troppo!

Michele:

That's right. He drinks too much!

Giorgetta:

Non lo sai ch'è gelosa?
O mio uomo, non sei di buon umore!
Perchè? Che hai? Che guardi?
E perchè taci?

Giorgetta:

Don't you know that she's jealous?
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. The song peddler appears on the wharf near the barge; he is 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! Sì! Sì!

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 amanti là fra l'ombra della sera."***Il Venditore di Canzonette:**

"Primavera, primavera, non cercare più i due amanti là fra l'ombra della sera.

Chi há vissuto per amore per amore si morì.

È la storia di Mimì."

Song Peddler:

"Springtime, the two young lovers are no longer among the evening shadows.

He who has lived for love, will die for love.

That's the story of Mimì."

Michele:

Forse lo vorresti?

Michele:

Perhaps you want me to beat you?

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 Mimì!"

Song Peddler:

"He who knows he will soon die counts the hours of the days with a beating heart.

But her lover did not return, and Mimì's heart stopped beating."

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:

Si capisce.

Michele:

Yes, I know.

Giorgetta:
Perchè?

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, love birds!

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 from his
backache 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 jeweled 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 'Rummager':
you ransack 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!

Se tu sapessi gli oggetti strani
che in questa sacca sono ricchiusi!

If you only knew what strange things are
contained in this sack!

Guarda, è per te, questo viuffo di piume.
Trine, e velluti, stracci, barattoli.
Vi son confusi gli oggetti strani.
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,
mi tiene compagnia e 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!

Look, this bunch of feathers is for you.
The curious objects are all jumbled together:
laces, velvets, rags, and cans.
Strange relics, the documents of a thousand loves.
I gather joys and pains, without distinguishing
between the rich and the common people!

Giorgetta:

And what's in that package?

Frugola: (laughing)

That's supper!
A heart of beef for my fine Angora, Corporal,
my tabby cat with the reddish fur, and
strange eyes that have no equal!

Giorgetta: (laughing)

What a privileged fellow!

Frugola:

He deserves to be! Look!
He's the most beautiful cat, and my best lover.
When Talpa is out,
the cat keeps me company and together we
spin our love without spite, and without
jealousy.
Do you want to know 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 feed on two slices of
heart than wear out one's own with love!

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.

Talpa:

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

Frugola:

I was telling Giorgetta about our Angora.

Michele: (approaching Luigi)

Luigi, tomorrow we're loading iron.
Can you give us a hand?

Luigi:

I'll come, boss.

*Tinca emerges from the hold, followed by other stevedores,
who scatter to the wharf after saying good night to Michele.*

Il Tinca:

Buona notte a tutti!

Tinca:

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 smettessi di passare
le notti all'osteria.

Non ti vergogni?

Frugola:

I'd beat you till you stopped spending all
night in the tavern.

Aren't you ashamed?

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:

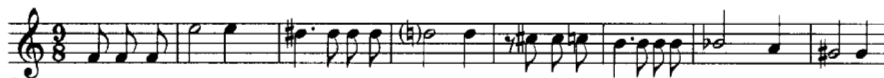
if I drink, I don't think,

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.

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 sorrow.

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!

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 the hour for love has to be stolen!

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.

Il Tinca:

Segui il mio esempio: bevi.

Giorgetta:

Basta!

Il Tinca:

Non parlo più!

A domani, ragazzi, e state bene!

Stolen with suffering and fear
that obscures the most divine ecstasies.
Everything is fought for, everything stolen from us,
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.

Tinca:

Follow my example and drink.

Giorgetta:

Enough!

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.

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

Andante moderato

GIORGETTA



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!

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.

Giorgetta: *(with excitement)*

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

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!

Giorgetta:

He's like me, with Belleville in his blood!

Luigi:

You can't tear yourself away from the place!

Giorgetta: *(her enthusiasm increasing)*

It's all in how you experience it!
 Belleville is our soil and our world!
 We can't live on the water!
 We need to walk on firm ground!
 There, there's a house, friends, festive
 meetings, full trust.

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 chiassose.
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!

Luigi:

And everyone knows everyone else!
We're all like one family there!

Giorgetta:

In the morning, you go to work.
In the evening, you return with company.
Shops ablaze with light,
and with allurements.
Carriages crisscross each other
and Sundays are boisterous.
Little excursions in pairs
to the Bois de Boulogne!
Open air dancing,
and intimate amours!?
It's hard to understand this anxiety
and 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 distance is Paris, calling its
immortal spell to us in 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 you. 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 with the boss.

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.

I've dream about a little house
with a small garden beside it.
Four walls around it, very narrow,
and two pine trees for shade.

Il mio vecchio steso al sole,
ai miei piedi *Caporale*,
e aspettar così la morte
ch'è il rimedio d'ogni male!

My old man stretched out in the sun,
and Corporal at my feet.
Waiting like that for death
is the remedy for all misfortunes!

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

Giorgetta:
O Luigi! Luigi!

Giorgetta: *(softly but fervidly)*
Luigi! Luigi!

Andante moderato
GIORGETTA



O Luigi! Luigi!

Bada a te! Può salir fra un momento!

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

Be careful! He can come up 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!

Giorgetta:
I throb when I think of last night,
and the passion of your kisses!

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

Luigi:
You know what was in those kisses...

Giorgetta:
Sì, mio amore. Ma taci!

Giorgetta:
Yes my love, but be quiet!

Luigi:
Quale folle paure ti prende?

Luigi:
What foolish fear has seized you?

Giorgetta:
Se ci scopre, è la morte!

Giorgetta:
If he discovers us, it's death!

Luigi:
Preferisco morire, alla sorte, che ti tiene legata!

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

Giorgetta:

Ah! se fossimo soli, lontani.

Luigi:

E sempre uniti!

Giorgetta:

E sempre innamorati!

Dimmi che non mi manchi!

Luigi:

Mai!

Giorgetta:

Sta attento!

Giorgetta:

If only we could be alone, far away.

Luigi:

And forever together!

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?

Michele: (*to Luigi*)

You still here? Haven't you gone yet?

Luigi:

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

Luigi:

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

Michele:

A Rouen? Ma sei matto?

Là non c'è che miseria: ti troveresti peggio.

Michele:

To Rouen? Are you crazy?

There's only poverty there, you'd be worse off.

Luigi:

Sta bene. Allora resto.

Luigi:

Very well. Then I'll stay on.

*Michele advances toward the cabin.***Giorgetta:**

E adesso dove vai?

Giorgetta: (*to Michele*)

Where are you going?

Michele:

A preparare i lumi.

Michele:

To prepare the lanterns.

Luigi:

Buona notte, padrone.

Luigi:

Goodnight, boss.

Michele:

Buona notte.

Michele:

Goodnight.

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

Giorgetta:

Dimmi: perchè gli hai chiesto di sbarcarti a Rouen?

Giorgetta:

Tell me: why did you ask him to be left ashore 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 also a captive, and I feel these chains
more strongly than you do!
You're right: it's torture,
anguish and suffering,
but when you hold me, the reward is even
greater!

Luigi:

Par di rubare insieme qualche cosa alla vita!

Luigi:

It's like stealing something together from life!

Giorgetta:

La voluttà è più intensa!

Giorgetta:

The sensuality is more intense!

LUIGI



Luigi:

E la gioia rapita fra spasimi e paure.

Luigi:

And joy is stolen among agony and fear.

Giorgetta:

In una stretta ansiosa.

Giorgetta:

In an anxious embrace.

Luigi:

Fra grida soffocate.

Luigi:

Suffocating cries, unfinished kisses.

Giorgetta:

E parole scemmesse.

Giorgetta:

And soft words.

Luigi:

E baci senza fine!

Luigi:

And endless kisses!

Giorgetta:

Giuramenti e promesse.

Giorgetta:

Vows and promises.

Luigi:

D'essere soli noi.

Luigi:

For us to be alone together.

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:

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.

Tell me you'll come back later.

Luigi:

Yes, in an hour from now.

Giorgetta:Listen: like yesterday I'll leave the gangplank
up. I'm the one who takes it down.

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
outstretched hand!It was as though the flame of our love would
light a star!!**Luigi:**

I crave your mouth and your caresses!

Giorgetta:

Then you also feel that mad desire!

Luigi:

Mad with jealousy!

I would like to hold you close to me as
though you are mine! I don't want to suffer
any longer knowing another man touches
you. I want to keep everyone away from
your divine body. I swear to you I'm not
afraid to wield my knife, and create a jewel
for you from 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 don't you go to 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?

Michele:

Perchè, perchè non m'ami più?
Perchè?

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.
El'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: (*nears her impetuously*)

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

Giorgetta: (*coldly*)

You're wrong. I love you.
You're good and honest.
(*she tries to end the conversation*)
Now let's go to sleep.

Michele: (*staring at her intently*)

You don't sleep!

Giorgetta:

You know why I don't sleep.
I can't breathe in there! I can't!

Michele:

Now the nights are cooler.
And last year, in that black shell, there were
even three of us, with our baby in the cradle.

Giorgetta: (*painfully*)

Our little baby! Be quiet!

Michele: (*insisting, and deeply moved*)

You stretched out your hand and rocked
him, gently and slowly. Then you fell asleep
on my arm.

Giorgetta:

I beg you, Michele, stop talking about it.

Michele:

There were evenings like this, when the
breeze stirred, I wrapped you both in my
cloak as though in a caress.
I felt both your blonde heads on my
shoulders. I felt your mouths close to mine.
I was so happy.
Now that our son is dead, my gray hair
seems to be an insult to your youth!

Giorgetta:

I beg you, Michele, no more!
No! Say no more!
No, keep quiet, Michele.
I can't stand it. Come.

Michele:

Ma non puoi dormire!
Sai bene che non devi addormentarti!

Michele: (*harshly*)

But you can't sleep!
You know well that you mustn't fall asleep!!

Giorgetta:

Perchè mi dici questo?

Giorgetta: (*frightened*)

Why do you say that?

Michele:

Non so bene.
Ma so che è molto tempo che non dormi!

Michele:

I don't quite 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?

Stay 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 the waves carried this boat across the water?

Giorgetta:

Non ricordare.
Oggi è malinconia.

Giorgetta:

I don't remember.
Today everything is sadness.

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!

Michele:

Come back to me,
be mine again!
When you loved me, sought me,
and kissed me passionately.
Stay close to me! It's a lovely night!

Giorgetta:

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

Giorgetta:

What do you want! We're older!
I'm no longer the same.
You've also changed. You're suspicious.
What are you thinking about?

Michele:

Non lo so nemmeno io!

Michele:

I don't even know myself!

Giorgetta:

Buona notte, Michele. Casco dal sonno.

Giorgetta:

Goodnight, Michele. I'm exhausted.

Michele:

E allora va pure; ti raggiungo.

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 perfumed lips.
 Oh perfumed evening.
 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.

(The aria, "Scorri, fiume eterno!" is generally replaced by "Nulla! Silenzio!")

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!

Michele:

Flow, eternal river, flow!
 How deep your mysteries are!
 Anguish pervades my soul endlessly!
 Pass by, eternal river, pass by!
 And drag me in and engulf me!

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!

How many did your waves destroy?
 You have marked the end of so much misery!
 Forever calm, you flow, never halted by fear
 or anguish, or the passing of years!

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!

Continue your course, and continue your
 lament!
 Are those the laments of your corpses?
 You carried thousands of dead in quick
 succession toward their destiny on your
 oppressive and strong arms!

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!

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

Andante grave
MICHELE



Nulla! Silenzio!

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

Nothing! Just silence!
There she is. Still dressed.
She isn't sleeping. She's waiting.
Who? What is she waiting for?

Andante grave
MICHELE



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

Who? Perhaps my sleep!
Who has changed her?
What cursed shadow has come between us?
Who has seduced her?

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!

Talpa? He's too old!
Perhaps Tinca? No, no, he doesn't think.
But then who? Luigi?
No, this very evening he wanted to leave me
and begged me to put him ashore at 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 insieme nel gorgo più profondo!
La pace è nella morte!

But then who is it? Who then?
Who can it be?
If I could see in the dark and clutch him with
my hands!
I'd shout to him: "It's you! It's you!"
Your livid face smiled at my suffering!
It is you! You!
Share this chain with me!
Join your fate with mine,
together in the deepest abyss!
There is only 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!

Michele:
I've caught you!

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! Per Dio!

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!

Luigi:

Assassino! Assassino!

Michele:

Confessami che l'ami! confessa! confessa!

Luigi:

Lasciami, lasciami, lasciami!

Michele:

No! Infame! Infami!

Se confessi, ti lascio!

Luigi:

Sì.

Michele:

Ripeti! Ripeti!

Luigi:

Sì. L'amo!

Michele:

Ripeti! Ripeti!

Luigi: (*struggling to free himself*)

Blood of God! I'm caught!

Michele:

Don't shout!

What did you come here to look for?

Were you looking for your lover?

Luigi:

It's not true!

Michele:

You're lying!

Confess! Confess!

Luigi: (*pulling out his knife*)

By God!

Michele: (*pinioning his arms*)

Drop the knife!

You won't escape from me, you bastard!

You soul of a convict! Worm!

You wanted to get off at Rouen. Is that true?

You'll go there dead, in the river!

Luigi:

Murderer!

Michele:

Confess that you love her! Confess!

Luigi:

Let me go!

Michele:

No! Villain! Villains!

If you confess, I'll let you go!

Luigi:

Yes.

Michele:

Repeat it!

Luigi: (*in a feeble voice*)

Yes, I love her!

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?

Michele: (*very calmly*)
Did I tell you that you wouldn't sleep?

Giorgetta:
Son presa dal rimorso d'averti dato pena.

Giorgetta: (*meekly*)
I'm full of remorse for making you suffer.

Michele:
Non è nulla. I tuoi nervi.

Michele:
It's nothing. Just your nerves.

Giorgetta:
Ecco è questo, hai ragione.
Dimmi che mi perdoni.
Non mi vuoi più vicina?

Giorgetta:
That's it. You're right.
Tell me you forgive me.
(*coquettishly*) Don't you want me closer?

Michele:
Dove? Nel mio tabarro?

Michele: (*menacingly*)
Where? Inside my cloak?

Giorgetta:
Sì, vicina, vicina. Sì.
Mi dicevi un tempo:

Giorgetta:
Yes, close to you.
You used to tell me:

“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!

“Everyone should wear a cloak that
sometimes hides a joy, and sometimes
pain.”

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, screaming desperately)*

Ah!

END OF OPERA

Suor Angelica

(“Sister Angelica”)

Opera in Italian in one act

**Music
by
Giacomo Puccini**

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

**Premiere:
Metropolitan Opera, New York
December 14, 1918**

Principal Characters in Suor Angelica

Sister Angelica	Soprano
The Princess (Angelica's Aunt)	Contralto
The Abbess	Mezzo-soprano
The Monitress	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

Sister Lucilla, Sister Portress, and other sisters of the convent

TIME: End of the seventeenth century

PLACE: A convent in Italy

Story Synopsis

Sister Angelica's illicit passion — bearing a child out of wedlock — brought shame and disgrace to her aristocratic family; in punishment, they forced her to take the veil. During seven years at the convent, Angelica has heard nothing from her family, and no news of her son.

Angelica's Aunt arrives at the convent to demand that Angelica renounce her inheritance. During their encounter, the Aunt informs Angelica that her son died two years ago. Angelica turns to despair. She has a vision that her son is in Heaven and is calling her to join him there. Angelica decides to end her life with poison. Just before her death, she is overcome by the full reality of her sin; she fears damnation.

Angelica prays to the Virgin Mary; her prayers are answered by angels who announce that she has been absolved. Angelica envisions the Virgin Mary and her son in Heaven, her son motioning that she join them. Angelica dies.

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 chapel, a shrine, a cloister, a cemetery, a garden with grass and flowers, and cypress trees. A fountain spouts water. Sisters pray inside the chapel, a hymn of praise to the Virgin Mary, blessing Jesus, the fruit of Her womb.

The Prayer: "Ave Maria"

Andante moderato



Two sisters appear, late for prayers. Before entering the chapel, they pause to listen to birds singing in the cypress trees. Sister Angelica is also late. She gestures the sign of penance for latecomers, kneels and kisses the threshold, rises, and enters the chapel.

After prayers, the sisters emerge from the chapel. The Abbess stands before the shrine. She blesses the exiting sisters who bow reverently to her as they pass by. Afterwards, the Abbess departs.

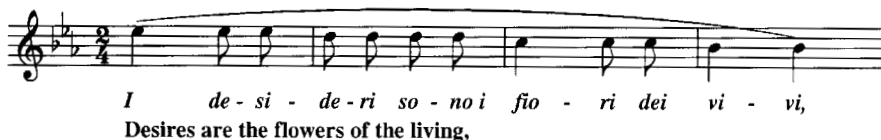
The sisters' slightest disobedience is punished by the Monitress. Two lay-sisters were late for prayers; in punishment, one day will be removed from their celebration of the "miracle" of their fountain, and they must recite a prayer twenty times for the oppressed, afflicted, and those living in mortal sin. Sister Lucilla, who made others in the choir laugh, is punished to work at her spinning wheel in the silence of her cell. And Sister Osmina, who concealed two roses in her sleeve during chapel prayers, is commanded to her cell. The other sisters, good and obedient, are allowed time for recreation before returning to their work.

Sister Angelica, the gardener of the convent, waters the flowers. Sister Genevieve notices that rays of the sun are appearing in the cloisters; they signal the beginning of the "miracle," the three evenings in May when their fountain's waters turn golden.

The sisters' thoughts turn to Sister Bianca Rosa, who died recently; they suggest that she would have desired to have the golden water sprinkled on her grave. Sister Angelica comments that desires are the Virgin's gift to the living, not to be shared with the dead.

"I desideri sono i fiori dei vivi"

Moderato e sostenuto SUOR ANGELICA



The Monitress admonishes the sisters: desires are forbidden, vain and worldly sensibilities that conflict with devotion and faith. Sister Genevieve, a former shepherdess, admits that she yearns to pet a lamb again, but she quickly extinguishes her desire by invoking Jesus, the true Lamb of God. The sisters reproach Sister Dolcina, whose desires are gluttonous.

Responding to the sisters' inquiry, Sister Angelica vows that she has no desires. But the sisters refute her, commenting that after seven years in the convent she most certainly yearns for news of her family; they believe that Angelica was an aristocrat, forced to take the veil by her family, but they are unaware of the reason.

The Nursing Sister announces that Sister Clara, bitten by a wasp, is experiencing excruciating pain. Sister Angelica offers a potion of herbs and flowers to reduce her agony.

Two Mendicants arrive with provisions, which they deliver to the housekeeper. They announce that a luxurious coach is parked outside the convent. Angelica becomes anxious, inquiring about its coat-of-arms; some of the sisters pray that the coach brings Angelica's long-sought visitor.

The Abbess enters; all are expectant, particularly Angelica, who remains motionless and in suspense. The Abbess dismisses the other sisters, who rush to the fountain to fill their cups with its golden water. The Abbess announces that Angelica's Aunt, the Princess, has come to visit her. After the Abbess departs, Angelica stares at the door, anxiously awaiting her Aunt.

There is the noise of keys opening the door. The Abbess reappears, together with the Sister Portress, each taking a reverential stance at each side of the door. A figure wearing dark clothes appears, her deportment that of aristocratic dignity. It is the Princess, Angelica's Aunt, who has come to visit her niece after seven years.

The Aunt enters slowly, her steps aided by an ebony cane. She stops and stares fixedly at Angelica, her glances cold and unemotional. Angelica tries to control her emotions. The Abbess and Sister Portress leave Angelica and her Aunt alone.

Angelica advances toward her Aunt, who stands rigid as she extends her left hand to her niece. Angelica seizes the Aunt's outstretched hand, raises it to her lips, and tearfully kisses it.

