PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
OPERA & THEATER / SEK SYMPHONY
PRESENT

Puccini

Suor Angelica & Gianni Schicchi

Memorial Auditorium
February 14th & 16th
Suor Angelica
*Opera in one act*
- Suor Angelica Jeeyeun Kim
- La Zia Principessa Lisa Gerstenkorn*
- Suor Genoveva Madison Youngberg King
- La Badessa Mary Jo Harper
- La Zelatrice Katie Knoles
- La Maestra Delle Novizie Genile Dennison
- Suor Osmina Laura Wray
- Suor Dolcina Magali Chase
- La Sorella Infermiera Jung Hee Lee
- Prima Touriere Alyssa Marsh
- Seconda Touriere Laura Wray
- Una Novizia Mara Knight
- Una Conversa Kalee Woody

Gianni Schicchi
*Opera in one act*
- Gianni Schicchi Aaron Hayse
- Rinuccio Jayson Canton
- Lauretta Alyssa Marsh
- Zita Lisa Gerstenkorn*
- Gherardo Chris Tanksley
- Nella Madison Youngberg King
- Betto di Signa Anthony Nelson
- Simone Aaron Powell
- Marco Jordan Riggs
- La Ciesca Jung Hee Lee
- Spinelloccio David McTeer
- The Lawyer Cullen Messer
- Pinellino Brendan Penner
- Guccio David McTeer
- Gherardino Hannah Eckstein
  *PSU Faculty*
2013-2014 Season - American Inspiration

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this performance of the SEK Symphony. The SEK Symphony holds a proud place in Pittsburg State University’s history, and it has delivered world-class performances to our community for nearly 100 years.

Like you, I enjoy the arts and understand the important cultural role a university plays in its community.

It’s why Pittsburg State University is currently constructing a $33 million Center for the Arts on its campus.

This 90,000 square-foot structure will house two performances spaces, including a 1,100-seat performance hall, a 270-seat theatre, a grand entrance and much more.

The Center for the Arts will allow Pittsburg State to become a cultural destination for the region.

I encourage you to take a moment to drive through our campus or visit pittstate.edu/pfac to view the progress on this amazing project for yourself.

Thank you for your support of the arts, and of the SEK Symphony.

I hope you enjoy today’s performance.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Scott
President

GREETINGS FROM THE CONDUCTOR

Dear friends,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to another great performance of your very own Southeast Kansas Symphony Orchestra: ‘Future Stars.’ I want to extend a heart-felt thank you for your commitment to support the musical arts at Pittsburg State University. The Southeast Kansas Symphony Orchestra is a transformative force and a source of pride for the cultural life of the area and your presence here as audience members is vital to our success.

This is a very exciting time for the SEK Symphony, the Department of Music, and the University as we prepare for our own Center of the Arts grand opening in the fall of 2014. Whether you have been with us on previous concerts or this is your first time, I invite you to relax and enjoy tonight’s performance. Our students, faculty, and guest artists have worked together very hard to give you an unforgettable evening.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to you and to our sponsors and patrons for making this concert possible through your support and attendance to this evening’s performance. I am delighted to be part of an institution that fosters self-expression and has the unconditional support of a community passionate for the arts.

Thank you again for your presence, enjoy an evening of great music making.

Raúl A. Munguía
Music Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Pittsburg State University Opera Theater, I would like to welcome you to our performance of Puccini’s Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi. We are thrilled that you are joining us during this Valentine’s Weekend for what I know will be a magical performance by our extremely talented students and faculty members!

These two one-act operas make up the larger portion of Il Trittico or literally a triptych when translated from Italian and indeed we do see two very different sides of the same picture in these stories. In Suor Angelica there runs the theme of a mother’s love for a child that was stripped from her in infancy and in Gianni Schicchi’s the we have title character’s scheming so that his beloved daughter may have a large enough dowry to marry her fiancée Rinuccio. In both operas, unconditional and steadfast love are the catalyst for the main characters actions. Couple all of this with the beauty and grandeur of Puccini’s music and one cannot help but be swept away in the drama and comedy of it all.

Thank you all for your continued support of opera at Pittsburg State University and for joining us for what I believe will be a truly exciting performance!!
Il Trittico

Puccini’s trilogy of contrasting one-act operas was a long time in the making. The concept occurred to him around 1900, but it took the composer many years—and many detours and false starts—for all the pieces to fall into place.

