

May 7, 2020 – Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*

On this week's WCPE Opera House I'm pleased to present Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, with the exciting tenor **Mario del Monaco** in the title role. Giordano's most successful and enduring work, it is historically based on the life of the French poet André Chénier (1762-1794), who was executed during the Reign of Terror for anti-revolutionary activities. The opera was premiered in Milan on March 28, 1896.

Andrea Chénier takes place in Paris during the French Revolution. At a party, the poet Chénier (**Del Monaco**) rebukes the wealthy Madeleine de Coigny (soprano **Renata Tebaldi**) for scorning love. They meet again after the Revolution and fall in love. Gérard (baritone **Ettore Bastianini**), who had loved Madeleine when he was a servant in the Coigny household, is now a revolutionary leader and denounces Chénier. To save Chénier, Madeleine offers herself to Gérard, who repents and intervenes on her lover's behalf—in vain, for Chénier is condemned to death. Madeleine bribes the jailer to let her change places with a condemned female prisoner, and she and Chénier go to death together.

Gianandrea Gavazzeni conducts the Orchestra and Chorus of the Academy of St. Cecilia, Rome in this 1957 Decca/London recording.

Here's Chénier's great Act III aria, "Come un bel dì di Maggio," sung by **Mario del Monaco**: <https://youtu.be/mjCFnlrqBuU>.

As a bonus we'll celebrate the career of American baritone **Thomas Hampson** with arias from Mozart and Rossini, and duets from Verdi's *La Traviata* (with **Anna Netrebko**) and *Don Carlos* (with **Jerry Hadley**).

Please join me next Thursday, May 14th, for a 1977 recording of Giacomo Puccini's three one-act operas known collectively as *Il Trittico*. **Renata Scotto**, **Plácido Domingo** and **Ingvar Wixell** star in *Il Tabarro*, Miss **Scotto** sings the title role in *Suor Angelica*, and **Tito Gobbi**, **Ileana Cotrubas** and Mr. **Domingo** are featured in *Gianni Schicchi*. **Lorin Maazel** conducts.

The WCPE Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the WCPE Opera House