The Aunt sits down. Angelica falls to her knees before her, but is unable to utter a word. Tears begin to stream down Angelica's face as she stares at her Aunt imploringly, the Aunt avoiding eye contact and staring rigidly ahead.

Finally, the Aunt breaks the tension of silence. She announces that after Angelica's parents died twenty years ago, she became the guardian of the family estate that was originally divided evenly between Angelica and her sister, Anna Viola. However, the Aunt was given power to change that bequest if she deemed that circumstances required alteration. Angelica's sister, Anna Viola, is to be married, a love that overcame the disgrace that Angelica brought to the family. She hands Angelica a document to examine, read, and sign; the document represents Angelica's surrender of her entire inheritance to her sister, Anna Viola.

Angelica explodes in anguish, protesting her Aunt's coldness and cruelty. The Aunt equally becomes agitated, telling Angelica that she often prays at the family chapel and hears her dead mother's voice calling for Angelica's atonement — and her eternal punishment for disgracing their family.

“Nell silenzio”

Andante molto sostenuto
THE PRINCESS (Aunt)



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

Angelica protests that she has paid severely for her transgression by offering her life to the Blessed Virgin. She is tormented by the memory of her son, torn from her as a baby. She inquires of him, his hair, his eyes. The Aunt is silent, provoking Angelica to curse and damn her for her insensitivity. The Aunt then shocks Angelica, revealing that her son died two years ago, the victim of a fatal illness.

Angelica falls to the ground, heartbroken and despairing. She covers her face with both hands. The Sister Portress enters. The Aunt whispers something to her. The Portress leaves, and immediately returns with the Abbess; both carry a writing tablet, inkwell, and quill.

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

After the two sisters leave, the Aunt takes the document. 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. She hesitates at the threshold, glances back at Angelica, and then departs.

Night has fallen. In the cemetery, the sisters place lanterns on the tombstones. Angelica sobs, overcome by shock and despair.

“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 her sorrow. Her son is dead, and he died without knowing his mother's unbounded love for him. She yearns for death; for Heaven where mother and child will be reunited.

Angelica becomes transformed into a state of ecstasy, as if the Divine voice of the Virgin Mary is commanding her new spiritual course.

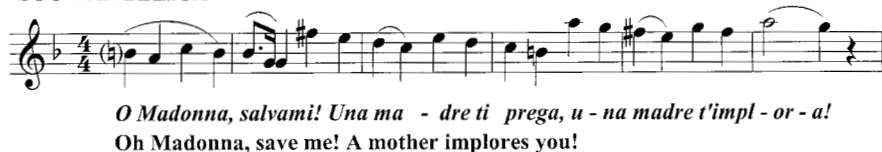
“La grazia è discesa dal cielo”**SUOR ANGELICA**

It is now quite dark, but the cupola of the chapel is aglow, illuminated by the stars and the moon. Angelica places an earthenware jar at the foot of the cypress tree; she piles some stones and places twigs and branches on the stones. She fills the jar with water from the fountain, lights the fire with flint, and places the jar on the fire.

Angelica tended her flowers with loving care, but these flowers contain poison; they will become the means for her to die and join her son in Heaven. Angelica bids farewell to her sisters, announcing that her son has called her to Paradise, where they will be reunited.

Angelica has become transformed into a euphoric state of rapture and exaltation. She moves to the shrine and kisses the crucifix. She takes the jar in her hands, fixes her eyes toward the heavens, and drinks the poison. She leans against the cypress tree and presses her chest with her left hand, slowly opening her right hand and letting the jar fall to the ground.

The stark reality of her mortal sin suddenly overcomes her. Her face, so serene and smiling moments before, transforms into intense anguish and fear, as if overcome by a horrifying revelation. Suddenly, she explodes in agony, realizing that she will be damned for committing the cardinal sin of suicide. She prays to the Virgin to offer Her grace and save her soul, explaining that she lost her reason because of her love for her son: “Regina Virginum, Salve, Maria!”

“O Madonna, salvami!”**SUOR ANGELICA**

Angelica prayers are answered. She hears the voice of Angels absolving her: The chapel becomes resplendent in mystic, radiant light. Angelica has a vision of the Blessed Virgin and her son; he gestures that his dying mother join them. 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 of the suicide of a nun, was the invention of Puccini's librettist, Giovacchino Forzano; it was derived from a sketch he had made for a play of the same name, but never produced.

Certain elements 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). Massenet's story is set in a French monastery during the fourteenth century; all of its characters are men. Puccini's story is set in an Italian convent at the end of the seventeenth century; all of its characters are women. Both operas conclude with the sinner receiving Divine absolution and forgiveness for committing a cardinal sin.

The suicide of Sister Angelica inspired Puccini's tragic imagination, kindling it to a heightened pathos that was dormant since *Madama Butterfly*, fourteen years earlier.

There are indeed parallels between the underlying tragedies of *Suor Angelica* and *Madama Butterfly*: the soul of both operas involves a mother's severe mental anguish and excruciating despair in losing her son; Butterfly relinquishes her son to Pinkerton and his American wife; Angelica's son dies. Puccini endowed Butterfly's impassioned farewell to her son with music of intense dramatic power; likewise, Angelica's suicide is underscored with unrivalled potency, her agony transforming into ecstasy as Divine absolution saves her from damnation, and a "Miracle" reunites her with her son in Heaven.

The convent ambience of the *Suor Angelica* story appealed to Puccini; he had an intimate understanding of convent life from his sister, Iginia, who rose to become Mother Superior at the Convent of Vicopelao, where he had visited often. But the ritual and spectacle of Roman Catholicism never failed to fascinate Puccini, an allure that certainly served to inspire that potent blend of religion and lechery he portrayed in the *Te Deum* concluding the first act of *Tosca*.

Like so many of his forebears, Puccini began his musical career as a church organist in his native Lucca, and many of his earlier compositions were liturgical, some becoming incorporated into his earlier *Edgar*. *Suor Angelica*'s religious coloring is its most conspicuous feature, Puccini garnering his old liturgical compositional skills for the opening "Ave Maria" prayer, and the concluding hymn of the angels in the "Miracle" scene, the "Regina Virginum, Salve, Maria!," or "Marcia Reale della Madonna" ("Royal March of the Madonna"), a Puccini coup de théâtre that evolved from material provided him by his friend, Father Pietro Panichelli.

Suor Angelica begins in an atmosphere of tranquility, its sense of piety and devotion expressed by a chorus of sisters singing the "Ave Maria" in the chapel; the convent is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the sisters' devotion to the Virgin Mary pervades the entire drama and envelops its characters.

Convent life severely tests the sisters' devotion: the Abbess, Monitress, and Mistress of the Novices are the fierce, authoritarian disciplinarians of the convent; they demand unquestioned obedience and absolute faith from the sisters. But the humble and devoted sisters are also frail human creatures; at times they are rebellious, and at times they are emotionally unable to cope with the monotony and rigorous discipline of convent life.

The Lay-Sisters — and Sister Angelica — are late for chapel prayers and are severely reproached; Sister Lucilla made the choir sisters laugh during prayers, and she is punished

with endless toil at the spinning wheel; and Sister Osmina is punished for concealing roses in her sleeves during the chapel prayer.

Puccini masterfully characterizes the various personalities of the sisters through his impressionistic music: the childish chatter of the Novices, the obstinate Sister Osmina, as well as the sternly reproving Monitress. After the Nursing Sister announces that Sister Clara was bitten by a wasp and suffers from excruciating pain, Puccini's impressionism provides a musical portrait of wasps reeling through the air. Angelica provides a remedy for the ailing sister that reveals her expertise with herbs, a portentous foreshadowing of the story's tragic conclusion.

From this seemingly homogeneous group, the gentle yet lively Sister Genevieve emerges, reminding the sisters that the three-day "miracle" of May has begun: the sun has enveloped the fountain and transformed its water into the purest gold, a grace from the Virgin that inspires the sisters to recall their recently departed Sister Bianca Rosa; they suddenly rush to bless her grave with the fountain's golden water.

At this moment, Sister Angelica emerges from the obscurity of a group of nuns; she is the gardener of the convent and reveals her expertise with flowers. In Angelica's aria, "I desiderì" ("Desires"), she declares that emotions are forbidden and incompatible with the sisters' life of self-denial, devotion, and total commitment to God. The austere Monitress admonishes the sisters with a stricture about desire: "Noi non possiamo nemmeno da vivere avere desiderì." ("We must never have desires that are vain and worldly.")

Sister Genevieve emerges to complain wistfully, "Soave Signor Mio!" ("My gentle Lord") that expresses her desire, which is her nostalgic longing for her former life as a shepherdess tending lambs. But she quickly arrests her uncontrollable — and sinful — thoughts, invoking the Lord as the "The Lamb of God."

The sisters gossip about Sister Angelica, aware that she suffers from extreme anxiety because she has not heard news from her family in her seven years at the convent. And they also speculate that Angelica was an aristocrat, but they are unaware of the reason that she committed herself to the veil: that Angelica defamed and shamed her family by bearing an illegitimate son,

The arrival of a luxurious coach at the convent sparks the dramatic apex of the opera: the confrontation between Angelica and her Aunt, the Princess. Angelica anxiously speculates that the coach belongs to a visitor from her family. And indeed, the Abbess announces that the visitor is Angelica's Aunt.

Until the Aunt's arrival, the ambience of the opera provided a portrait of convent life: an interplay between the sisters' light chatter, and their devotion to the Virgin Mary. The confrontation between Angelica and her Aunt becomes the turning point of the opera, the moment Angelica transforms into a tragic heroine — and the inspiration for some of Puccini's finest musico-dramatic inventions.

The Aunt is the most captivating and complex character in the opera, and the only significant role in Puccini's gallery of female characters written for a mezzo-soprano voice. (Excluding Tigrana in his earlier *Edgar* and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*.) Puccini's music provides a brilliant psychological portrait of the Aunt's pomposity, arrogance, coldness, and cruelty, the music conveying reptilian images reminiscent of *Tosca's* Scarpia and *La fanciulla's* Jack Rance.

Mental cruelty is the Aunt's primary weapon of torture and terror. She wears black, conveying the demeanor of a severe and autocratic figure. Yet, she is completely self-controlled and dignified. As she approaches Angelica, the atmosphere seems to convey

impending disaster. Her harsh personality is conveyed through gestures; she walks with measured steps while supporting herself on an ebony cane. An emotional Angelica approaches her Aunt, who stares fixedly ahead, and extends her left hand as if to indicate that she will only tolerate a submissive kiss on her hand. After the Aunt seats herself, Angelica kneels before her in supplication.

A potent exchange ensues between the Aunt and Angelica, the Aunt expressing herself in a dull monotone, but with inflections that are devastatingly pointed. She is the exclusive guardian of the family estate, and she has come to demand that Angelica relinquish her inheritance and worldly goods to her sister, who is about to be married.

The Aunt is unforgiving — and relentless. In her aria, “Nell silenzio” (“In the silence of my prayers”) she relates her mystic communion with the spirit of Angelica’s dead mother, who, the Aunt reveals, remains implacable in her condemnation of Angelica: her mother has demanded justice for Angelica’s disgrace of the family, which is eternal punishment through continuous atonement, but never absolution.

The Aunt shatters Angelica, informing her that her son died, a heartrending moment of the drama in which the heroine’s meek submissiveness transforms into tragic despair. Angelica explodes in agony, “È morto?” (“Is he dead?”), expressing her pathetic grief and utter devastation, the emotional core that will lead to her tragic decline.

The confrontation between the Aunt and Angelica is perhaps one of Puccini’s finest musico-dramatic inventions, the characterizations clearly defined, and the dramatic tension relentless, if not ferocious and terrorizing.

Angelica is overcome by despair, her aria “Senza mamma” a pathetic portrait of a mother grieving the loss of her son. She offers prayers for her son, the compassionate sisters informing her that the Virgin heeds her prayers. But Angelica clearly envisions her destiny: that the Virgin Mary has divined that she must die and reunite with her son in Heaven: “La grazia è descesa dal cielo” (“Her grace has descended from Heaven”), the leitmotif of the opera, and perhaps Puccini’s finest music in the opera.

Death will become Angelica’s path to Heaven: but it will be a suicidal death, a cardinal sin. Angelica prepares a poison from the flowers she had cared for with such tenderness, the flowers that will redeem her through death. In exaltation, she bids farewell to the sisters, poignantly informing them that she had a vision of her son urging her to join him in Heaven, “Mamma, vieni in paradiso!” (“Mother, come to Paradise!”), an expansive hymn-like melody that conveys Angelica’s ecstatic vision of her rise to Heaven and her reunion with her son.

The concluding “Miracle” is stirring, Puccini’s coup de théâtre. Angelica is near death, spiritually transformed as she envisions Heaven opening before her in Divine splendor. But she fears damnation because she took her own life. Her pleading voice merges with those of invisible angels announcing the Virgin’s absolution. Angelica erupts into joyous ecstasy as she envisions her son advancing toward her. Sister Angelica dies. Puccini’s “Marcia Reale della Madonna” (“Royal March of the Madonna”) is a moment of mystical ecstasy celebrating Sister Angelica’s soul rising to Heaven to join her son.

The soul of the *Suor Angelica* story involves the tragedy of two mothers: Sister Angelica, and the Virgin Mary, the Divine Mother of Christianity; both mothers share the agony of their son’s deaths. But this story of mothers also juxtaposes the sacred versus the profane: Mary of the virginal birth stands in opposition to Angelica’s illicit conception.

Suor Angelica is a compelling story, admittedly Puccini’s favorite in his trilogy. But most of all, it is a story about the love of children and the death of that love, its essence realized through the magnificence of the opera art form, and the magic of Puccini’s ingenious musical inventions that provide an emotive power for this poignant story of filial love.

LIBRETTO

Suor Angelica

*A convent in Italy during the latter part of the seventeenth century.
 A small church, a cloister, a shrine, a cemetery,
 a garden with grass and flowers, and cypress trees.
 A fountain sprouts into a basin on the ground.*

*It is a clear spring sunset. A ray of sun falls on the jet of water in the fountain.
 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 Jesus, the fruit of Thy womb.

Two sisters appear, late for chapel prayers. Before entering the chapel, they pause an instant to listen to the birds chirping 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: (from inside the church)

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 Church)

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

*The sisters emerge from the chapel in pairs. The Abbess pauses in front of the cross. The sisters pass by and bow to her reverently. The Abbess blesses them, and then withdraws.
 The sisters form small groups. Sister Zelatrice, 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 were 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.

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!

A Lay Sister:

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

Mistress of the Novices:

Those coming late for chapel prayers must
prostrate themselves 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 Sisters: (with enthusiasm)]

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

Perchè 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, concealed two scarlet
roses in your sleeves while in church.

Sister Osmina: (restive)

It is not true!

The Monitor: (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 per tornare più allegramente a
faticare per amor Suo, ricreatevi!

Le suore:

Amen!

As the 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?

Six Sisters:

Queen of Virgins, pray for her.

The Monitor:

And now sisters, since your joy pleases the
Lord, before returning to work, you may
have some recreation!

The Sisters:

Amen!

Sister Genevieve: (gaily)

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

Some Sisters:

It's true, in a moment we'll see the golden water!

One Sister:

And it will appear for two more evenings!

Some Sisters:

It's 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?

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.

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!

*There is silence. The sisters becoming absorbed in thought,
seemingly making an effort to invoke the image of their dead sister.*

Suor Genovieffa:

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

Sister Genevieve:

Oh sister in devout toil, when the fountain
begins to glow and turn golden, shall we
take a pail of golden water to the grave of
Sister Bianca Rosa?

Le suore:

Sì, la suora che riposa lo desidera di certo.

The Sisters:

Yes, our sister resting there would certainly
be pleased.

Moderato e sostenuto**SUOR ANGELICA****Suor Angelica:**

I desideri sono i fiori dei vivi, non fioriscono
nel regno delle morte,
perchè 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.

Sister Angelica:

Desires are the flowers of the living that do
not flower in the realm of the dead,
because the Blessed Virgin helps us, and in
Her Goodness, freely anticipates desire.
Before a desire can flower the Mother of
Mothers has granted a desire before it has
been expressed.
Sisters, death is a beautiful life!

O sorella, la morte è vita bella!

La Suora Zelatrice:

Noi non possiamo nemmeno da vive avere
desideri.

The Monitor:

We must never have desires that are vain
and worldly.

Suor Genovieffa:

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

Sister Genevieve:

But if they are simple and innocent, why not?
Have you ever had a desire?

La Sorella Zelatrice:

Io no!

The Monitor:

Not I!

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,

tocargli 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 desideri.

Qualche boccone buono! Della frutta

gustosa! La gola è colpa grave!

È golosa!

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 in the outside world I was a shepherdess.

I have not seen a little lamb in five years.

Lord, does it anger You if I say that I desire

to see a little one, and pet him, touch its

cold nose, and hear it bleat?

If it is a sin I shall offer the Miserere Mei.

Forgive me, Lord, Thou art the Lamb of God.

Sister Dolcina:

I also have a desire!

The Sisters:

Sister, we already know your desires.

A tasty mouthful of juicy fruit!

Gluttony is a grave sin.

She's such a glutton!

Sister Dolcina remains speechless. Genevieve and other sisters approach Sister Angelica.

Suor Genovieffa:

Suor Angelica, e voi avete desideri?

Suor Angelica:

Io? No, sorella mia.

Sister Genevieve:

Sister Angelica, do you have desires?

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:

Perchè?

One Novice:

But why?

Alcune suore:

Noi lo sappiamo, ha un grande desiderio!

Vorrebbe aver notizie della famiglia sua!

Some Sisters:

We know she has a great desire!

She wants to hear news of her family!

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! Principessa! La vollero far monaca, sembra per punizione! Perché? Chi sa! Mah!?

La sorella infermiera:
Suor Angelica, sentite!

Suor Angelica:
O sorella infermiera, che cosa accadde, dite!

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

Alcune suore:
Poveretta!

Suor Angelica:
Aspettate, ho un'erba e un fiore.

La sorella infermiera:
Suor Angelica ha sempre una ricetta buona, fatta coi fiori, sa trovar sempre un'erba benedetta per calmare i dolori!

Suor Angelica:
Ecco, questa è calenzola: col latticcio che ne cola le bagnate l'enfiagione.
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, che lamentarsi crescono i tormenti.

La sorella infermiera:
Le saprò riferire. Grazie, sorella, grazie.

Suor Angelica:
Sono qui per servire.

Since she entered the convent more than seven years she hasn't heard any news! She seems resigned, but she's tormented! Our Mother Abbess said she comes from a wealthy family! She was a noble! A Princess! She was forced to take the veil as punishment! But why? Who knows!

The Sister Nurse: (*arriving anxiously*)
Sister Angelica, listen!

Sister Angelica:
Sister nurse, tell me, what happened?

The Sister Nurse:
Sister Clara was there in the garden adjusting the rose trellis, and suddenly she happened on a wasp's nest, and they've stung her in the face! Now she's lying in her cell, groaning from the excruciating pain!

Some Sisters:
Poor girl!

Sister Angelica:
Wait, I have an herb and a flower.

The Sister Nurse:
Sister Angelica always has a good remedy made from herbs and flowers. She knows how to find a blessed herb to soothe the pains!

Sister Angelica: (*handing her herbs*)
Here, this is a spurge. Bathe the swelling with the milk that drips from it.
And with this one, a potion. Tell Sister Clara that it's very bitter, but it will ease the pain.
And also tell her that wasp stings are not very serious. She really must remember that fretting and crying only increases the pain.

The Sister Nurse:
I'll tell her that! Thank you sister.

Sister Angelica:
I am here to help you.

Two Mendicant sisters arrive (alms collectors), 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.*

Le cercatrici:
Buona cerca stasera, sorella dispensiera!