In Paris, in 1912, he found the first part of his triptych: Didier Gold’s gruesome one-act play La Houppelande (The Cloak in English, Il tabarro in Italian). Captivated by the play’s gritty, realistic details and dark atmosphere, Puccini started setting it to music in 1913; but without ideas for the other two parts of his trilogy, he turned to other projects. He resumed work on Il tabarro two years later. After much delay and difficulty finding a suitable collaborator, Puccini turned to Giuseppe Adami, who finished the libretto in just two weeks. For the remaining two operas, Puccini searched far and wide for subjects, and considered a long list of collaborators. Finally, playwright Giovacchino Forzano suggested pairing Il tabarro with a tragedy and a comedy. The tragedy, Suor Angelica, was an original story by Forzano. The subject was new, and the all-female cast made it unique in the opera world. (As research, Puccini visited his sister Iginia, who was Mother Superior at the Convent of Vicopelago. When the composer played the finished score for the sisters, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.)

The last opera in the triptych, Gianni Schicchi, marked Puccini’s one and only foray into comedy. No one knows whether it was the composer or the librettist who hit on the idea of adapting a character from Dante’s Inferno into a comic opera, but when Puccini received Forzano’s libretto, he was so excited that he immediately stopped work on Suor Angelica and began setting the comedy. The character of Gianni Schicchi appears only briefly in The Inferno; the opera was actually based on an anonymous 1866 commentary on the Divine Comedy that explains how Schicchi cleverly defrauded the rich Donati family out of their inheritance.

The premiere of Il trittico, originally slated for Rome, was held up by World War I. The premiere took place instead at the Metropolitan Opera, on December 14, 1918. Though the armistice had been signed, transatlantic travel was still dangerous, and so Puccini was unable to be present. Puccini always meant for his three one-acts to be performed together, but as time wore on they were increasingly performed separately, often paired with one-act operas by other composers. Gianni Schicchi, hailed as a masterpiece from the moment of its premiere, became the most popular. Il Tabarro is also frequently excerpted; Suor Angelica, the composer’s favorite, is the most often overlooked of the trilogy. As a whole, Il trittico showcases Puccini’s unique gifts: a knack for lean storytelling, the ability to create atmospheric musical universes, and the flexibility to conjure up shock, tears, and uproarious laughter.

“Almighty God touched me with his little finger and said to me: ‘Write for the theater. Remember, only for the theater.’ And I have obeyed that supreme commandment.”

Giacomo Puccini was born on December 22, 1858 in Lucca, Italy, into a long line of church composers and organists. The expectation was that he would follow the family tradition. At 14 he became a church organist. By 16, he was composing religious music and beginning studies at a local conservatory. His life changed on a night in 1876, when he and a friend walked 13 miles to Pisa to see a performance of Verdi’s Aida. From that moment, his sole ambition was to write opera. Upon graduation from the Milan Conservatory, he entered a competition for one-act operas. His entry, Le villi, didn’t win even an honorable mention, but it was an international success. (It is very rarely performed today.) Manon Lescaut (1893) is the composer's earliest work to endure in the standard repertoire. His next three operas are his most celebrated: La bohème (1896), Tosca (1900), and Madama Butterfly (1904). Subsequent works, though less frequently produced, are of very high quality: La fanciulla del West (1910), La rondine (1917), Il trittico (1918), and Turandot. Puccini’s operas combine great stories, intense emotion, memorable characters, sweeping melodies, and exquisite harmonic coloration. The composer took great pains in the entire creative process, from finding the perfect subjects for his operas to demanding countless rewrites from his librettists (and, if he was still not satisfied, writing the text himself). He traveled extensively to supervise productions of his operas, making sure they met his exacting standards. He made some fortuitous discoveries while attending the theater abroad—for example, Madame Butterfly in London and The Girl of the Golden West in New York. The composer explored all sorts of music—traditional Chinese music for Turandot, American folksongs for
La fanciulla del West, Viennese waltzes for La rondine—looking for details to help him create a distinct sonic atmosphere for each opera. The composer had an interesting, if complicated, personal life. During his student days in Milan, he fathered a child with Elvira Gemignani, a married woman. (They were married in 1904, following her husband's death.) Puccini was a notorious philanderer; his wife a jealous woman. Suspecting him of carrying on an affair with their 21-year-old servant, Elvira drove the young woman to suicide. (An autopsy revealed that the girl had been a virgin.) The scandal caused a sensation in the press. Puccini was forced to compensate the girl's family to prevent Elvira from going to jail. Besides attractive women, Puccini's passions included hunting, smoking, mechanical devices of any kind, fast cars, and buying houses. His love for speed caused a near-fatal automobile accident just months before the Milan premiere of Madama Butterfly. It was smoking, however, that ultimately led to his death. On November 29, 1924, while in a Belgian hospital undergoing experimental radiation treatment for throat cancer, he suffered a fatal heart attack. At the time of his death, his last opera, Turandot, remained unfinished. Composer Franco Alfano was commissioned to complete the score.

