

## May 14, 2020 – Puccini's *Il Trittico*

Enjoy three one-act operas by Giacomo Puccini on this week's Opera House. Known collectively as *Il Trittico*, they were premiered on December 14, 1918 at New York's Metropolitan Opera House. Originally, Puccini planned to write each opera to reflect different parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. However, he eventually based only *Gianni Schicchi* on a fleeting reference in the Florentine's epic poem. As a whole, *Il Trittico* is quite balanced. *Il Tabarro* is very dark and brooding, full of the violence and grit associated with verismo opera. *Suor Angelica*, Puccini's personal favorite, is an uplifting tale of religious redemption. *Gianni Schicchi* is the most popular, a comedic farce full of greed and conniving. Nowadays it's rare for all three to be mounted as a single production, but you're going to hear *Il Trittico* as Puccini conceived it.

*Il Tabarro (The Cloak)* takes place on the River Seine in late 19th-century Paris. The barge captain Michele (baritone **Ingvar Wixell**) discovers that his wife Giorgetta (soprano **Renata Scotto**) is having an affair with the young stevedore Luigi (tenor **Plácido Domingo**). Michele kills Luigi as he is about to keep a rendezvous with Giorgetta, and presents her with the body of her lover wrapped in his cloak.

*Suor Angelica (Sister Angelica)* takes place in a convent near Siena in the 17th century. Angelica (**Scotto**) has entered the convent after bearing an illegitimate child. Her aunt, the Princess (mezzo-soprano **Marilyn Horne**), visits her and asks her to renounce her share of the family estate. When Angelica asks about her child, her aunt brutally tells her that he is dead. Angelica takes poison and, as she is dying, receives a vision of the Virgin Mary bringing the child to her.

*Gianni Schicchi* takes place in Florence in 1299. Greedy relatives of the recently deceased Buoso Donati gather at his deathbed. Led by Simone (bass **Giancarlo Luccardi**) and Zita (soprano **Anna Di Stasio**), they are horrified to discover that Buoso has left his entire estate to a monastery. They ask the wily Gianni Schicchi (baritone **Tito Gobbi**), whose daughter Lauretta (soprano **Ileana Cotrubas**) loves Buoso's nephew Rinuccio (**Domingo**), to help them make a new will, giving him detailed instructions as to how everything is to be bestowed. Schicchi dresses up as Buoso and gets into his bed. When the lawyer arrives, Schicchi dictates Buoso's will, and--except for the house, which he wills to the lovers--bequeaths everything to his "good friend Gianni Schicchi."

**Lorin Maazel** conducts the New Philharmonia Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra in this 1977 CBS Masterworks recording.

From a 1981 performance, **Renata Scotto** is heard in the finale of *Suor Angelica*: <http://youtu.be/nVM63R20Fhg>.

Please join us next Thursday, May 21st, for an encore performance of Gaetano Donizetti's comic masterpiece *Don Pasquale*, hosted by the late **Al Ruocchio** (1937-2007). This 1982 recording features **Sesto Bruscantini** in the title role, **Mirella Freni** as

Norina, **Gösta Winbergh** as Ernesto, and **Leo Nucci** as Dr. Malatesta. **Riccardo Muti** 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 world-wide at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

*Bob Chapman*

**W. Robert Chapman, Host of the Opera House**