The Mendicants:
Good collecting tonight, Sister Procurator!

Una cercatrice:
Un otre d'olio.

One Mendicant:
A skin of oil.

Suor Dolcina:
Uh, buono!

Sister Dolcina:
Oh, splendid!

L'altra cercatrice:
Nocciòle, sei collane.

The other Mendicant:
Hazelnuts, six strands.

Una cercatrice:
Un panierin di noci.

One Mendicant:
A little basket of walnuts.

Suor Dolcina:
Buone con sale e pane!

Sister Dolcina:
So good with salt and bread!

La Suora Zelatrice:
Sorella!

The Monitor: (reproaching her)
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:
Here's flour, and a small sheep cheese that's still dripping milk, as delicious as a cake, a little bag of lentils, some eggs, butter, and that's everything.

Alcune suore:
Buona cerca stasera, sorella dispensiera!

Some Sisters:
Good collecting tonight, Sister Procurator!

L'altra cercatrice:
Per voi, sorella ghiotta.

The other Mendicant:
For you, greedy sister.

Suor Dolcina:
Un tralcetto di ribes! Degnatene, sorelle!

Sister Dolcina:
A stem of currants. Help yourselves, sisters!

Alcune suore:
Grazie! Grazie!

Some Sisters:
Thank you! Thank you!

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 vien 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!

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 did you say, sister? 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 increasing anxiety)

Tell me about the carriage? Did it have an ivory coat-of-arms? Was it upholstered inside with dark blue silk and embroidered in silver?

The Mendicant:

I don't know. All I saw was a splendid carriage!

The Sisters: (watching Angelica curiously)

How pale she's become. Now she's red! Poor thing! She's upset! She hopes it's someone from her family! People are entering the parlor! A visitor! For whom? If only it was for me! Perhaps my mother is bringing white turtledoves! Perhaps my cousin from the country is bringing me some good lavender seeds!

A bell sounds. Some of the sisters rush away.

Suor Angelica:

(O Madre eletta, leggimi 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 into my heart and smile at the Savior for me.)

Sister Genevieve:

Oh sister in love, we pray to the Star of Stars 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 the Virgin.

La Badessa:

Offritele anche l'ansia che adesso vi scompone!

The Abbess:

Then also offer Her the anxiety that now troubles 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 Princess-Aunt has come to visit 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.

Suor Angelica:

La Vergine m'ascolti e così sia.

The Abbess:

When in the parlor say as much as
obedience and necessity require.
Every word is heard by our pious Virgin.

Sister Angelica:

May the Virgin listen to 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 maintains a fixed stare 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.

The Princess-Aunt:

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

I was to divide it as I deemed appropriate
and with full fairness.
It is what I have done. Here is the
document. Read it, discuss it, and sign it.

Sister Angelica:

I stand before you after seven years.
Be inspired by this holy place.
It is a place of forgiveness, of compassion!

The Princess-Aunt:

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

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.

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 Princess-Aunt:

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

Sister Angelica:

Sister of my mother, you are inexorable!

The Princess-Aunt:

How dare you? What are you thinking?

Inexorable? Dare you invoke your mother's name against me? Often, in the evening, I go to our chapel, kneeling in silent prayer.

Andante molto sostenuto**THE PRINCESS (Aunt)**

Nell si - lenzio di quei raccogli-men - ti, il mio spirito par che s'allon - ta-ni.

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!

In the silence of those prayers, my spirit seems to leave me

and join your mother's spirit in mysterious communication!

How painful it is to hear the dead suffer and weep!

When the mystical ecstasy passes I have kept but only one word for you:

Atone! Offer my justice to the Virgin!

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!

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 child who was torn away from me! My son who I saw and kissed only once!

My child, so far away!

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!

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!

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

Why are you silent?
 Another moment of this silence and you'll
 damn yourself for eternity!
 The Virgin hears us and She judges you.

La zia Principessa:

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

The Princess-Aunt:

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

Suor Angelica:

È morto?
 Ah!

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 desperation.*

Andante desolato molto sostenuto**SUOR ANGELICA**

Senza mamma, o bimbo, tu sei mor - to! Le tue labbra, senza i baci miei,

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!

Sister Angelica:

Without your mother, my child, you died!
 Without my kisses, your lips turned pale
 and cold!
 And you closed your beautiful eyes!

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.

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

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!

Tell me when I shall be able to see you?
 When shall I be able to kiss you?
 Oh, sweet end to all my sorrows,
 when shall I ascend to Heaven?
 When will I be able to die?
 Beautiful 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 semidarkness, 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, oh good sister, the Virgin has heard
 your prayer.
 You will be content, sister, for the Virgin
 has shown Her grace.

Buona accogliervi preghieri e pianti.
 È discesa la grazia benedetta!
 Muoio per lui e in ciel lo rivedrò!

You received 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'm dying in mortal sin!
 Madonna, save me! 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 glorious Virgin, sublime among the stars
 Thou who created a child and who suckled
 Him from Thy breast.
 What unhappy Eve took away from us, you
 gave back to us through your offspring:
 Thou revealed the poles of Heaven so that
 the mournful stars could enter.*

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 spell of the mystical vision,
 Sister Angelica raises her arms towards the child.
 As the child steps towards her, Angelica falls to the ground and dies.*

END OF OPERA

Gianni Schicchi

Opera in Italian in one act

**Music
by
Giacomo Puccini**

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

**Premiere:
Metropolitan Opera, New York
December 14, 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 Spinelloccio, a physician	Bass
Amantio di Nicolao, a notary	Bass
Pinellino, a shoemaker	Bass
Guccio, a dyer	Bass

TIME: the year 1299

PLACE: Florence, Italy

Story Synopsis

The wealthy Buoso Donati has just died. Mourning relatives have gathered at his deathbed, their greedy minds troubled by a rumor that Buoso left his entire fortune to the monks of Signa. They ransack the house in search of Buoso’s will, which is finally found by Rinuccio, a nephew who wants to marry Lauretta, the daughter of Gianni Schicchi, a newcomer to Florence.

Buoso indeed disinherited his relatives; he bequeathed his entire fortune to a monastery. To resolve their dilemma, the relatives seek help from the shrewd Gianni Schicchi, despite the fact that they consider him an upstart, and have prevented Rinuccio from marrying his daughter Lauretta because Schicchi is unable to provide a dowry.

Schicchi invents a ruse; he will impersonate Buoso in his deathbed and dictate a new will to the Notary: a will that bequeaths the Donati estate to the relatives. The relatives become overjoyed at Schicchi’s cleverness, each surreptitiously offering him a bribe if he bequeaths the most valuable properties to them. Blandly, Schicchi consents to each of them.

Buoso’s body is removed. Schicchi dons the dead man’s clothes and climbs into his bed. After the Notary arrives, Buoso/Schicchi dictates his will, bequeathing some insignificant properties to the relatives, but the most valuable properties — the house in Florence and the properties at Signa — to his dear friend, Gianni Schicchi. The mortified relatives must remain silent, fearing the repercussions if they are implicated in a fraud: the punishment, according to ancient Florentine law, is severance of a hand and exile from Florence. After the Notary leaves, the relatives attack Schicchi, but he chases them from his newly acquired home.

Gianni Schicchi has secured a dowry for his daughter, Lauretta.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

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

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

Buoso's relatives frantically rushed to the Donati house when they heard that he died. They kneel before his bed, hopeful, fearful, and anxious.

"Mourning" or "Death" motive:

Largo



The relatives include: Buoso's nephew Gherardo, his wife Nella, and their young son Gherardino; Buoso's old cousin Simone, his son Marco, and wife La Ciesca; Buoso's old cousin Zita and her young nephew, Rinuccio; and Betto of Signa, Buoso's impoverished brother-in-law.

The relatives mourn, moan, and mumble, except young Gherardino, who is bored and amuses himself by playing with marbles. When he overturns a chair, the relatives interrupt their mourning and reproach 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.

The relatives express their hopes and fears about their prospective inheritance. They stop wailing to whisper to each other; there is gossip that Buoso willed his properties to the monks of Signa as atonement for his unethical acquisition of the properties. They all express their exasperation at the possibility of being disinherited, underscored by a new musical theme that suggests the clever Gianni Schicchi, his shadow lurking on the horizon.

Gianni Schicchi theme:



The relatives' worry turns to panic. They seek advice from Simone, the oldest and wisest among them, who was at one time the mayor of Fucecchio. Simone deliberates with an air of gravity, and then expresses his opinion: if the Notary already has Buoso's will in his possession, Buoso's bequests are a *fait accompli*; good for the monks of Signa but bad for the relatives. But if the will is still in the house, there may yet be hope for them.

All are overcome with expectation, particularly young Rinuccio, who had hoped to inherit enough money from Uncle Buoso so that he could marry Lauretta, Gianni Schicchi's daughter. A frantic and chaotic search is begun to find Buoso's will: furniture, drawers, and lockers are overturned; except Betto, who covertly approaches the table and places some of the valuable silver articles under his coat.

One false alarm announcing success follows another. Finally, Rinuccio, high on a ladder, finds a parchment that he believes is Buoso's will. He holds it away from his aunt Zita, until she promises that if Buoso left him money she will consent to his marriage to Lauretta. Zita replies that if she inherits money from Buoso, she does not care who he marries.

Love theme of Rinuccio and Lauretta:

Allegro, un poco sostenuto



Rinuccio gives old Zita the document. She looks at the table, seeking a scissors to cut the ribbon of the parchment, but that scissors has disappeared, is now hidden in Betto's pocket. Instead, Zita fiercely tears the ribbon from the document, revealing at last, Buoso's will.

The relatives gather around Zita, all attempting to read the will's contents simultaneously. Meanwhile, Rinuccio takes Gherardino aside, gives him some coins, and tells him to rush to Gianni Schicchi with the message that he and Lauretta must come at once.

Zita begins to read the will aloud: "To my dear cousins Zita and Simone"; the relatives immediately express their elevated hopes. Simone, in excited anticipation and gratitude, lights the three extinguished candles of the candelabra. Others begin to speculate what Buoso may have bequeathed each of them: perhaps the house, the mills at Signa, the mule, or who knows?

Zita is surrounded by the anxious and excited relatives; all eyes are fixed on Buoso's will.

"Will" motive:

Andante moderato



Their lips move as they silently read the will. Suddenly, they are overcome by anxiety, looks of incredulity, and then despair and rage. Each relative falls into the nearest chair, becomes frozen like a graven image with eyes wide open, and blankly stares fixedly ahead.

All, that is, except Simone, who proceeds to extinguish the candles he lit just a few minutes ago.

The relatives are petrified by Buoso's bequests. With suppressed rage, Simone announces that the rumor that Buoso bequeathed his wealth to the monks of Signa was indeed true: those monks will become rich and fat, lavishing themselves and feasting on Buoso Donati's riches while the Donati relatives starve. Rinuccio protests that he must surrender his happiness to benefit the greedy monks. Slowly, the relatives' fury increases. Each rises from his chair and frantically moves about the room, hysterically cursing the monks, and simultaneously breaking into sardonic bursts of laughter, like the cries of the damned.

Their fury and outrage turns to despair. Some begin to shed tears in earnest, unable to believe that Buoso disinherited them. They are shocked: Buoso's will is a *fait accompli*, and that nothing can be done 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, an acknowledgement of hopelessness.

Rinuccio proposes that they speak to the clever Gianni Schicchi; he can certainly help and advise them. But Zita becomes furious at the mention of Schicchi's name: that members of the respectable Florentine Donati family will have nothing to do with that rascal and upstart — or his daughter. Suddenly, Gherardino rushes in to announce that Schicchi has almost arrived at the threshold of the house. The relatives berate and denounce Schicchi; they grumble and threaten to bar him from entering the house; Gherardino, who had been Rinuccio's messenger to call for Gianni Schicchi, is spanked for taking orders from someone other than his father.

Rinuccio is severely reproached; a Donati should never consider marrying the daughter of Gianni Schicchi, a vulgar and revolting peasant and scoundrel. But Rinuccio contradicts and admonishes them; only the cleverest trick can serve them in their present dilemma. He explains that Schicchi is cunning and clever, nobody's fool, sharp as a needle, and a man who can find the answer to anyone's special problem, and capable of any ploy; he possesses shrewd eyes, and a great nose that is like an old ruined tower.

“Firenze è come un albero fiorito”

Andante mosso

RINUCCIO



Fi - ren - ze è co - me un al - bero fio - ri - to.

Florence is like a flowering tree.

Rinuccio praises Gianni Schicchi, a metaphor for Florence itself: the city of great arts, sciences, and great men. He urges the relatives to forget their petty animosities and recriminations, and praise a man like Gianni Schicchi; the new breed of Florentine; the successor to Giotto and the Medici.

There is a knock at the door. Gianni Schicchi appears at the threshold, accompanied by his daughter Lauretta. The arch-roguer pauses to keenly scan the downcast faces of the relatives; cynically interpreting their sorrow and despair as their response to Buoso's recovery.

Meanwhile, Rinuccio and Lauretta display their affections, and Rinuccio reveals their unfortunate dilemma; without his inheritance from Uncle Buoso, they cannot marry.

Schicchi observes the lighted candles around the bed and assumes that Buoso Donati died. Cynically, he wonders to himself if the relatives are truly grieving or just acting, but he does acknowledge and sympathize with their sorrow, an unbearable grief. Schicchi offers the relatives counsel about mortality; an inevitability for everyone. But, they grieve because they have lost dear Buoso Donati, but they surely have gained money.

Zita erupts into a rage and fury, and informs Schicchi that Buoso bequeathed his money to the monks, leaving them disinherited and penniless. However, she declares with pride that the Donati's predicament is not his concern, and that he should leave immediately, further adding that she will never consent to her nephew marrying Lauretta, a girl without a dowry. The lovers are disappointed, their hopes shattered. Rinuccio pleads with Zita, and likewise Lauretta with Schicchi: love is more important than money.

Schicchi and Zita begin a malicious argument: Schicchi condemns Zita as a sordid, miserly old curmudgeon; Zita returns his insults in kind. The other relatives try to intervene, suggesting that at this critical moment they should only be concerned with Buoso's will. When Schicchi threatens to leave, Rinuccio pleads with him to remain. He urges the relatives to show Schicchi Buoso's will; after all, Schicchi has a reputation for genius in resolving any problem, or finding an error or a loophole in a contract. But Zita has insulted Schicchi, and he expresses his indignation and refusal 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



Oh! mio babbino ca - ro, mi piace, è bel-lo, bel - lo.
Oh, my dear daddy, be kind and help us.

The musical score is for the song 'Oh! mio babbino caro' by Puccini. It is marked 'Andante ingenuo' and is sung by Lauretta. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The melody is simple and sentimental, with a long note on 'ro' in the first phrase and a rising line in the second phrase. The lyrics are in Italian and English.

Lauretta's sentimental — and threatening — appeal overwhelms Schicchi, and he angrily concedes; he shouts to the relatives, "Give me the will."

Schicchi paces back and forth while absorbed in reading the will, some of the relatives following him with their eyes, and others following his footsteps. All except Simone, who remains seated, shaking his head doubtfully. The lovers, Rinuccio and Lauretta, remain saddened, expressing their regret that their dream of marriage has been shattered.

Schicchi orders the relatives to be silent while he reads the will more closely. He paces, stops, and then paces again. Suddenly, he is struck by an idea; his face slowly becomes severe, expressing his inner sense of victory and triumph. Before he addresses the relatives, he orders 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 left, Schicchi receives the relatives' assurance that no one knows of Buoso's death; he cautions them that no one must hear about it just yet. Schicchi orders Marco and Gherardo to remove Buoso's 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, startling everyone. Zita whispers that it must be Maestro Spinelloccio, Buoso's doctor. Schicchi advises them to keep him away: that they should tell him that Buoso is feeling better but is resting. From outside, the doctor insists on seeing his patient. Schicchi hides himself, and Betto draws the curtains to keep out the light. Other relatives open the door for Spinelloccio. They crowd around him, divert him, engage him in conversation, and assure him that Buoso is recovering and feeling much better.

Spinelloccio, speaking in a nasal tone and Bolognese accent, arrogantly praises the well-known scientific achievements of the Bolognese school of medicine that have restored Buoso's health. (In the old *Commedia dell'arte* the Doctor was generally from Bologna.) Spinelloccio tries to approach Buoso's bed, but the relatives block his way, claiming that Buoso is sleeping. But from behind the curtains, Buoso's (Schicchi) thin, weak, and trembling voice begs the physician to call again in the evening, because he now feels drowsy and needs rest.

Schicchi's impersonation of Buoso's voice is so convincing that the relatives become frightened and startled. All manage to regain their composure, except old Betto, who, in his fright, lets a silver tray fall that he had hidden in his sleeve. Zita retrieves it and places it on the table, saying nothing to Betto, but looking at him menacingly, and threatening him with pointed finger.

Spinelloccio agrees to return in the evening, but not before he congratulates his astute medical expertise; his defiant patients never die. With Spinelloccio gone, Betto reopens the curtains, letting in the full light of day.

Schicchi emerges and proudly asks the relatives: "Did I sound like Donati?" They assure him that he was perfect, and he responds with delight at the prospect of his triumph: "Victory! Victory!" Schicchi orders the relatives to send for the Notary and tell him to come immediately: that old Buoso has gotten much worse and wants to make his will.

Schicchi informs the relatives of his plan: 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 only his great nose is visible. But Gianni Schicchi will be in Buoso's bed, imitating Buoso's voice, and dictating a new will to the Notary: a will that will suit the relatives.

Schicchi prides himself in inventing the most ingenious, greatest trick in the world. The relatives become exultant and celebrate their forthcoming victory, particularly their revenge against the monks of Signa. In their excitement, they become choked with emotion; they gather around Schicchi, praise him, and kiss his hands and garments. In their euphoric frenzy, they even lovingly embrace each other.

Rinuccio quickly exits to collect the Notary.

Simone suggests that they decide how they will divide Buoso's money: all agree that it should be in equal portions. But then they begin to argue among themselves, each greedily 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. During the pandemonium, Schicchi cynically comments about their enduring family love.

All stop upon hearing the mournful sound of a funeral bell. They fear that it signals that it announces Buoso's death; and the end of their scheme. Gherardo rushes out to investigate. Lauretta peeps in from the terrace to tell her father that the little bird does not want to eat; he

tells her give it water. Schicchi wants Lauretta occupied and out of the way while he perpetrates his intrigue.

A gasping Gherardo returns from scouting, and reveals that the funeral bell announced the death of the moor, the captain's servant. The relatives express their relief, and then they become cheerful as their thoughts return to the happy prospect of the disposition of Buoso's properties. Simone, with an air of authority, suggests that the fair-minded Gianni Schicchi should determine the disposition of Buoso's property. All agree.

Schicchi prepares for his intrigue; he calls for Buoso's nightcap, nightgown, and lace handkerchief. Each relative in turn approaches Schicchi and whispers an offer of a substantial bribe if he leaves them the mansion, mule, and sawmills at Signa; Schicchi assures each relative that he/she need not worry. Each relative is confident that he/she has succeeded with Schicchi, and each rubs his/her hands gleefully.

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. Schicchi, dressed in Buoso's nightcap and nightshirt, is about to be put to bed by Zita, Nella, and Ciesca, their lullaby expressing their excitement that Gianni Schicchi shall prevail as their savior: "O Gianni Schicchi, nostro salvatore!" ("Oh, Gianni Schicchi, our savior!")

The relatives are anxious for Gianni Schicchi's intrigue to begin. But beforehand, Schicchi 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 amputation of a hand, and then exile from Florence forever." All mournfully repeat Schicchi's warning, 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 remaining curtains to darken the room. A candle is carefully placed 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. Buoso (Schicchi) is in bed concealed by curtains; he thanks them for coming to witness his will.

Schicchi/Buoso advises the Notary that he had hoped to write his will himself, but he is impeded by paralysis; 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 arrangements. Schicchi/Buoso instructs 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 Schicchi/Buoso begins to dictate his will: "To the Friars and their fund for Santa Reparata, I bequeath" — the relatives seem fearful, but they are relieved when the amount bequeathed is a mere five lire; the relatives compliment Buoso's charity. With respectful tact, the Notary challenges such a small bequest, but Schicchi/Buoso advises him that if it was more, the people would say it was because he had stolen that money. The relatives congratulate Buoso's wisdom and understanding.

Schicchi/Buoso bequeaths his cash monies to the relatives in equal shares. Then, he bequeaths some of his other possessions: the property at Fucecchio is given 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. However, their real concern is the disposition of the most valuable properties: the house in Florence and the mule and sawmills in Signa.

Schicchi/Buoso continues. He bequeaths the mule — the finest in Tuscany — to his devoted friend, Gianni Schicchi. The startled relatives suddenly spring up, believing that Schicchi has become insane. Simone asks what on earth Gianni Schicchi would want with the mule, Schicchi/Buoso replying by assuring him that he knows well what Gianni Schicchi wants. Simone is stunned. The relatives grumble, cursing Schicchi as a rascal, villain, and scoundrel for bequeathing property to himself.

Schicchi/Buoso bequeaths his mansion in Florence to his devoted and affectionate friend, Gianni Schicchi. The relatives explode in rage, shouting that the bequest is an injustice that they will not permit; Schicchi/Buoso, in a thin and squeaky voice, invokes "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 "warning."

Nevertheless, all is not lost for the relatives because there remain those most valuable properties at Signa: the mule and the sawmill. The relatives wait for Schicchi/Buoso's bequest with great anticipation; they become shocked when the roguish Schicchi/Buoso bequeaths all the Signa properties to his affectionate friend, Gianni Schicchi, each phrase of his dictation subtly injected with the "warning." The relatives have been caught in their own net; they have no recourse but to groan. But Rinuccio realizes the significance of Schicchi/Buoso's bequests and excitedly slips out to the terrace to join Lauretta.

Schicchi/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. They express their gratitude to Buoso, and their sadness because they will never again see this humane man. They exit weeping.

After they have left, the relatives assault Gianni Schicchi with vigorous furor, cursing and condemning him as a rascal, thief, and traitor. Schicchi leaps up from Buoso's bed, brandishing Buoso's staff, and deals blows at the relatives. Then he orders them from his house. In revenge, the relatives 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, with Rinuccio and Lauretta on the terrace, embracing each other and blissfully celebrating their love.

Gianni Schicchi returns from his pursuit of the marauding relatives. He catches sight of Rinuccio and Lauretta embraced on the terrace, and his heart melts as he smiles

Commentary and Analysis

With *Gianni Schicchi*, an opera buffa, Puccini proved his ingenious capability to combine sentiment with farce. The opera is populated by bizarre characterizations, as well as the ingratiating affections of the young lovers: the interrelationships of the archetypal figures in the opera with the lovers provided Puccini with the opportunity to invent rich musical textures for his characterizations.

The story is driven by the hopes and fears of relatives anticipating wealth through inheritance; but they are disinherited. However, their plans to overturn their disinheritance backfire and they become dupes of their own clever stratagems and schemes, generating a sense of “schadenfreude” for the audience, a malicious enjoyment and vengeful delight derived from the troubles, disappointments, and failures of others. These characters in Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* are prisoners of their primal lust for money, and it is their absurdity of their greediness — yet the honest truth of their yearnings — that generates the story’s humor.

The underlying plot of *Gianni Schicchi* and its colorful parade of characters are closely related to the Renaissance theatrical tradition of *commedia dell’arte*, or comedy of masks. Gianni Schicchi himself recalls the astute and roguish persona of Harlequin; and his daughter Lauretta clearly resembles the wily Columbine as she attempts to overcome obstacles to marry Rinuccio.

And likewise, each of the Donati relatives is reminiscent of the *commedia dell’arte*: Simone is like the crusty old bachelor, Pantaloon; and the impoverished Betto di Signa recalls a *zany*, a clumsy and buffoonish valet. And also typical are the haughty characterizations of the Notary, Amantio di Nicolao, and the equally arrogant Doctor Spinelloccio, the latter praising his scientific genius and the great medical achievements of his native Bologna school of medicine — in appropriate dialect.

Ben Jonson’s play *Volpone* (1605), another brilliant illustration of the same comic theme that also had its provenance in the *commedia dell’arte* tradition, also bears many striking parallels to Puccini’s opera story. Jonson’s 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.

In the play, the sly Volpone pretend to be on the verge of death; he and his roguish servant Mosca exploit their victim’s avarice, enjoying their intrigue with sadistic delight. And just like Gianni Schicchi, Volpone addresses the audience with a final apostrophe, inviting them to censure or praise his actions: a parallel to the theatrical epilogue that Mozart later used in *Don Giovanni*, and Verdi in *Falstaff*.

These stories are caustic satires on human weaknesses. Nevertheless, Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* is pure comedy, a farcical portrayal of the stupid things people are capable of doing when they become obsessed by greed.

Puccini’s librettist, Giovacchino Forzano, selected the subject from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*: Canto XXX of the *Inferno* deals with the notorious Gianni Schicchi, a story Dante based on historical events that took place in Florence in the year 1299.

Dante relates the preposterous swindle perpetrated by the rogue Schicchi in connection with the last will and testament of the wealthy Buoso Donati. 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 Buoso Donati died, his son Simone was haunted by fears that his father might bequeath some of his property to the Church: atonement for his dishonest acquisition of the property. (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. They placed Schicchi in Buoso's bed, where the consummate rogue dictated the will to a notary, bequeathing to himself a valuable mare known as "Donna della torma" ("The stud's lady.")

Dante's inclusion of Schicchi's crime in the *Inferno* ensured immortality for the rogue, but Dante's purpose was to vent his wrath on Schicchi for his despicable crime.

In the *Inferno*, 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, pale spirits, who are consumed by their iniquity, biting and terrorizing the others: "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 were running and biting like a hog let out of the sty.")

The first spirit was Myrrha, the daughter of the King of Cyprus, who conceived an incestuous passion for her father, and succeeded 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" ("Arrived 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 identifies the criminal to Dante: "Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi, e va rabbioso altrui così conciano" ("That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and he goes about raging and dealing with the others in this manner.")

Just as Myrrha had created a pretense for her own ends, so did the despicable Gianni Schicchi, relentless in pursuing his devious objectives: "Per guadagnar la donna della torma, falsificar in sè Buoso Donati, testando e dando al testamento norma." ("To impersonate Buoso Donati, make a will in legal form, so that he might personally acquire the 'The stud's lady.'")

Dante poured out his hatred of Gianni Schicchi, a peasant he considered the vilest of criminals. Nevertheless, Puccini and librettist Forzano elevated Schicchi's actions to those of a hero: Schicchi's impersonation of the dead Buoso become an act of justice against the gluttonous relatives; and his actions were also those of a deeply loving and sentimental father exploiting an opportunity to secure a dowry for his daughter.

Forzano's libretto faithfully reflects the spirit of medieval Florence, particularly its social conflicts, some of which 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 condemned Schicchi

for other reasons: Dante's wife, Gemma, was a Donati, the family who became the victim of Schicchi's trickery; condemning Schicchi was Dante's revenge.

In several places of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante, a descendant of a Guelph family that prided its pure Florentine blood, vents his xenophobia and class antagonism: his contempt for the peasants who were invading aristocratic Florence from the surrounding countryside. In Canto XVI of the *Inferno* Dante meets the spirits of three noble Florentines who inquire about their beloved city. The poet replies by venting his disgust of the lower classes: "A glut of self-made men and profiteers have bred excess. Oh Florence! You cry in pain!" Gianni Schicchi was one of those lower class peasants and opportunists that Dante despised.

Likewise, librettist Forzano dutifully incorporated Dante's class animosity into the opera: the Donati relatives are Florentine patricians, although virtually impoverished; they initially reject Schicchi's help because he is a peasant and upstart, even though he might resolve their predicament; and nephew Rinuccio is forbidden to marry Schicchi's daughter Lauretta because the father cannot provide a dowry.

Like Mozart and librettist da Ponte in *The Marriage of Figaro*, librettist Forzano's sympathies leaned toward notions of social equality, ideals represented by Schicchi himself, as well as the young Rinuccio, who, although a Donati, identified with a new generation that favored liberal ideas and social progress. Significantly, in the opera, it is Rinuccio who praises the great city of Florence and its new society: men like Gianni Schicchi who he compares to Giotto and the Medici. In the spirit of Mozart and da Ponte, the underclasses are heroes, and like Gianni Schicchi, they are 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 the Donati's heirs of the dire punishment that awaits the forger of wills, as well as 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 would be a severed hand and exile from Florence. Schicchi concludes the aria with an historical reference: "Io ti saluto con questo moncherino, e vo randagio come un Ghibellino!" ("I wave goodbye with this stump, condemned 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* slyly rebuked Dante for his unmerciful condemnation of Schicchi. The opera concludes with Schicchi's 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 attribute my guilt to extenuating circumstances!" In Puccini's version of Dante, Gianni Schicchi's unethical actions are absolved and elevated to heroic deeds; energetic rogues deserve more compassion than saints.

Gianni Schicchi has often been compared to Verdi's *Falstaff*, another comic masterpiece. Both operas are saturated with robust wit and gaiety, and both are the creations of composers whose lifetime oeuvre was tragic music drama. In these operas, both composers exhibited talents 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, Nanetta and Fenton in *Falstaff*, and Lauretta and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, provide sentimental relief from a world populated by utterly comic, yet at times ridiculous and grotesque characters.

Verdi's *Falstaff* centers around its title character, and its comedy is embellished with horseplay, practical jokes, and good-natured humor; Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* is pure farce, its fun lying more in its parade of characters as well as Puccini's vivid musical underscoring of their actions.

Falstaff is a sublime testament to Verdi, a swan song concluding with a parody about life: "Tutto nel mondo è burla" ("The whole world is a joke.") *Falstaff* has the benefit of being a full-length opera; Puccini's opera is in one-act, its very nature demanding brevity of plot, which he achieved to brilliant effect. Nevertheless, both composers created ingenious comic masterpieces, supreme examples — although late flowerings — of the great Italian opera buffa tradition.

Dramatically, *Gianni Schicchi*'s action progresses with perfect theatrical pace, its focus always concentrated on the hopes and fears of the Donati relatives. It is the relatives' lust and greed that makes *Gianni Schicchi* pure comedy from beginning to end, a rare Puccini opera in which the romantic 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: *Gianni Schicchi* remains 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 providing relief from its intense tragic elements.

But even in a comedy, Puccini's macabre instincts come to the fore. Behind the riotous fun and humor of *Gianni Schicchi* there are some gruesome plot elements that border the sadistic: Buoso's corpse remaining on stage for a considerable portion of the action; the crude and vulgar removal of the corpse; Schicchi slipping into Buoso's bed to impersonate him only a couple of hours after his death; and Schicchi's sinister "warning" that a hand will be severed if the conspirators' fraud is uncovered.

The action unfolds with gusto and zest: rapidly, mercurially, fluently, and with a dynamic thrust. Each scene and its impending disaster quickly succeeds another.

The anxious and whining "Mourning" motive immediately dominates the action, the comedy set in motion with the relatives' mock solemnity and phony grieving for the dead Buoso. Although much of the opera is written in major keys, Puccini turned to the minor to suggest the relatives' feigned lamenting. Rhythms are straightforward and incisive, most in two/four and four/four time. Vocal parts are highlighted by wide leaps and offbeat phrases.

The orchestration has many brass and percussive fanfares that sometimes sound grotesque, yet provide pungent comic effects. There are moments with grating musical dissonance: Schicchi's furious cries of "Niente! Niente! Niente!" ("Never! Never! Never!") is his outburst in which he refuses to offer his services to benefit the predator relatives; and the raging ensemble in which the Donati relatives accuse Schicchi of

betrayal and monstrous deception after his bequeathal of the choice Donati properties to himself.

Gianni Schicchi himself is at the center of the opera: he is its comic spirit. Schicchi's musical motives are all short, incisive, sprightly, and at times fanfare-like, such as the short theme that is associated with his cleverness that appears in the opening "Mourning" motive. The theme is introduced long before Schicchi's arrival, a typical Puccini technique in which the music associated with a character is heard before his/her appearance: Tosca, Butterfly, Mimi. Likewise, the Schicchi motive is heard during the relatives' "Whisper" scene, and in the relatives' reading of the will, all hints that the arch-roguer is about to play a prank on them. The fanfare, or "Victory" motive is first introduced in Rinuccio's aria when he praises the new Florentines; it symbolizes Schicchi's vitality and zest, and it is the theme that closes the opera.

Schicchi's "Warning" to the relatives, "Primo un avvertimento" ("First a warning") cautions the Donati's about the dire punishment awaiting the forger of wills is pure comic irony that begins in a mood of sham mystery, but concludes with Schicchi's menacing farewell, "Addio, Firenze," an example of the roguer's macabre humor. And that theme underscores Schicchi's dictation of the will to the Notary, a moment of sublime vocal characterization; it requires histrionic agility as Schicchi holds the fuming relatives in complete arrest by injecting them with fear and fright for their complicity in a fraud while he appropriates the most valuable Donati properties to himself.

Rinuccio's brief characterization of Schicchi is followed by "Firenze è un albero," a vigorous and fervent paean to the glory of ancient Florence and its new spirits like Gianni Schicchi, the music like a festive march with rousing flourishes.

The music for the two young lovers, Rinuccio and Lauretta, is vintage Puccini; in a brief love duet at the conclusion of the opera, they embrace against the background of the towers of Florence bathing in the midday sun, their music lush and expansive, and conveying a sense of eminent triumph.

Lauretta's signature aria, "O mio babbino caro," in which she threatens to throw herself into the Arno River unless she is allowed to buy her wedding ring, seems to spring naturally from the surrounding mayhem. Nevertheless, its sentimentality and expressiveness provides a welcome repose after the agitation of the preceding scene in which Zita and Schicchi hurled insults at each other. The aria is built on a second Gianni Schicchi's motive that was heard when he first arrived at the Donati 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 that perhaps suggests the relatives' drooping heads. It is the most important single musical idea associated with the relatives, dominating the opening scenes and undergoing 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 busily dress 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, the entire opera is a paean to the spirit of the famous old city of Florence and its legendary glory. At the conclusion of the opera, Gianni Schicchi expels the Donati relatives from the house in a scene of great commotion and mayhem. Suddenly, there is calm, and the towers of ancient Florence appear in the background, bathing gloriously in the midday sun. As such, *Gianni Schicchi* parallels Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*, in which Act II concludes in calm after all the mayhem, the full moon stealing over old Nuremberg’s ancient streets. Wagner’s comic opera may be said to be his most German in spirit; Puccini’s opera, his most Italian.

As such, the real hero of *Gianni Schicchi* is medieval Florence, the plot, characters and music of the opera springing from the glory of Florentine soil. *Gianni Schicchi* is vintage *commedia dell’arte* and *opera buffa*, rich Italian humor that Puccini embellished with his great musical inventions: a magical and magnificent creation combining luscious sentiment with wholesome comedy.

LIBRETTO

Gianni Schicchi

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

The room is the bedchamber 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 Donati's bed are surrounded by candelabra, its candlesticks lighted. Through the half-open bed-curtains Buoso's covered body can be seen.

Buoso Donati's relatives face the bed: they kneel, murmur prayers and sob loudly. Little Gherardino is seated on the floor by a wall, his back to the other relatives; he is vored and disinterested in the relatives' grief and is only intent on playing marbles.

Largo



Zita:
Povero Buoso!

Zita:
Poor Buoso!

Simone:
Povero cugino!

Simone:
Poor cousin!

Rinuccio:
Povero zio!

Rinuccio:
Poor uncle!

Ciesca e Marco:
Oh! Buoso!

Ciesca and Marco:
Oh! Buoso!

Nella e Gherardo:
Buoso!

Nella and Gherardo:
Buoso!

Betto:
O cognato!

Betto:
Poor brother-in-law!

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

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

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

Gherardo:
Io piangerò per giorni e giorni.

Gherardo:
I'll weep for days and days.

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

Sciò!

Shhh!

Nella:
Giorni? Per mesi!

Nella:
For days? For months!

Sciò!

(to Gherardino)
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 weep!

Rinuccio:
Piangerem!

Rinuccio:
We'll weep!

Zita:
Buoso! Buoso!

Zita:
Buoso! Buoso!

Ciesca:
Tutta la vita!

Ciesca:
All our lives!

While all feign grief, Betto whispers something to Nella.

Nella:

Ma come? Davvero?

Nella:

How come? Is that true?

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Betto:

That's what they're saying in Signa.

**Rinuccio:**

Che dicono a Signa?

Rinuccio: (to Nella)

What are they saying in Signa?

Nella:

Si dice che...

Nella: (whispering to Rinuccio)

They're saying that...

Rinuccio:

Giaaa?!

Rinuccio:

Is that so?!

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Betto:

That's what they're saying.

Ciesca:

Che dicono a Signa?

Ciesca: (bending over to Betto)

What are they saying in Signa?

Betto:

Si dice che...

Betto: (whispers to Ciesca)

They're saying that...

Ciesca:

Noooo!?

Marco, lo senti che dicono a Signa?

Si dice che...

Ciesca: (loudly)

Noooo!?

Marco, did you hear what they're saying in Signa? They're saying that...

Marco:

Eeeh?!?

Marco:

Eeeh?!?

Zita:

Ma in somma possiamo sapere.

Zita:

Let's all hear it briefly.

Betto:

Lo dicono a Signa.

Betto:

They're saying it in Signa.

Zita:

Che diamine dicono a Signa?

Zita:

What the devil are they saying in 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, 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!

Gherardo:

O Simone?

Ciesca:

Simone?

Zita:

Parla, tu se’ il più vecchio.

Marco:

Tu se’ anche stato podestà a Fucecchio.

Zita:

Che ne pensi?

Marco:

Che ne pensi?

Simone:

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

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

Guaio pei frati, ma per noi speranza!

Betto:

There’s been gossip and horrible rumors.
Last night, at Cisti’s bakery, they were saying:
“If Buoso croaks, it’s manna for the friars!
They’ll say: “My belly, make room!”
And another: “Yes, Buoso’s will left
everything to a convent!”

Simone:

But what!? Who’s saying 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:

Oh Simone?

Ciesca:

Simone?

Zita: (to Simone)

You speak, you’re the eldest.

Marco:

You were once mayor of Fucecchio.

Zita:

What do you think about it?

Marco:

What do you think?

Simone: (rising with an air of gravity)

If Buoso’s will is in the hands of a notary,
who knows? Perhaps it’s a misfortune!
But if it is hidden in this room, it’s
misfortune for the friars but hope for us!

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

Misfortune for the friars, 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 articles of silver.
He cautiously stretches his hand to take them, but is disturbed by Simone's alarm..*

Simone:

Ah! No. Non è!

Simone: (scanning a parchment closely)

Ah! No. It isn't here!

All turn round to look at Betto, who pretends innocence. 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. It isn't here!

*The relatives continue their frenzied search for the will, not knowing where to look. They
ransack everything in the room, rummage in the boxes, chests and under the bed.
The room becomes filled with 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! It isn't here!

Gherardo:

Dove sia?

Gherardo:

Where can it be?

Marco:

Dove sia?

Marco:

Where can it be?

Simone, Betto:

No! Non c'è!

Simone, Betto:

No! It isn't here!

Rinuccio:

Salvati! Salvati!

Rinuccio: (crying out triumphantly)

I've found it!

*All rush toward Rinuccio, their hands outstretched to grab the will. But
Rinuccio holds the parchment tightly, 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
in which all of us are 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 riparlarne!

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, quickly, give me the will!

Ciesca:

Lo vedi che si sta colle spine sotto i piedi?

Ciesca:

Can't you see that we're on pins and needles?

Rinuccio:

Zia!

Rinuccio: (*hands the will to Zita*)

Aunt!

Zita:

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

Zita:

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

The relatives follow Zita with great anticipation as she sits down at the table. She looks for 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 loved me so much that he must
have left my pockets full!

(Rinuccio whispers to Gherardino)

Run to Gianni Schicchi and tell him to
come here 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 off.)

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 candelabrum.

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

He must have all the candles lit in his
honor. Yes! Rejoice! Poor Buoso!

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

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

Nella, Marco:

Se m'avesse lasciato questa casa!

Nella, Marco:

If only he left me this house!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

Se m'avesse lasciato questa casa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

If only he left me this house!

Zita, Marco:

E i mulini di Signa!

Zita, Marco:

And the mills at Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

E i mulini di Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

And the mills at Signa!

Nella, Marco:

Poi la mula!

Nella, Marco:

Then the mule!

Betto:

Se m'avesse lasciato...

Betto:

If only he left me...

Simone:

La mula e i mulini di Signa!

Simone:

The mule and mills at Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

I mulini di Signa!

Ciesca, Gherardo:

The mills at Signa!

Marco:

La mula e i muli...

Marco:

The mule and the mills...

Zita:

Zitti! È aperto!

Zita:

Quiet! It's opened!

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 their faces 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 all the candles and then lowers the bed curtains. Slowly, the other relatives take chairs and sit down; all are immobile, their eyes wide open as they stare blankly.

Simone:

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

Simone: (with suppressed rage)

So it was true! We'll watch the friars grow
fat on Donati's money!

Ciesca:

Tutti quei bei fiorini accumulati finire nelle
tonache dei frati!

Ciesca:

All those lovely florins ending up in the
friars' cassocks!

Marco:

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

Marco:

We're deprived of our inheritance while the
friars wallow in abundance!

Betto:

Io dovrò misurarmi il bere a Signa
e i frati bevano il vin di vigna!

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!

Betto:

I'll have to ration my drinking at Signa,
while the friars drink the wine from our vines!

Nella:

They'll often have to enlarge their robes
while we are left starving!

Rinuccio:

My happiness will have been stolen by the
"Order of Santa Reparata!"

Gherardo:

Happy brothers, open the pantries of the
monasteries and sharpen your teeth!

*Little by little, the relative's rage increases; they run frantically about the room,
cursing and swearing, and exploding into sardonic laughter.*

Zita:

Eccovi le primizie di mercato!
Fate schioccar la lingua col palato!
A voi, poveri frati! Tordi grassi!

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:

Quaglie pinate!

Simone:

Firm quails!

Nella:

Lodole!

Nella:

Larks!

Gherardo:

Ortolani!

Gherardo:

Partridge!

Zita:

Beccafichi!

Zita:

Salmon!

Simone:

Quaglie pinate! O che ingrassate!

Simone:

Stuffed turkey with chestnuts!

Zita:

Ortolani!

Zita:

Partridge!

Betto:

E galletti!

Betto:

And young fowl!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Galletti??

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Young fowl??

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Galettini!!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Young fowl!!

Rinuccio:
Galletti di canto tenerini!

Rinuccio: (*shouting*)
Tender, singing young fowl!

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:
E colle facce rosse e ben pasciute...

Zita, Marco, Simone, Betto:
And with red, well-fed faces...

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:
Lodole e gallettini!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:
Larks and young fowl!

Zita, Marco:
...ridetevi di noi: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Zita, Marco:
...they'll laugh at us: Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Simone, Betto:
...schizzando dalle gote la salute!

Simone, Betto:
...bloated with grease and gravy!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:
Eccolo là un Donati!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo:
There's a 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, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Ah! Ah! Ah! There he is!
There's a Donati!
Ah! Ah! Ah! Look at him!
He wanted the inheritance himself!
Laugh, friars, laugh at the expense of the
Donati's! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

*Their frenzy reaches a climax. Afterwards they renew their outrage,
but some 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 said
that when Buoso departed we would have
wept for real!)

Slowly, each sinks into a chair, subdued, and overcome with tears.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
E non c'è nessun mezzo...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:
And there's no means...

Simone, Betto:
...per cambiarlo?

Simone, Betto:
...to change it?

Zita, Marco:
...per girarlo?

Zita, Marco:
...to get around it?

Gherardo
... addolcirlo?

Marco:
O Simone, Simone?

Zita:
Tu sei il più vecchio!

Marco:
Tu se' anche stato podestà a Fucecchio!

Gherardo:
...to change it?

Marco:
Oh Simone, Simone?

Zita:
You are the eldest!

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.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone,
Betto:**
Chi?

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?

Rinuccio:
Io l'ho mandato, perchè speravo...

Ciesca, Nella:
È proprio il momento d'aver Gianni
Schicchi...

Rinuccio:
There's only one person who can advise us,
and perhaps save us.

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Marco, Simone,
Betto:**
Who?

Rinuccio:
Gianni Schicchi!

Zita: (*furious, gesturing disappointment*)
I don't want to hear any more talk about
Gianni Schicchi and his daughter!
And I mean it!

Gherardino: (*excitedly*)
He's coming here!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Who?

Gherardino:
Gianni Schicchi!

Zita:
Who sent for him?

Rinuccio:
I sent for him, because I was hoping...

Ciesca, Nella: (*grumbling*)
It's better to have Gianni Schicchi...

Zita:

Ah! Bada! Se sale...

Zita: (*furious*)

Ah! Mind you! If he comes near me...

Ciesca, Nella:

...fra i piedi...

Ciesca, Nella:

...under our feet...

Zita:

...gli fo ruzzolare le scale!

Zita:

...I'll make him roll down the stairs!

Marco, Simone:

È proprio il momento d'aver Gianni Schicchi.

Marco, Simone: (*grumbling*)

It's better to have Gianni Schicchi...

Gherardo:

Tu devi obbedire soltanto a tuo padre.

Gherardo: (*to Gherardino*)

You must only obey your father.

Marco, Simone:

...fra i piedi!

Marco, Simone:

...under our feet!

Gherardo:

Là! Là!

Gherardo: (*spanking Gherardino*)

Là! Là!

Gherardo shoves 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!**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:**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!**Rinuccio:**You're mistaken! He's clever and astute.
He knows and understands every loophole
in the laws and codes. A joker! A mocker!
Do you want to play a new and rare joke?
It's Gianni Schicchi who can do it!Gli occhi furbi gli illuminan di riso lo strano
viso,
ombreggiato da quel suo gran nasone
che pare un torrachione per così!
Vien dal contado? Ebbene? Che vuol dire?
Basta con queste ubbie grette e piccine!His cunning eyes light up his strange face
with laughter; it's a face
overshadowed by that great big nose,
which looks like that overturned tower.
Does he come from the country? So what?
Enough of these mean and 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,
its roots growing new strength from the
fertile valleys.
Florence blossoms, and strong palaces and
slender towers rise to the stars!

The Arno, before running to its mouth,
sings and kisses the Piazza Santa Croce,
its song so sweet and resounding
that all the streams join it in a chorus.
So let those versed in arts and sciences
descend upon Florence to make it richer
and more splendid!

Welcome Arnolfo from the Val d'Elsa,
to build his beautiful tower.
Welcome Giotto from the Mugel woods,
and the bold Medici merchants!
Enough of these mean and 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 gloomy faces of the relatives.*

Gianni Schicchi:

(Quale aspetto sgomento e desolato!
Buoso Donati, certo è migliorato!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(What sorrow and distress! Buoso Donati's
health certainly must have improved!)

Rinuccio:

(Lauretta!)

Rinuccio:

(Lauretta!)

Lauretta:

(Rino!)

Lauretta:

(Rino!)

Rinuccio:

Amore mio!

Rinuccio: (*whispering*)

My beloved!

Lauretta:
Perchè sì pallido?

Rinuccio:
Ahimè, lo zio.

Lauretta:
Ebbene, parla.

Rinuccio:
Amore, amore, quanto dolore!

Lauretta:
(Quanto dolore!)

Lauretta: (*whispering*)
Why are you so pale?

Rinuccio:
It's poor uncle Buoso.

Lauretta:
Then tell me.

Rinuccio:
My love, so much sorrow!

Lauretta:
(So much sorrow!)

*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?

Zita:
Diseredati! Sì, sì, diseredati!
E perciò velo canto: pigliate la figliola,
levatevi di torno, io non do mio nipote ad
una senza dote!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! He's gone?
(But why are they weeping? Their tears are
better acted than a jester's!)

Ah! I understand your unbearable grief. My
soul is moved by your great loss.

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*)
Sure! To the friars!

Gianni Schicchi:
Ah! You're disinherited?

Zita:
Disinherited! Yes, disinherited!
Therefore I'll speak my mind to you. Take
your little daughter and get out of here! I
won't give my nephew to a girl who has no
dowry!

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 sacrifici 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!
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!

Rinuccio:

Aunt, I love her!

Lauretta:

Daddy, I love him!

Gianni Schicchi:

My daughter, have a little pride!

Zita:

I don't give a damn!

Gianni Schicchi:

Good for you, old witch! For a dowry you'd sacrifice my daughter and your nephew!
You old miser: you stingy, avaricious and petty woman!

Lauretta:

Rinuccio don't leave me! You swore to be true!

Rinuccio:

My Lauretta, you remember!
You vowed to love me forever! And everything that night at Fiesole seemed like it was blooming!

Zita:

He also insults me! I won't give my nephew to a girl who has no dowry.
Rinuccio, come, let them 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:

You remember, my love!

Gianni Schicchi: (*pulling Lauretta away*)

Come! A little pride! Come!

Zita:

Come Rinuccio, come!

Lauretta:

No! No! Addio, speranza bella!

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!

Lauretta:

No! No! Farewell, lovely hopes!

Rinuccio:

Farewell, lovely hopes!

Gianni Schicchi :

Let's get out of here, Lauretta. Come, dry your eyes.

Zita:

Come, come.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

...every ray of hope is shattered.

Gianni Schicchi :It would mean having misers for relatives!
Have a little pride!**Zita:**

Let her leave! Get out of here!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

We won't be able to marry on May Day!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Come, come!

Marco, Simone, Betto:

There are always quarrels...

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo:

...among 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:

Proprio il momento! Pensate al testamento!

Gianni Schicchi:

Vecchia taccagna, gretta, sordida, spilorcia!
Via!

Zita:

Ma vieni, vieni!

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?

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

This is the moment! Let's think about the will!

Gianni Schicchi:

You mean old woman: you are petty, despicable and avaricious! Go away!

Zita:

Come, come Rinuccio!

Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Let's think 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 to solve the problem: a scheme, a solution, a loophole, a trick!

Gianni Schicchi: (*indicating the relatives*)

On behalf of those vultures?

Niente! Niente! Niente!

(to Rinuccio)

Never! Never! Never!

Andante ingenuo

LAURETTA



Lauretta:

O mio babbino caro, mi piace è bello, bello;
vo' andare in Porta Rossa a comparar
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!

Lauretta: (kneeling before Gianni)

Oh, my dear daddy, be kind and help us. I
love Rinuccio. He's so handsome. I want to
go to Porta Rosa to buy the ring! Yes, 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!

Oh God, I would like to die!

Daddy, have mercy!

Gianni Schicchi:

Datemi il testamento!

Gianni Schicchi: (reluctantly)

Give me the will!

Rinuccio hands the will to Schicchi. He paces back and forth while absorbed in reading it.

The relatives follow him with their eyes, and then follow his footsteps.

Simone, who is seated, shakes his head doubtfully. Schicchi suddenly stops.

Gianni Schicchi:

Niente da fare!

Gianni Schicchi:

Nothing can be done!

The relatives leave Schicchi and move about. Lauretta and Rinuccio are apart from them, preoccupied by their disappointment.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

Addio, speranza bella, dolce miraggio; non
ci potrem sposare per il Calendimaggio!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

Farewell, my sweet beloved, sweet illusion;
we won't be able to marry on May day!

Gianni Schicchi begins to pace about again, reading the will more closely.

Gianni Schicchi:

Niente da fare!

Gianni Schicchi: (stops suddenly)

Nothing can be done!

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 we can marry on May Day!)

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 little terrace and feed some crumbs to the little bird!

As soon as Lauretta has gone, Schicchi 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:

Good! No one must know it!

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

Nessuno lo saprà!

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

No one knows!

Gianni Schicchi:

E i servi?

Gianni Schicchi: (*assailed by doubts*)

And the servants?

Zita:

Dopo l'aggravamento in camera, nessuno!

Zita:

After he got worse, no one came in!

Gianni Schicchi:

Voi due portate il morto e i candelabri là dentro nella stanza di rimpetto!

Gianni Schicchi: (*to Marco and Gherardo*)

You two take the body and the candelabras to the room opposite!

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!

Ladies, remake the bed!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

ma...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

but...

Gianni Schicchi:

Zitte. Obbedite!

Gianni Schicchi: (*gesturing to them*)

Quiet. Do as I say!

*As the women begin to remake the bed, there is a knock at the door.
All become startled.*

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

Ah!

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

Ah!

Gianni Schicchi:

Chi può essere? Ah!

Gianni Schicchi: (*in a stifled voice*)

Who can it be?

Zita:

Maestro Spinelloccio il dottore!

Zita: (*to Gianni*)

Master Spinelloccio, the doctor!

Gianni Schicchi:

Guardate che non passi! Ditegli qualche cosa che Buoso è migliorato e che riposa.

Gianni Schicchi:

Don't let him in! Tell him something: that Buoso is better and that he's resting.

*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:**Spinelloccio:**

Spinelloccio speaks in a nasal voice and with a Bolognese accent.

L'è permesso?

May I come in?

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

Buon giorno, Maestro Spinelloccio!

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

Good day, Master Spinelloccio!

Zita, Marco, Betto:

Va meglio!

Zita, Marco, Betto:

He's better!

Ciesca, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

Va meglio!

Ciesca, Rinuccio, Gherardo:

He's better!

Nella:

Va meglio!

Nella:

He's better!

Simone:

Va meglio!

Simone:

He's better!

Spinelloccio:

Ha avuto il benefissio?

Spinelloccio:

Has he had a bowel movement?

Zita, Simone, Betto:

Altro che!

Ciesca, Nella, Marco:

Altro che!

Spinelloccio:

A che potenza l'è arrivata la scienza!

Be', vediamo, vediamo!

Zita, Simone, Betto:

Certainly!

Ciesca, Nella, Marco:

Certainly!

Spinelloccio:

The power 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, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

A sta sera, Maestro!

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've such a need to rest. Could you come back this evening? I'm almost asleep.

Spinelloccio:

Yes, Master Buoso! But are you better?

Gianni Schicchi:

I've risen from the dead! Till evening.

Spinelloccio:

Till 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:

Till this evening, Master!

Spinelloccio:

A questa sera!

Spinelloccio:

Till this evening!

*After Spinelloccio 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:**

Identical!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Vittoria! Vittoria!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Victory! Victory!



Ma non capite?

But 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!

You 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 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 quello 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!

And the notary arrives. He enters: the room
is half dark. He can just see the shape of
Buoso on the bed, a nightcap on his head,
and a kerchief under his chin. Between the
nightcap and the kerchief, a nose that looks
like Buoso's, but is really mine, because I shall
be in Buoso's place, I, Schicchi, with another
voice, will pretend to be Buoso Donati, legally
dictating his last will and testament.

O gente! Questa matta bizzarria che mi
zampilla nella fantasia è tale da sfidar
l'eternità!!

Oh people! This crazy whimsy that springs
from my imagination is such that it could
challenge eternity!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Schicchi! Schicchi! Schicchi!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio, Gherardo,
Marco, Simone, Betto:**
Schicchi! Schicchi! Schicchi!

*The relatives become emotional; they surround Gianni Schicchi
and shower his hands and garments with kisses.*

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi! Schicchi!

Zita:
Va, corri dal notaio.

Zita:
Go, run to the notary.

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Rinuccio:
Io corro dal notaio!

Rinuccio:
I'm running to the notary!

Simone:
Caro Gherardo, Marco, Zita, Ciesca, Nella,
Gherardo, Zita, Betto.

Simone:
Dear Gherardo, Marco, Zita, Ciesca, Nella,
Gherardo, Zita, Betto.

Betto:
Ciesca, Marco, Gherardo, Nella, caro
Gherardo, Marco, Ciesca, Nella,

Betto:
Ciesca, Marco, Gherardo, Nella, dear
Gherardo, Marco, Ciesca, Nella,

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Nella, Marco:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Ciesca, Gherardo:
Schicchi!

Simone:
Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo...

Simone:
Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo...

Betto:
Nella, caro Gherardo, Marco...

Betto:
Nella, dear Gherardo, Marco...

Gianni Schicchi:
(Oh quale commozione!)

Gianni Schicchi:
(Their love is so touching!)

Zita:
Nella, Ciesca, Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

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!

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.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

Oh what a happy day. What a beautiful trick to play on the friars! Schicchi!!

Gianni Schicchi:

(Their love is so touching!)

Gherardo:

Schicchi!! Schicchi!!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

How beautiful love is among relatives!

Simone:

O 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, those at Figline.

Betto:

For me, those at Prato.

Gherardo:

For us, the land at Empoli.

Marco:

For me, those at Quintole.

Betto:

For me, those at Prato.

Simone:

And those at Fucecchio.

Zita:

Still remaining would be the mule, this house, and the mills at Signa.

Marco:

They're the best things.

Simone:

Ah! Capisco, capisco! Perché 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!

Zita, Nella, Gherardo:

Sentilo, sentilo!

Gianni Schicchi:

(Quanto dura l'amore fra i parenti!)

Tutti:

La casa, la mola i mulini di Signa toccano a me!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Simone:

Ah! I understand! Because I'm the oldest, and was mayor of Fucecchio, you want to give them to me! 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, the mayor!

Gherardo:

...the mayor!

Marco:

...the mayor!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

He wants the best part of the inheritance!

Zita, Nella, Gherardo:

Listen to him!!

Gianni Schicchi:

(How enduring their love is!)

All:

The house, mule and mills at Signa belong to me!

Gianni Schicchi:

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

A funeral bell is heard. The relatives become fearful that it is announcing Buoso's death.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

L'hanno saputo che Buoso è crepato!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto: *(in a stifled voice)*

They already know that Buoso has croaked!

Gherardo rushes outside to find out what has happened.

Gianni Schicchi:

Tutto crollato!

Gianni Schicchi:

All our plans have collapsed!

Lauretta:

Babbo, si può sapere?

L'uccellino non vuole più minuzzoli.

Lauretta: *(appearing from the terrace)*

Daddy, what shall I do?

The bird doesn't want any more crumbs.

Gianni Schicchi:

Ora dàgli da bere!

Gianni Schicchi: *(dryly)*

Give him something to drink!

*Lauretta again disappears onto the terrace. Gherardo returns breathlessly;
he has difficulty speaking and motions negatively.*

Gherardo:È preso un accidentale moro battezzato
del signor capitano!**Gherardo:** *(out of breath)*The captain's servant, the moor, died in a
fatal 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!**Simone:** *(with authority)*For the house, the mule and the mills, I
propose that we leave their disposition to
Schicchi's sense of honesty and justice!**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto:**

Rimettiamoci a Schicchi!

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

Let's leave it up to Schicchi!

Gianni Schicchi:Come volete.
Datemi i panni per vestirmi.
Presto! Presto!**Gianni Schicchi:**As you wish.
Give me the clothes so I can dress myself.
Quickly! Quickly!

*Zita, Nella and Ciesca take Buoso's kerchief, nightcap and nightgown from a chest,
and pass them to Gianni Schicchi.*

Zita:

Ecco la cappellina!

Zita: *(coming close to Schicchi)*

Here's the nightcap!!

(in a whisper)(Se mi lasci la mula, questa casa, i mulini di
Signa, ti do trenta fiorini!)(If you leave me the mule, this house and the
mills at Signa, I'll give you thirty florins!)**Gianni Schicchi:**

(Sta bene!)

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!)**Simone:** *(in a whisper)*(If you leave me the mule, this house and
the mills, I'll give you one hundred florins!)**Gianni Schicchi:**

(Sta bene!)

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 this house, the mule
and the mills I'll stuff you with money!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Nella approaches Gherardo, and then both address Schicchi in a whisper.

Nella:

Ecco la pezzolina!

(Se lasci a noi la mula, i mulini di Signa e
questa casa, a furia di fiorini ti s'intasa!)

Nella: (*aloud*)

Here's the kerchief!

(*whispering to Schicchi*)

(If you leave me the mule, the mills at Signa
and this house at Signa, I'll smother you with
florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

Ciesca:

Ed ecco la camicia!

(Se ci lasci la mula, i mulini di Signa e
questa casa, per te mille fiorini!)

Ciesca:

And here's the nightshirt!

(*whispering to Schicchi*)

(If you leave us the mule, the mills at Signa and
this house, I'll give you a thousand florins!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Sta bene!)

Gianni Schicchi:

(Very well!)

All rub their hands in satisfaction, while Gianni Schicchi puts on the nightgown.

He takes a mirror in one hand and then arranges the kerchief and nightcap.

*The three women gather around Gianni Schicchi and admire him comically, while Simone
watches at the window for the arrival of the notary. Gherardo clears the table for the
notary to sit, and Marco and Betto draw the bed curtains and tidy up the bedchamber.*

Zita:

È bello portentoso! Chi vuoi che non
s'inganni?
È Gianni che fa Buoso?
È Buoso che fa Gianni?
Il testamento è odioso?
Un camicion maestoso, il viso dormiglioso,
il naso poderoso, l'accento lamentoso, ah!

Zita: (*referring to Schicchi*)

He's handsome and prodigious! Who would
not be deluded?

Is Gianni playing Buoso?

Is Buoso playing Gianni?

The will is odious?

Ah, a majestic nightshirt, a sleepy face, a
powerful nose, and the whiny tone!

Ciesca:

Fa' presto, bambolino, che devi andare a
letto.
Se va bene il giochetto ti diamo un confortino!

Ciesca: (*to Schicchi*)

Hurry, little baby, you must go to bed.

If your little game goes well, we'll reward
you with some sweets!

L'uovo divien pulcino, il fior diventa frutto,
ma il frate impoverisce, La Cesca
s'arricchisce, ah!

Nella:

Spogliati, bambolino, che ti mettiamo in
letto.

E non aver dispetto, no se cambio il
camicino!

Si spiuma il canarino, la volpe cambia pelo,
il ragno ragnatela, il cane cambia 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!

Gianni Schicchi:

Vi servirò a dover!

Contente vi farò!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

Proprio così!

O Gianni, Gianni, nostro salvator!

Nella, Gherardo:

È preciso!

Tutti:

Perfetto! A letto!

The egg becomes a chick, the flower
becomes a fruit, but the friar grows poor
and Ciesca grows rich, Ah!

Nella:

Undress little baby, for we're putting you
to bed.

And don't be annoyed if I change your little
shirt!

The little canary sheds, the fox changes its
coat, the spider its web, the dog its bed, the
serpent its skin, and the good Gianni...

Zita:

...changes clothes...

Nella:

...in order to be able to serve us!

Ciesca:

He changes his face...

Zita:

...features and nose...

Ciesca:

...in order to serve us!

Nella:

He changes his tone...

Zita:

The Will!

Gianni Schicchi:

I'll serve you properly!!

I want to make you happy!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella:

Wonderful!

Oh Gianni, Gianni, our savior!

Nella, Gherardo:

Precisely!

All:

Perfect! To bed!

The relatives push Schicchi toward the bed, but he stops them, gesturing solemnly.

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 lasciati, 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!
Ladies and gentlemen, discretion!
Do you know the law?
“Anyone who impersonates another
for the sake of a will or bequest,
he and his accomplices
shall have a hand cut off
and be exiled.”
Remember it well if we are discovered.
Do you see Florence?

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, farewell divine sky,
I salute you with this stump,
and I 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, farewell divine sky,
I salute you with this stump,
and I wander around like a Ghibelline!

Suddenly there is a knock at the door.

Gianni scrambles into bed, the relatives hastily helping him. They draw the curtains to darken the room, and then place a candle on the writing table.

They open the door: the Notary Amantio appears with two witnesses, Pinellino and Guccio.

Rinuccio:

Ecco il notaro!

Rinuccio:

Here's the notary!

Il Notaio, Pinellino, Guccio:

Messer Buoso, buon giorno!

The Notary, Pinellino, Guccio: *(entering)*

Master Buoso. good day!

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 Buoso's voice*)

Oh! You're here? Thank you Master Amantio, and cobbler Pinellino and dyer Guccio. You're so kind to come and serve as witnesses to 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, solenne et leale!

Gianni Schicchi:

I wanted to make my will with my own
hand, but paralysis prevents me, so I
wanted a notary, serious and sincere!

Il Notaio:

O messer Buoso, grazie!
Dunque tu soffri di paralisia?

The Notary:

Master Buoso, thank you!
Then you're suffering from paralysis?

Gianni slowly raises his trembling hands and all express pity.

Ciesca, Nella, Zita, Simone:

Povero Buoso!

Ciesca, Nella, 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:
*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.*

The Notary:

Then I begin:
*In the name of God, in the year of our
Lord Jesus Christ from his salutary
incarnation, one thousand two hundred
ninety nine, the first day of September,
ordinance eleven, I, the notary Amantio di
Nicolao, citizen of Florence, by request of
Buoso Donati, write this will.*

Gianni Schicchi:

*Annullans, revocans, et irritans omne aliud
testamentum!*

Gianni Schicchi: (holding out his hand)

Annuling, revoking, and rendering invalid
all former wills!

Tutti:

Che previdenza!

All:

What prudence!

Il Notaio:

Un preambolo: dimmi, i funerali
(il più tardi possibile)
li vuoi ricchi? Fastosi? Dispendiosi?

Gianni Schicchi:

No, no, no! Pochi quattrini!
Non si spendano più di due fiorini!

Gherardo, Marco:

Oh! Che modestia!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:

Povero zio!

Zita:

Che animo!

Betto:

Che cuore!

Simone:

Gli torna onore!

Gianni Schicchi:

Lascio ai frati minori e all'opera di Santa
Reparata.

Tutti:

Bravo! 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!

The Notary:

The preamble: tell me about the funeral
(may it be delayed as long as possible.)
Do you want it sumptuous and expensive?

Gianni Schicchi:

No, no, no! Very inexpensive!
It shouldn't cost more than two florins!

Gherardo, Marco:

Oh! What modesty!

Ciesca, Nella, Rinuccio:

Poor uncle!

Zita:

What a soul!

Betto:

What a heart!

Simone:

So honorable!

Gianni Schicchi:

I leave five lire to the young brothers and
the order of Santa Reparata.

All:

Well done! It's always necessary to
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 maxims!

Ciesca, Marco, Betto:

What intelligence!

Zita, Simone:

What wisdom!

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.

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.)

The Notary:

What lucidity!

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 properties at Fucecchio.

Simone:

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Zita, the farms at Figline.

Zita:

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Betto, the fields of Prato.

Betto:

Thank you, brother-in-law!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Nella and Gherardo, the properties at
Empoli.

Nella, Gherardo:

Thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

To Ciesca and Marco, the properties at
Quintole.

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

(Now we come to the mule, the house, and
the mills.)

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?

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!

Tutti:

Ah, Gianni Schicchi, basta! Un accidente, basta! Ci ribelliamo, ci ri...

Schicchi raises his hand to remind the relatives about the penalty for conspiring to forge a will.

Gianni Schicchi:

Addio, Firenze...
...addio, cielo divino.
Io ti saluto.

Il Notaio:

Non si disturbi del testator la volontà!

Gianni Schicchi:

I give the mule, the best mule in Tuscany that is worth 300 florins, to my devoted friend: Gianni Schicchi.

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

What? What is this?

The Notary:

He bequeaths the mule to his devoted friend, Gianni Schicchi.

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

But...

Simone:

Of what importance is the mule to Gianni Schicchi?

Gianni Schicchi:

Calm yourself, Simone, I know well what Gianni Schicchi wants!

The Relatives: (grumbling)

Ah! Scoundrel!

Gianni Schicchi:

I leave the house in Florence to my dear devoted friend, Gianni Schicchi!

All:

Ah! Enough! Damn him!
We rebel, we reb...

Gianni Schicchi:

Farewell, Firenze...
...farewell, divine skies.
I salute you.

The Notary: (sharply)

Let the wish of the testator not be interfered with!

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, Pinellino:

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!
(e ti saluto con questo moncherino!)

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!

Il Notaio:

Ah! Che uomo, che uomo!

Pinellino, Guccio:

Che uomo! Che perdita!
Che peccato! Coraggio!

Gianni Schicchi:

Master Amantio. I'll bequeath 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 shall do as I please.

Guccio, Pinellino:

Ah! What a man!

Pinellino:

What a man!

Gianni Schicchi:

And the mills at Signa...

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto

(rapidly)
And the mills at Signa?

Gianni Schicchi:

The mills at Signa (Farewell Florence!)
I leave to my dear (farewell divine sky)
affectionate friend Gianni Schicchi!
(and I salute you with this stump!)

Zita, give 20 florins to the witnesses and 100
to the good notary from your own purse!

The Notary:

Master Buoso, thank you!

Gianni Schicchi:

(spitefully)
No goodbyes. Go now. Let's be strong!!

The Notary:

(moving towards the door)
Ah! What a man!

Pinellino, Guccio:

(moving away, moved)
What a man! What a loss!
What a shame! Courage!

*As soon as the Notary and witnesses have departed, the relatives rush in a mass towards
Gianni Schicchi, cursing and condemning him for betraying them.*

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Ladro! Furfante! Traditore! Iniquo!

Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco, Simone, Betto:

Thief! Scoundrel! Traitor! Evil man!

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 a stick, effectively swatting at the relatives.
The relatives run around in an uproar and then pillage the house.*

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto**

Saccheggia! Le pezze di lino!
La roba d'argento!

**Zita, Ciesca, Nella, Gherardo, Marco,
Simone, Betto**

Plunder! The linen cloths!
The silverware!

Gianni Schicchi:

Via! Via!

Gianni Schicchi:

Get out of here!

Tutti:

Le pezze di tela! Bottino!

All:

The cotton materials! Booty!

Schicchi chases the relatives from the house and pursues them into the street. From the terrace, Rinuccio opens the large window. In the background, Florence appears, bathed in glorious sunshine. The two lovers embrace.

Rinuccio:

Lauretta mia, staremo sempre qui.
Guarda, Firenze è d'oro Fiesole è bella!

Rinuccio:

My Lauretta, we'll stay here forever.
Look, Florence is golden, Fiesole is beautiful!

Lauretta:

Là mi giurasti amore!

Lauretta:

In Fiesole, you vowed your to love me!

Rinuccio:

Ti chiesi un bacio.

Rinuccio:

I asked you for a kiss.

Lauretta:

Il primo bacio.

Lauretta:

The first kiss.

Rinuccio:

Tremante e bianca volgesti il viso.

Rinuccio:

You faced me, pale and trembling.

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

Firenze da lontano ci parve il Paradiso!

Lauretta, Rinuccio:

From afar, Florence looked like Paradise!

Gianni Schicchi returns, laden with bundles which he throws on the floor.

Gianni Schicchi:

La masnada fuggì!

Gianni Schicchi:

The gang fled!

*Schicchi notices 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, ladies and gentlemen, if you think
Buoso's money would have been better
spent than this?

For this bizarre trick, they chased me into
hell, and so be it;
but with permission from the great father
Dante, if you were amused this evening,
allow me to plead "extenuating
circumstances."

Gianni Schicchi bows gracefully to the audience.

END OF OPERA

Turandot

Opera in Italian in three acts

Music

by

Giacomo Puccini.

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni,

after *Turandotte* (1772)

a dramatic fairy tale and play by Carlo Gozzi,

adapted by Johann Friedrich Schiller.

Premiere at La Scala,

April 25, 1926

Turandot was Puccini's 12th and last opera.

The composer died in 1924, two years before its premiere.

*Act III - Scene 2 was composed posthumously from Puccini's own sketches by
the contemporary composer, Franco Alfano,
under the supervision and direction of Arturo Toscanini.*

Principal Characters in Turandot

Turandot, a Princess	Soprano
Calaf, the “Unknown Prince,” son of Timur	Tenor
Timur, Calaf’s father, the dethroned Tatar King	Bass
Liù, a Tatar slave girl	Soprano
Altoum, Turandot’s father, Emperor of China	Tenor
Turandot’s Ministers:	
Ping, the Grand Chancellor	Tenor
Pang, the General Purveyor	Baritone
Pong, the Chief Cook	Baritone
A Mandarin	Baritone

The Prince of Persia, the Executioner, dignitaries, eight wise men,
Turandot’s attendants, soldiers, and crowds of people

TIME: Ancient China

PLACE: the city of Peking

Story Synopsis

In ancient Peking, China, the beautiful Princess Turandot has erected barriers to repel suitors: she will only wed a man of royal lineage who successfully answers her three riddles; anyone who fails will be executed.

Calaf, an enemy Tatar Prince in exile, travels in Peking incognito: he is the Unknown Prince. Calaf accidentally finds his exiled father, Timur, an old blind man, who is accompanied by the young slave girl, Liù, secretly in love with Calaf. Calaf beholds Princess Turandot and becomes awestruck by her beauty. He becomes obsessed to possess her, and he accepts her challenge to solve her three riddles.

Calaf succeeds in Turandot’s riddle contest. But she refuses to marry the victor of her diabolical contest and pleads with her father, the Emperor Altoum, to repudiate her solemn obligation. Calaf magnanimously poses a counteroffer to Turandot; if she can discover his name by dawn, he will free her from her promise and sacrifice his life to the executioner.

Turandot orders Liù tortured in order to discover the Unknown Prince’s name, but Liù kills herself rather than betray Calaf. Finally, Calaf melts Turandot’s resistance with a kiss, and then reveals his name to her. However, the victorious Turandot, now transformed from hostility to powerful emotions of love, does not condemn Calaf to death, but accepts him as her betrothed.

Story Narrative and Music Highlight Examples

Act I: Ancient China. The Imperial City of Peking at dawn.

The walls of ancient Peking are surmounted with the impaled heads of Princess Turandot's failed suitors.

A Mandarin announces that the Prince of Persia failed to solve Turandot's three riddles, and will be executed at moonrise. The agitated crowd seethes with savage enthusiasm, eagerly awaiting the execution.

The clashing opening chords, the bitonal dissonance of C# minor juxtaposed over D minor, provide a chilling and terrifying musical depiction of the executioner's axe falling.

Opening Chords:



Amid the turmoil and confusion of the bloodthirsty crowd, Liù, a young slave girl, is seen tending an old blind man; he is Timur, a Tatar King exiled after the Chinese vanquished his realm. Timur falls, and the fragile Liù pleads for help from the bystanders.

Calaf emerges from the crowd to help the old man. He is gratified to discover his missing father, whom he thought dead. Calaf is in mortal danger in Peking, a Tatar Prince in the land of his enemies; he travels incognito, simply known as the Unknown Prince.

Liù reveals that she has dedicated her life to serve Timur, motivated by her secret love for the Prince, who once smiled upon her in the palace courtyard: "Perchè un dì nella reggia m'hai sorriso!" ("Because one day in the royal palace, you smiled upon me!")

The barbaric crowd watches rabidly as men sharpen the Executioner's sword. They gaze anxiously at the moon, its rise the signal for the Prince of Persia's execution. They lust for an execution, but as the Prince of Persia is led to the scaffold, they become strangely compassionate to his gruesome fate and implore Turandot to be merciful and pardon him. Calaf likewise expresses indignation, cursing Turandot for her cruelty.

Princess Turandot appears on the balcony of the palace.

Turandot's motive:



Turandot is indifferent to the pleas of the crowd. With an imperious and definitive gesture, she signals immediate execution of the Prince of Persia.

Calaf becomes intoxicated and infatuated by Turandot's beauty: "O divina bellezza, meraviglia!" ("Oh what a divine and miraculous beauty!") He yearns to possess her, and explains his sudden irrational passion to Timur and Liù: "Il suo profumo è nell'aria! È nell'anima!" ("Her perfume is in the air! It has penetrated my soul!")

Calaf has become smitten and expresses his resolve and determination to challenge and solve Turandot's riddles. Neither the impassioned pleas from Timur to escape from Peking, nor the execution of the Prince of Persia — whose last cry of "Turandot" is heard just before he is beheaded — can deter Calaf. Calaf's passion has overcome reason: "Quest'è la vita, padre!" ("Father, life is here!") Calaf is undaunted in purpose, and consumed to win Turandot's love.

Turandot's Three Ministers, Ping, Pang, and Pong, attempt to discourage and dissuade Calaf, explaining that it is futile and impossible to win Turandot's diabolical contest; only death awaits him. They expound their cynical philosophy: that Turandot is merely flesh, and that he can possess 100 women just like her. They urge him to leave the butcher shop of Peking. They fail: Calaf is impassioned and intransigent in his determination.

Liù pleads with Calaf to abandon his reckless obsession: "Signore ascolta!" ("My lord, listen to me!") She explains that she has dedicated her life to serve Timur, a sacrifice motivated by her secret love for the young Prince, whose name remains engraved in her heart and soul. She fears for Calaf's life, reminding him that if he dies, they will perish in exile; Timur will lose his beloved son, and she will lose Calaf's smile.

"Signore ascolta!"

Adagio
LIÙ



Signore a - scola! Ah, signore, a - scola!
My lord, listen to me!

Calaf acknowledges his gratitude to Liù for her faith and devotion to him and his father. He tells her that if he fails to solve Turandot's riddles, she must erase thoughts of him from her memory; but she must never abandon his old father. Liù cries, and Calaf responds sympathetically and compassionately.

"Non piangere, Liù!"

A tempo rallentando
CALAF



Non piangere, Liù! Se in un lontano giorno io t'ho sor-ri - so,
Don't cry Liù! If a long time ago I smiled upon you,

Timur, Liù, and Turandot's Three Ministers again attempt to dissuade Calaf from his reckless obsession to possess Turandot, but he remains impetuous, stubborn, intransigent, and undaunted in resolve, committed to follow his destiny to win Turandot by challenging and solving her riddles.

Intoxicated with passion and confident of victory, Calaf raises the hammer and strikes the great gong three times, the official challenge to Turandot's riddles.

Turandot appears on her balcony, scornfully and derisively signaling her acceptance of his challenge.

Andante sostenuto



The crowd lusts for blood, sensing an impending execution, it erupts into a sadistic frenzy and fiendish delirium.

Act II - Scene 1: A Pavilion in the palace.

Turandot's Three Ministers, Ping, Pang, and Pong, ponder the fate of the unknown Prince who has challenged Turandot, speculating whether they should prepare a victory celebration or a funeral. They express their agitation and discontent, because Turandot's diabolical riddle contest has brought chaos to their kingdom. Their country had been peaceful for thousand of years, but it has become a butchery, its graveyards filled with Turandot's failed suitors. The Ministers pray that Turandot will soon find a lustful husband; if she is conquered by love, then peace will finally be restored to China.

The Ministers fantasize about escaping from their duties, nostalgically yearning for the solitude of their respective homes: Ping yearns for his house of bamboo in Hunan by a blue lake; Pang for the solitude of a forest near Tsiang; and Pong for his garden near Kiù.

Ping: "Ho una casa nell'Honan"

Andante mosso



Ho una ca - sa nell'Ho - nan con il suo laghet - to blù,
I have a house in Hunan with a blue lake,

The sounds of crowds and trumpets remind the Three Ministers that the Unknown Prince is about to challenge Turandot's riddles, and they dutifully depart to attend the ceremony.

Act II - Scene 2: A large public square in front of the Imperial Palace.

An enormous crowd assembles, together with court dignitaries, and the Wise men bearing scrolls that contain the answers to Turandot's riddles. The Emperor Altoom sits on his throne high above a majestic staircase. The crowd blesses their exalted Emperor and wishes him long life.



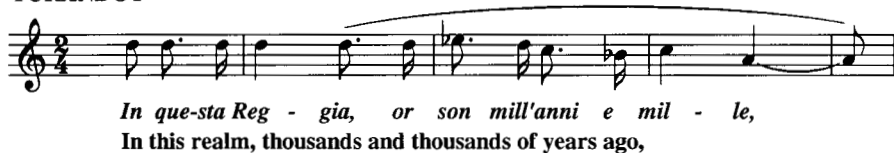
Altoom urges the Unknown Prince to abandon his quest and save his life, but the impassioned Calaf remains undaunted, unable to be deterred from his obsession.

A Mandarin reads Turandot's edict to the crowd, and then Princess Turandot appears to pose her riddles.

But beforehand, Turandot justifies her edicts, defending her hatred and obsession for vengeance against all men.

"In questa Reggia"

Molto lento
TURANDOT



Turandot explains that many years ago, a terrible crime was committed, and its memory gnaws within her soul: her ancestress, the chaste Princess Lo-u-ling, was dethroned, raped, and killed by an invading enemy. Turandot has resolved that it is her solemn duty to avenge the evil committed against her ancestress, a revenge that she achieves by challenging suitors to answer her riddles, and beheading them if they fail.

Turandot defends her duty heroically and eloquently, but as she again recalls the horrible fate of Lo-u-ling, her agitation and anguish intensify. She turns menacingly to the Unknown Prince, her voice rising in grandeur as she viciously denounces him. She warns him that she represents divine justice; his adventure is a futile challenge to her uncompromising will; and no one will ever possess her.

Mai nessun m'avrà!

"But no one will ever possess me!"

Straniero! Non tentar la fortuna! Gli enigmi sono tre, la morte è una!

"Stranger! Don't tempt fate! There are three riddles, but one death!"

Largamente

Calaf heroically contradicts Turandot by offering love, the essence of life.

No, no!, Gli enigmi sono tre, una è la vita!

“No, no! There are three riddles, but one life!”



Gli e - nig - mi so - no tre, la mor - te è u - na!
There are three enigmas, but one life!

Turandot's Riddles:

An eerie calm overcomes the crowd as Turandot prepares to pose the first riddle to the Unknown Prince.

Turandot describes a spirit that rises each night to evoke humanity's optimism, but at dawn, disappears to be reborn in the heart.

Nella cupa notte vola un fantasma iridescente. Sale e dispiega l'ale sulla nera infinita umanità! Tutto il mondo l'invoca e tutto il mondo l'implora! Ma il fantasma sparisce coll'aurora per rinascere nel cuore! Ed ogni notte nasce ed ogni giorno muore!

“An iridescent spirit flies in the dark night. It spreads its wings over humanity! The whole world invokes it, and the whole world implores it! But the spirit disappears with the dawn to be reborn in the heart! Every night it is born, and every morning it dies.”

Calaf ponders the answer to the first riddle, and then responds:

Si! Rinasce! Rinasce e in esultanza mi porta via con sè, Turandot, la Speranza!

“Yes! Reborn! Reborn and triumphantly brought me to you! Turandot: it is Hope!”

The wise men address their scrolls and confirm Calaf's answer: “Hope.” Turandot becomes disturbed and alarmed. She acknowledges that Calaf's answer is correct, but scornfully and cynically comments that hope is a fantasy, humanity's delusion.

Turandot immediately proceeds to pose the second riddle:

Guizza al pari di fiamma, e non è fiamma! È tal volta delirio! È febbre d'impeto ardore! L'inerzia lo tramuta in un languore! Se ti perdi o trapassi, si raffredda! Se sogni la conquista, avvampa, avvampa! Ha una voce che trepido tu ascolti, e del tramonto il vivido baglior!

“Though not a flame, it darts like a flame! It is a fire with intense heat! Its exertion makes it weaken! If it is lost, you become chilled! If it is conquered, it inflames you! You listen to its voice with fear, and it glows like the setting sun!

As Calaf ponders the answer to the second riddle, the Emperor and the crowd encourage him: “Do not fail, stranger, it is for your life!” Liù, anxious about the Prince’s fate, comments despairingly how he has become overpowered by love: “È per l’amore!” (It is for love!”)

Calaf replies to Turandot’s second riddle:

Sì, Principessa! Avvampa e insieme langue, se tu mi guardi, nelle vene: Il Sangue!
“Yes, Princess! It glows and at the same time languishes, you can find it in the veins: It is Blood!”

The wise men confirm the answer: “Blood.” The crowd senses the Prince’s imminent victory and encourages him. Turandot reprimands them, scornfully commanding silence. Then Turandot poses her final riddle:

Gelo che ti dà foco e dal tuo foco più gelo prende! Candida ed oscura! Se libero ti vuoi, ti fa più servo. Se per servo t'accetta, ti fa Re!

“The ice that inflames you makes you more frigid! It is dispassionate and obscure! If you want to be free from it, it makes you subservient. If you serve it and it accepts you, you become king!

Calaf nervously contemplates his answer. Turandot, having descended the majestic stairs, stands before Calaf scornfully, self-assured, and convinced that he will be unable to answer her final riddle; she derides him because he appears ashen with fear.

Suddenly Calaf rises with confidence and assurance, and heroically calls out the answer to Turandot’s final riddle: “Turandot.”

The wise men confirm that Calaf’s answer is correct. The crowd erupts into praise for the victor, the conquering hero for whom they invoke the blessings of happiness and love.

Ti sorrida la vita! Ti sorrida l'amor!
“May life smile on you! May love smile on you!”

Turandot becomes distraught and hostile, unable to face the reality and truth that her riddles have been solved: that she has been finally vanquished. She rejects Calaf’s victory and desperately pleads with the Emperor that he not force her to yield to the foreigner. But the Emperor reminds her that he is the guardian of their laws, and that her oath is sacred: Turandot must marry the stranger who has now solved her riddles.

Turandot continues to plead with her father: “I am sacred, you cannot cast me to a stranger like a slave. I will die in shame.” Defiantly, she turns to the Unknown Prince and proclaims that even though he has been victorious and solved her riddles, he will never possess her soul: “No, non sarò tua! Non voglio!” (“No, I will never be yours! It is not my will!”)

The Prince responds with equal ardor, advising Turandot that he desires her love, but that love must be her willful desire: “No, no, Principessa altera! Ti voglio ardente d’amor!” (“No, no, proud Princess, I want your love to be ardent!”)

Calaf was victorious, but he cannot melt the intransigence of the frigid Princess. Nevertheless he is undaunted, vowing to transform Turandot’s lost pride into fervent love. Courageously, he offers her a magnanimous counter-proposal: that if Turandot can solve his riddle by morning, he will free her from her sacred pledge.

Turandot does not know his name: “Il mio nome non sai” (“You do not know my name”), his words underscored with the signature “Love” music of the opera, a theme that now belongs to Calaf, and the music that will underscore Calaf’s “Nessun dorma” aria in Act III, as well the final transformation scene.

Love music:

Moderto sostenuto



Calaf proposes that if Turandot can learn his name before dawn, he will accept death by the executioner’s axe, like all the other princes who preceded him. For the moment, Turandot is free from her sacred obligation.

Calaf’s dramatic challenge to Turandot incites the crowd to excitement, their anticipation of either a celebration of love, or an execution.

The ceremonious Riddle scene closes as all praise their Emperor: “Glory to the Emperor.”

Act III - Scene 1: Palace gardens.

Music with exquisitely delicate harmonies portrays a sublime nocturnal atmosphere. The voices of Turandot’s heralds echo from the distance, proclaiming Turandot’s decree of torture and death until the name of the Unknown Prince is revealed: “Nessun dorma!” (“No one may sleep!”)

Calaf has emerged triumphant from Turandot’s grueling test of the riddles. He is equally confident that Turandot will fail to learn his name by morning. He contemplates his forthcoming victory, reflecting with triumphant pride and passion how he will transform Turandot into a woman of tenderness and unbounded love.

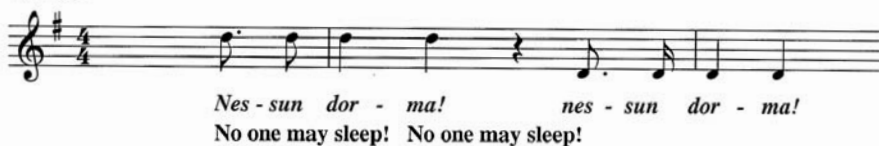
Calaf repeats the call of the heralds, “Nessun dorma,” and transforms it into his victory resolve: Calaf will conquer Turandot with the sublime mysteries of love; day will conquer night, and male will conquer female.

At first Calaf meditates on the terror Turandot has initiated in Peking. Then, in poetic words underscored by the “Love” theme, he dreams about his transformation of Turandot: “Ma il mio mistero è inchiuso in me, il nome mio nessun saprà!” (“But my mystery is locked within me, and no one will learn my name!”) He vows to unlock the mystery of love by placing a kiss on Turandot’s lips. With bold certainty and conviction, Calaf proclaims his forthcoming victory over Turandot: “All’alba vincerò!” (“At sunrise I will be victorious!”)

“Nessun dorma”

Andante sostenuto

CALAF



Calaf’s anticipation of victory is suddenly interrupted by Turandot’s Three Ministers. She has commanded them to liberate her from her dreadful fate by persuading the Unknown Prince to leave Peking. The Three Ministers offer Calaf women, money, and an escape route to freedom, but he declines, his passion to possess Turandot remaining ardent.

Timur and Liù have been captured by Turandot’s guards. Both were seen conversing with the Unknown Prince, and the guards are certain that they know his name. Turandot appears and demands that Timur disclose the Prince’s name: he is silent.

Liù fears for Timur’s safety and intervenes to declare that she alone knows the Prince’s name. Turandot orders that Liù be tortured until she reveals the Unknown Prince’s name, but she heroically resists, refusing to reveal her secret. Her steadfastness stuns and bewilders Turandot, who inquires what strange power she possesses that enables her to withstand the torture: “Chi pose tanta forza nel tuo cuore?” (“What powerful force lies in your heart?”) Liù reveals that it is the power of love: “Principessa, l’amore!” At the mention of love, Turandot momentarily hesitates, overcome by some strange sensibility that stirs within her unconscious. Nevertheless, Turandot orders the guards to tear the secret from her, which elicits the encouragement of the crowd and Ping, who calls for the Executioner.

Liù reveals that she is possessed by an impossible hope of love, but in her silence, she will save the life of the man she loves; she will be giving Calaf life and love, his victory and the love of Turandot.

Liù rises to address Turandot, predicting that her destiny is to be conquered by the flames of love.

“Tu, che di gel sei cinta”

Andantino mosso

LIÙ



Liù fears that she will yield under further torture. She seizes a dagger from one of the guards and stabs herself, sacrificing her life to save Calaf, the man she truly loves.

For Liù's tragic death, Puccini provided some of the finest musical inventions in the *Turandot* score. The music pulsates with a pathos that rises to great nobility and dignity, becoming even more exquisite through its rich and exotic harmonic coloring. In a crescendo of heightened emotion, Liù addresses her final farewell to Calaf, the man she truly yearns and desires, but with her imminent death, has lost forever: "Per non vederlo più!" ("And I will never see him again!") Liù dies.

The sad death of Liù is intensely emotional, evoking a profound sense of remorse and pity from the on-looking crowd. As all pray for forgiveness, Liù's body is carried away into the darkness of night, Timur holding her hand. Calaf reacts to her death in shock and disbelief, expressing heartfelt emotion and compassion for Liù: "Tu sei morta, o mia piccola Liù!" ("You are dead, my little Liù!") Timur denounces and curses Turandot, praying that the avenging spirits will exact justice for her cruelty and brutality.

Toscanini, at the premiere of Turandot, turned to the audience after Liù's death and said: "A questo punto, il maestro è morto" ("At this point, the maestro died.")

After Puccini composed the music for Liù's death, he laid down his pen: it was his final music; his final poetry; his final artistic expression of sorrow, sacrifice, and death.

Act III - Scene 2:

Calaf and Turandot are alone. Turandot will become transformed from inhuman to human sensibilities: the Princess of ice will be raised to sublime consciousness and discover her soul, ultimately aspiring to the nobility of love.

Calaf, reeling from the brutal horror of Liù's death, reproaches Turandot for her cruelty:

Principessa di morte! Principessa di gelo! Dal tuo tragico cielo scendi giù sulla terra. Ah! Solleva quel velo! Guarda, crudele, quel purissimo sangue che fu sparso per te!

"Princess of death! Princess of ice! Descend to earth from your tragic heaven! Ah, raise your veil! Look, cruel one, at that pure blood that was shed for you!"

Turandot commands Calaf to leave her. She must remain chaste and free, a divine, sacred, and untouchable daughter of heaven. He may lift her veil but it is a sacrilege to touch her.

Calaf cannot be deterred from his passion for Turandot: impetuously, he takes her into his arms, overcomes her resistance, and kisses her.

There is a pause, an eerie silence. A sublime calm overcomes Turandot. She seems dazed, stunned, and in an almost dream-like stupor. She asks Calaf: "What did you do to me?" Turandot, unable to understand that she has been defeated by Calaf's ardor, despairingly comments: "I am lost!"

Calaf's kiss has transformed Turandot and broken the spell of the "icy" Princess. At first, Turandot reflects on her defeat: "La mia gloria è finita!" ("My glory is finished!"), but Calaf reassures her that it has just begun: "No! Essa incomincia!" ("No! It just begins!")

Turandot again commands Calaf to leave, urging him to ask nothing more and take the mystery of his identity with him. Calaf refuses: he has triumphed and he wants to possess his victory prize. Calaf also wants Turandot to know him, and he feels compelled to reveal his name to her, no matter the fatal consequences: “My mystery? I no longer have it! You are mine! You trembled when I barely touched you! You became pale when I kissed you and you now wish me to leave! My name and life are one, I give both to you! I am Calaf, son of Timur!”

Calaf has placed his destiny at Turandot’s mercy: she now possesses his secret — his name — and she has the power to destroy him if she wishes. But Turandot has been transformed by Calaf’s kiss: she has discovered love and responds to Calaf ecstatically.

As dawn approaches, Turandot leads Calaf before the Emperor, the court, and the people, to announce her victory — and Calaf’s destiny.

She proclaims that at last she knows the stranger’s name.

Turandot turns to Calaf, shaking and trembling with incomprehensible, mysterious emotions, and then addresses her father, Emperor Altoum:

*Padre augusto, conosco il nome dello straniero!
Il suo nome è Amor!*

“August Father, I know the name of the stranger!
His name is Love.”

The jubilant crowd acclaims the two lovers, underscored with the “Love” motive: love has been victorious.

Commentary and Analysis

As early as 1919, Puccini became interested in what would become his last opera, *Turandot*, based on the German dramatist Friedrich von Schiller's (1759-1805) adaptation of a dramatized fairy tale by the eighteenth-century Italian playwright, Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806).

Gozzi was at the vanguard in reviving the old Renaissance theatrical tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*, literally "art plays," that were improvisations of standardized situations with stock characterizations: comedies, satires, parodies, and lampoons of life, politics, and social situations that actors performed in streets; because actors wore masks to avoid recognition, the art form was also called "comedy of masks."

Gozzi argued vociferously with detractors who considered the old *commedia dell'arte* a combination of monotonous and stereotyped subjects: trivial intrigues, crude farces, rigid and inhuman characterizations, and inane dialogue. Among the detractors was Carlo Goldoni, a fellow Venetian, who created more realistic comedies about the lives of everyday people. But Gozzi perceived the old *commedia dell'arte* as the most vital expression of the Italian comic spirit, a glorious two hundred year-old art form that linked contemporary theater with its splendid and glorious past.

Gozzi single-handedly revived the *commedia dell'arte* and effectively gave it a blood transfusion, his most significant theatrical achievement was the dramatized five-act fairy-tale, *Turandotte* (1762), the prominence of its three satirical "mask" characters defining its *commedia dell'arte* roots. The original legend dealing with a man winning a woman by answering her riddles most probably derived from late seventeenth and early eighteenth century translations of *The Arabian Nights*: the heroine's name seems to have Persian roots; *Turan* is the Persian name for Turkestan.

But there were other stories sharing similarities of plot: Molière's *La Princesse d'Elide*; Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Portia's three caskets mirror Turandot's three riddles; and later, the Grimm fairy tale *Der Rätsel* ("The Riddle"), that reversed the riddle challenge by compelling the suitors to propose their own riddles to the heroine.

Turandotte relates a war between the sexes, a perennial theme that underlies many myths, legends, and fairy-tales. But Gozzi's specific intention was to illustrate the righteousness and power of all-conquering true love; in the pursuit of love, Gozzi exalted the virtues of courage, loyalty, fortitude in suffering, and self-sacrifice.

Gozzi's *Turandotte* caught the imagination of Friedrich von Schiller, who adapted it in 1804 for presentation at the newly conceived German National Theatre at Weimar, a theater whose purpose was to present the best German as well as foreign plays; Schiller's play was translated back into Italian by Andrea Maffei, the librettist for Verdi's *I masnadieri* (1847) and collaborator on the revised *Macbeth* (1865). *Turandotte* would later become the subject of operas by Antonio Bassini, Puccini's first teacher at the Milan Conservatory, who composed *Turanda* (1867); Busoni (1917); and of course Puccini (1926). Earlier, Carl Maria von Weber composed an overture and incidental music titled *Turandot* (1809). Another popular Gozzi dramatic fable, *La donna serpente*, became Wagner's inspiration for his first opera, *Die Feen* (1833) ("The Fairies"), and Prokofiev's opera, *The Love of Three Oranges* (1921).

Puccini, unlike Wagner and the German Romanticists, had never tackled myths, fairy-tales, or the fantastic, even though his first opera, *Le villi*, contained abundant phantasmagoria. Nevertheless, his main problem with the *Turandotte* story concerned the proper dramatic treatment of the play's satirical elements: the three "masks," its traditional *commedia dell'arte* roles. He considered them clowns, or old-style cardboard characters, who did not directly affect the action, but instead indulged in cynical, satirical, and at times, obscene and vulgar

commentary. Puccini seriously considered eliminating these *commedia dell'arte* characters.

Nevertheless, Puccini persevered. He admonished his librettists, Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, that the Three Ministers, or “masks,” had to be transformed. Ultimately, they became ambivalent characters: a combination of philosophers and clowns, who would occasionally lighten the dramatic tension of the story with their humor, but would also become humanized characters. In the end, those farcical and satirical “mask” characters became Turandot’s Grand Chancellor (Ping), the General Purveyor (Pang), and the Chief Cook (Pong), characters possessing a magnificent blend of both humane as well as inhumane attributes.

Underlying the *Turandot* story is the classic mythological battle of the sexes, that tension and conflict in which the male (the hero Calaf) relentlessly pursues his female quest (the heroine Turandot), a woman unknown to Calaf, but whose physical beauty has infatuated and mesmerized him. Although he becomes appalled by Turandot’s inhumanity and cruelty, nothing can dissuade him from his zealous passion: Calaf becomes a victim of emotions overpowering reason.

Calaf is determined to transform Turandot’s obsessive male-hatred into a yearning for his love. As such, Calaf is an archetype representing the nobility of love. Turandot, equally archetypal, is his opposite: the woman who fears love. Calaf becomes the victor and Turandot finally capitulates with fervid passion, her transformation a powerful statement about humanity’s yearning and desire for the fulfillment of love.

Turandot is consumed by a passionate hatred and fear of men that has evolved into an uncompromising monomania for revenge. To resist conquest and subjugation by the male, she has erected three riddles, impregnable obstacles that she believes will not only protect her, but will also provide the instrument for her revenge against the male sex. Until her final transformation, Turandot is brutal and harsh, a grotesque and warped character who terrorizes with impunity. Nevertheless, until her final capitulation, Turandot is an archetypal villainess, duly qualified to be admitted into opera’s Rogues Gallery of female monsters: Richard Strauss’s *Salome* and *Elektra*, and Alban Berg’s *Lulu*.

The psychiatrist Carl Jung and the mythologist Joseph Campbell hypothesized that myths yield inner secrets arising from the collective unconscious: eternal truths that are uncorrupted by history, and incidences and events that occurred long ago, but are recalled from the subconscious through dreams.

In the traditional myth, the male embarks on an initiation rite in order to break from the mother’s bond (nature); he seeks the father (wisdom) in a progressive adventure toward maturity and reasoning power. Ultimately, he is elevated to awareness and consciousness, which enables him to overcome the threatening female.

Conversely, there are many myths that portray the maturing female realizing her vulnerability in a male-dominated world, and struggling against the male with unyielding ferocity. In traditional Amazon myths a vanquished female is forced to marry a conquering male. Ultimately, she becomes combative and belligerent, developing an unrelenting hatred of the overpowering male that transforms into an obsession for revenge.

Gozzi’s *Turandotte* provided no explanation for the heroine’s male hatred; it is a fait accompli that is never explained. Puccini’s acute dramatic instincts demanded that his story provide a more explicit justification for his heroine’s animosity and obsessive passion for revenge against males. Puccini, together with librettists Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, resolved the issue by inventing Turandot’s ancestress, Lo-u-ling, a character not mentioned in Gozzi’s *Turandotte*, or in Schiller’s adaptation of the play.

In Turandot's Act II monologue, "In questa reggia" ("In this realm"), she provides an impassioned reference to her ancestress Lo-u-ling that justifies her hatred of men: that her ancestress was raped and murdered during a Tatar invasion, and that it has become her sacred duty to avenge the cruelty exacted upon her ancestress by men.

But there is indeed another factor underlying Turandot's resentment and hatred of men: in ancient eastern cultural traditions, the male-dominated society considered women inferior beings, at times slaves, and at times merely a means for the gratification of man's sensual pleasure. Turandot does not address that abuse of women in her monologue, but it would be logical to deduce that she is defending her gender against their historical exploitation by men.

Nevertheless, Gozzi's *Turandotte* elevates the eternal battle between the sexes to a high intellectual plane: in many myths and legends, the desired female avoids conquest by vowing to yield only to the man who proves himself superior to her in a physical battle. But Gozzi's tale becomes a contest of wits rather than physical power: Turandot's three riddles.

Opera achieves its most profound dramatic power when it exploits zealous passions, an expression of heightened passions in a magnificent blend of prose that is realized through the emotive power of music. *Turandot* is saturated with fierce explosions of the passions of both love and hate, contradictions that are expressed with equal intensity.

Until Calaf's "kiss" in Act III, the opera story is a tension between Turandot's obsessive male-hatred that fiercely opposes Calaf's relentless aspirations for love: Calaf remains undaunted in his desire to bring life — through love — to Turandot, to raise her consciousness to the sublime bliss of fulfilled love. Gozzi ennobled love: an exalted virtue that represented the manifestation of humanity's most revered aspiration: as such, the pursuit of love requires courage, fortitude, and self-sacrifice; lofty virtues that Calaf embodies.

But Turandot also fears giving love as well as receiving love; she fears surrendering her soul to those essential human sensibilities of warmth and affection. Both protagonists are unrelenting, and even fanatic in their individual passions of love or hate. And Puccini's music expresses that tension with heroic grandeur and enormous power.

After Calaf succeeds in solving Turandot's three riddles, Turandot pleads with her father, the Emperor Altoum, to reverse the sacred laws and not cast his daughter to the victor as if she were a slave. Calaf responds to Turandot's fear and defeat with fervent passion, a noble expression of his desire to convert her: "No, no Principessa altera! Ti voglio ardente d'amor!" ("No, no, proud Princess! I want your love to be ardent!"), an incomparable operatic climax if the tenor opts for a heroic high C.

Calaf is magnanimous in victory and offers Turandot her freedom if she can learn his name by dawn, prompting the cruel Turandot to terrorize Peking, and later torture Liù to learn his name. But it is in the final scene of the opera in which Turandot is transformed from inhumanity to humanity: Calaf's kiss becomes a sublime, transforming magic. Turandot discovers her true soul, her seething passions of hate immediately dissolving into yearning for the glory of love.

Hate has transformed into love. Turandot proclaims to the Emperor and her people that she is happily vanquished. Indeed, she has learned the name of the Unknown Prince: "Il suo nome è Amor!" ("His name is Love!")

The original *Turandotte* was not the typical Puccini opera subject. Essentially, Puccini's muse was tragic, music that exploited pain, suffering, and despair, and the story lacked the human pathos of a tragic heroine that in the past had kindled some of his greatest musical inventions. Puccini's challenge was to transform the *Turandotte* fairy tale into a real "Puccinian"

opera, a story with elements that could kindle his tragic imagination.

Puccini and his librettists created the character of Liù, a gentle, kind, selfless, and self-sacrificing slave-girl. With Liù, Puccini appreciably enlarged both the emotional and musical scope of *Turandot*, the inspiration for what became some of his most heartfelt music, and the introduction of pathos into an ostensibly fairy-tale story.

Liù secretly loves Calaf because in the past he smiled upon her: she has dedicated and sacrificed her entire life to Calaf's father Timur in the hope that one day she would see the Prince again.

The faithful Liù dies by her own hand, fearing that under Turandot's torture she will reveal Calaf's name. Liù's unbounded love and loyalty, and the sacrifice of her life for the love of Calaf becomes the most poignant — if not dramatic — moment in the opera: a Puccinian moment. If Liù revealed Calaf's name, the brutal Turandot would surely behead Calaf. With Liù suicide, Calaf's name remains secret. As such, Liù died so that the man she loved could love another woman: so that Calaf can win Turandot.

Liù's sacrificing death endeared Puccini's *Turandot* to German Romanticists, the reason that the opera became extremely popular in Germany before it achieved worldwide acclaim. In that context, Liù was considered a soul-sister of Wagner's sacrificing "women of the future," or Goethe's "femme eterne," women whose love was so profound that they would sacrifice their lives to redeem the men they love: *The Flying Dutchman*'s Senta; *Tannhäuser*'s Elisabeth.

Nevertheless, Liù's tragic death at the conclusion of Act III, Scene 1, became anticlimactic for Puccini, frustrating and exhausting his creative imagination; her agonizing death was a dramatic finality itself. But *Turandot* concludes with an additional scene: the proclamation of the jubilant triumph of love. This was not a typical Puccinian conclusion, and the composer pondered, struggling desperately for musical inspirations. Ironically, Puccini himself died after completing the music for Liù's death. The opera was unfinished, but Puccini left musical sketches that facilitated the completion of the opera's final scene posthumously.

Casa Ricordi initiated a search for a composer to complete the opera. Francesco Zandonai was considered, but Tonio, Puccini's son, most probably rejected him because he was Tito Ricordi's protégé. Pietro Mascagni was mentioned, as well as Vincenzo Tommasini, who worked with Toscanini to complete *Nerone* (1924) after Boito's death.

Ricordi turned to Franco Alfano, a distinguished teacher and composer, whose opera *Leggenda di Sakùntala* (1921), based on an Indian play, resembled much of *Turandot*'s oriental setting and heavy orchestration. Under Toscanini's direction, Alfano finished *Turandot*, basing the music on Puccini's sketches. Other versions of Act III, Scene 2 have appeared since *Turandot*'s premiere in 1926: by the American conductor Steven Mercurio, and more recently, by the composer Luciano Berio.

For the *Turandot* premiere in 1926, Casa Ricordi decided to end the performance after Liù's death in Act III, Scene 2: the last music Puccini completed for the opera. At the premiere, Toscanini stopped the orchestra, put down his baton, and addressed the audience: "Here the opera ends, because at this point the Maestro died."

In terms of the musico-dramatic structure, *Turandot* is undoubtedly a work of the largest design Puccini had ever attempted. It is truly grand opera, a genre at that time that Italian opera composers shunned, but not Puccini; the most popular Italian opera composer in the world heroically returned to an opera genre that some considered dated.

The opening scene is sheer spectacle. A frenzied crowd awaits the execution of the recently failed Turandot suitor, the Prince of Persia. The savage crowd is bloodthirsty and ferocious, urging the Executioner's servants to sharpen their blades. Puccini relieves tension with welcome

moments of seeming tranquility: the invocation of the pale moon, a metaphor for the ashen heads of Turandot's failed suitors; the crowd's compassion for the Prince of Persia as he marches off to execution; Turandot's maids urging silence; and the eerie chorus of the dead suitors.

Calaf has seen the beautiful Princess Turandot and has become intoxicated by her beauty. Timur, the old deposed Tatar king, admonishes his impetuous son, urging him to abandon his reckless desire to challenge Turandot's Riddles. Likewise, Turandot's Three Ministers are unsuccessful in dissuading the young Prince.

Liù's plaintive plea to Calaf possesses Puccini's vintage lyricism: "Signor, ascolta!" ("Sir, Please listen!") Calaf's responds to Liù with equal passion: "Non piangere, Liù!" ("Don't cry, Liù!"), which merges seamlessly into a dramatic and savage ensemble with the bloodthirsty crowd. Calaf, undaunted and confident of victory, challenges Turandot's riddles by striking the gong three times. Turandot appears, gesturing in seeming delight that another victim awaits her. The crowd erupts into frenzied agitation, crying out "La Morte!" (Death!)

Act II, Scene 1, is the Pavilion scene featuring Turandot's Three Ministers, ostensibly a relief of the heightened, frenzied tension that closed Act I. In Puccini's characterization, the Three Ministers are humanized, their personalities alternating from mysterious to serious to gay. Ultimately, the "masks" unmask themselves: they nostalgically dream of returning to the pastoral bliss and rural solitude of home, far away from Turandot's cruel court; Ping yearns for his bamboo-surrounded house in Honan by a blue lake, Pang for his forest near Tsiang, and Pong for his garden near Kiù.

Act II, Scene 2 is the "Riddle Scene," a grand opera stage spectacle peopled by an enormous crowd. The aged Emperor makes a vain attempt to dissuade the impetuous Unknown Prince from his reckless resolve, his urging seemingly that of a father displaying compassion for a son; Turandot is apparently his only sibling.

The Mandarin reads Turandot's decree, and then Turandot arrives to pose her riddles. (In the Gozzi play, there were 91 unfortunate suitors who failed to solve Turandot's riddles.)

Turandot rises to address the crowd. "In questa reggia" is a grand and somber monologue that concludes with a test of ferocious wills between Turandot and Calaf; Turandot proclaims that the Riddles mean death; Calaf proclaims that they signify life, both voices exerting almost superhuman power in order to rise above an equally powerful orchestration.

Each of Turandot's Riddles is set to the same music, a monotony that strangely serves to dramatically compound the tension. But the underlying music of each Riddle rises chromatically, musically heightening the tension. As Calaf correctly answers each riddle, Turandot's fear of defeat becomes evident; after each correct answer she gradually descends the majestic palace steps, menacingly approaching and taunting the Unknown Prince. After Calaf's victory, Turandot betrays her promise and refuses to accept defeat, pleading with her father to rescue her from doom. But the Emperor confirms that the law is sacred, and she must accede.

Calaf magnanimously offers Turandot her freedom, but only if she can learn his name before dawn, underscored by the "Love" theme, the signature music of the opera.

Act III, Scene 1 opens with the distant voices of Turandot's heralds heard terrorizing Peking to learn the name of the Unknown Prince. Then Calaf intones "Nessun dorma," his confidence that he will be victorious by sunrise: that Turandot will not learn his name, and that he will win her love.

The nocturnal atmosphere is suddenly interrupted by the Three Ministers. They try to learn the Unknown Prince's name, invoking flattery as well as promises of women, money, and freedom, but they quickly become grave and despairing — and even threatening — when they fail to succeed with the obstinate and undaunted Unknown Prince.

Timur and Liù have been captured by Turandot's guards; they were seen with the Unknown Prince, circumstantial evidence that they surely know his name. Liù confounds Turandot by revealing that even under the threat of torture she will not reveal the Unknown Prince's name. Liù explains that it is because of love that she is silent, her "amore" underscored by Puccini's melting lyricism. Turandot is momentarily dazed, but the cruel and heartless Princess quickly regains power over her sensibilities and orders her guards to torture the slave girl until she reveals the Unknown Prince's name.

In Liù's melancholy aria, "Tu, che di gel sei cinta" ("You, wrapped in ice"), she predicts that one day Turandot will experience love. But Liù fears that she will reveal Calaf's name under torture. She unsheathes a dagger from a guard and kills herself, the sacrifice of her life so that the man she indeed loves can win the love of Turandot.

Liù's funeral procession is poignant and evocative, vintage Puccini music that is grave, somber, and heartrending, evoking profound sympathy and sadness for the tragic fate of the devoted slave-girl: it was the last music Puccini fully completed before his own death, despairing music that is the dramatic soul of the opera.

The focus of the opera transfers to Turandot, who up to this point in the drama, has been inhumane and brutally savage, a profound contrast to the loving and selfless Liù.

The final scene is Turandot's capitulation to Calaf, and in that final "Jubilation" scene Turandot and Calaf explode into heroic lyricism. Calaf has conquered Turandot with a kiss; a transformation that she admits is her discovery of the most noble of human aspirations; the glory of love.

Puccini generally composed music in harmonies that emphasized his nineteenth century roots: mostly tonal and diatonic. But in *Turandot's* score, there is much harmonic adventurism; advancements beyond any of his previous works. At times, the score contains huge dissonances, some strongly influenced by Igor Stravinsky, the composer of the innovative and pioneering *Rites of Spring*.

There are many dissonant harmonies — as well as barbaric rhythms — that were incorporated into the score in order to create specific effects: there is a harsh and crude bitonalism in the opening chords when the two unrelated keys of C-sharp major and D minor are superimposed, an effect that musically suggests the executioner's axe falling, evoking fear, terror, barbaric cruelty, and grotesqueness.

In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini incorporated many authentic Japanese songs; in *La fanciulla del West*, he likewise incorporated many authentic songs of the American West; but in both instances he also invented music in their respective idioms.

Turandot, set in ancient China, provided Puccini with another opportunity to prove his mastery at capturing exotic idioms, spicing his score with authentic Chinese music as well as self-invented oriental melodies. Many of its Chinese themes were apparently adapted from a Chinese music box belonging to an acquaintance, a diplomat who was a collector of Oriental art: there are fragments of the Chinese National anthem that underscore the music of the Three Ministers; and the authentic Chinese folksong "Mo-li-hua" ("The Jasmine Flower") that is the music identified with Princess Turandot.

The opera is scored for a huge orchestra, augmented with 23 different instruments in order to masterfully capture oriental effects: xylophone, bells, tam-tam, gong, saxophone, and carillon. As always, Puccini's orchestration possesses spectacular coloration and textures.

There is much music in the score that possesses Puccini's highly personal lyric signature: elegant, sumptuous, poignant, and lamenting musical phrases. Puccini wrote masterfully for

the voice, and his major strength was his invention of lush and arching melodic lines that possess a sensuous if not melting lyricism. Liù's first act aria "Signor ascolta" and Calaf's response, "Non piangere Liù" are vintage Puccini arias that clearly bear the composer's unique signature: elegance and profound poignancy.

For *Turandot*, Puccini invented one of the most difficult arias in the entire operatic canon: Turandot's "In questa reggia" is a grueling test for singers, in which there is a tessitura with a wide range between low to high notes, as well as leaping intervals. Indeed, the aria's many high B's and C's must resound and pierce through Puccini's huge orchestra, a moment when the score is marked abundantly with *ff*'s and *fff*'s.

The exchange between Turandot and Calaf that follows Turandot's "In questa reggia" is no less punishing. First Turandot proclaims, "No, no! Mai nessun m'avrà!" ("No, no! No one will ever possess me!"), and then Turandot and Calaf duel over the fatal significance of the riddles: Turandot proclaims, "L'enigmi sono tre, la morte è una!" ("There are three riddles, but one death!"), and Calaf responds, "L'enigmi sono tre, una è la vita" ("There are three riddles, but one life!")

Calaf's "Love" theme, first heard in Act II when he counter-challenges Turandot, is the signature music of the opera; it becomes the music that underscores the conclusion of Act II, Calaf's aria "Nessun dorma," and the final "Jubilation" scene.

Calaf's third act aria, "Nessun dorma" is a brilliant and effective ode to the nobility of love that concludes with "All'alba vincerò!" ("At sunrise, I will be victorious!"), his "vincerò" dramatically and heroically repeated three times as the music builds to its spectacular climax.

In Liù's music, Puccini bared his musical soul for the character who became the true Puccinian heroine in the opera, a woman who became the victim of her yearning for love, but must sacrifice that love to death. Much of Liù's music is composed in the pentatonic harmony of the oriental five-tone scale, but in its moments of profound pathos, it reverts to western harmony. Nevertheless, Liù's music possesses that special Puccinian signature: there is an intense emotion in each of her arias: "Signore, ascolta!" ("My lord, listen to me!"); and her addresses to Turandot just before her pathetic suicide, "Tu, che di gel sei cinta" ("You are wrapped in ice"), her revelation that she can withstand torture because she is fortified by her intense love for Calaf, a love fulfilled by dying with Calaf's secret.

Until *Turandot*, Puccini was not a composer of ambitious works on the scale of grand opera. He often admitted that he was not a creator of stage spectacle in the manner of Meyerbeer, Verdi, or Wagner, his acknowledgement that his talent and temperament were not suited to works of large design, or even portrayals of romantic heroism. Puccini's world was of *piccole cose*, small things, a naturalism that portrayed people of everyday life rather than the grandeur of supercharged passions evolving from world-shattering events: that subtle poignancy that is evoked from moments of tender human emotion and sentiment.

Turandot became Puccini's singular grand opera, a vast work certainly more complex than any previous Puccini opera. In every respect, *Turandot* is an exception and exceptional: grandiose, sumptuous, exotic settings, large crowd scenes, and heroic characters. But its grandeur is remarkably blended with romantic and poignant sentimentalism.

Turandot is the swan song from one of the world's greatest and most popular opera composers. Many consider the opera Puccini's magnum opus, a powerful drama for which he invented lush music, arching melodies, rich harmonies, and a colorful and exotic orchestration. It is a music drama par excellence, and in its lyric intensity and melodiousness, it is Italian to the core.

Turandot is an unprecedented work among Puccini's 12 operatic inventions, and a fitting opera to mark the end of the great "Golden Age of Opera" that had dominated most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries;

Turandot is an overwhelming operatic experience. It is an opera possessing unrivalled lyric beauty and intensive dramatic power. It was Puccini's last contribution to the canon of the great Italian opera tradition; no Italian opera composer since Puccini has appeared to rival him, or approach his impact on the opera stage.

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.