Suor Angelica - Synopsis

As the opera opens, a Monitor assigns penance to two novices who have neglected their prayers; she tells the other sisters they may have a recreation period. Sister Genovisetta and a few others notice the spring sunshine finding its way into their courtyard. The Mistress of the Novices notes that on three evenings of the year, in May, the sun turns the water in the fountain golden—a sign of divine grace. Sister Genovisetta suggests that they take some of the golden water to sprinkle on the grave of Sister Bianca Rosa, who died during the past year. Though the monitor warns that personal wishes are earthly vanity, Genovisetta confesses she has one: as a former shepherdess, she would like to hold a lamb once more. Sister Dolcina, known for her sweet tooth, is headed off by the other sisters from expressing her own wish—doubtless for something to eat. When Sister Angelica denies that she wishes anything for herself, the others say she is not admitting that she has heard nothing from her family in over seven years and would like news of them. Of noble birth, she was sent to the convent for some offense. The nursing sister runs in breathless to ask for help for Sister Chiara, stung by wasps in the garden; Angelica, who is familiar with herbs, offers a remedy.

Alms Collectors enter bearing provisions they have solicited around the country side. One remarks that she saw a fine carriage draw up outside the convent. Angelica reacts anxiously, and the other sisters hope the visit will be for her.

The Abbess, alone with the Princess (Angelica's Aunt), kneels before her as she enters, but the old woman avoids her imploring glances and announces she has come on business. Angelica's sister Anna Viola is to be married, and the inheritance left by her parents, dead twenty years, has to be divided. Angelica's signature is needed on a document. The Princess alludes to Angelica's sin, which stained the family honor, and rebukes the young woman for calling her harsh and unbending. When the girl says she cannot forget the child she bore out of wedlock and begs for news of him, the Princess says he died two years ago. Angelica nearly faints but regains control as the old woman sends for the Abbess and places the document in front of her niece to sign, then leaves with no further word.

Alone, Angelica thinks of her child dying motherless; as an angel in heaven he can see her at last, and she longs to see him too. The sisters return to find her in a near-visionary state, declaring she has glimpsed the Virgin's grace and heard angelic singing. It is time for all to retire, but after they have gone, Angelica returns alone to brew some herbs, a poison to help her join her son in heaven. She addresses a simple farewell to the convent where her sisters are sleeping and embraces the cross, then takes the poison. Coming out of her exaltation, she realizes that her suicide is a sin and prays for pardon, declaring that love was her motive.

Gianni Schicchi - Synopsis

FACTS: Gianni Schicchi is set in Florence in 1299. In Dante's Inferno, Canto XXX (lines 22-44), Gianni Schicchi—who actually existed, as did the Donati family—is found with other forgers and cheats in the Eighth Circle of Hell, naked, berserk, and tearing with his teeth the flesh of the other denizens of the underworld. Part of the Donatis' great house, so coveted in the opera, still stands in Florence today, a crumbling tower on the Via del Corso, very close to the house where Dante was born in 1265 (Dante's house was reconstructed in the 19th Century and is now a museum). Dante, in fact, married Gemma Donati in 1295, five years after his beloved muse, Beatrice Portinari, died. Beatrice is buried in the Church of Santa Margherita in Florence; people still leave flowers for her today. Dante was exiled from Florence in 1301, and died in Ravenna in 1321.
STORY: Wealthy Buoso Donati has just died, and his relatives are vying to express the most grief. But the weeping and wailing soon give way to alarmed rumor-mongering, as poor-relation Betto starts to spread the news that at Signa they are saying that Buoso has left everything to the monks. Everyone turns to old Simone, Buoso's brother-in-law (who is not only the eldest, but also was once Mayor of Fucchecchio), who advises that if the will is still in that room, they might just have some hope. A frantic search begins. At last young Rinuccio, Buoso's nephew, triumphantly announces that they are saved, for he has found the will. But he will not give it up unless his aunt Zita, Buoso's cousin, promises to let him marry Lauretta, daughter of Gianni Schicchi, on the first of May. Zita doesn't give a damn whom he marries, as long as the will leaves them all well off. Rinuccio whispers to little Gherardino to run and get Gianni Schicchi and Lauretta. Zita solemnly opens the will, prompting more grief — and whispered greed for Buoso's treasures: the house, the mills at Signa, and the mule. Simone tenderly lights candles for the deceased. Together they silently read the will, soon giving way to cries of dismay. Simone blows out the candles. It's true: Buoso has left everything to the monks of Santa Reparata. They bitterly imagine all the luxuries the monks will enjoy, all the while laughing at the Donatis. The laughter ends in tears. Zita can't believe that when Buoso died, they'd be crying real tears. Suddenly, an idea occurs to them: perhaps there is a way to get around the will. Once again they ask Simone's advice, but Rinuccio chimes in with the suggestion that Gianni Schicchi can help them. Zita will not hear of it. But Gherardino returns with the news that Schicchi is on his way. The relatives all attack Rinuccio for his presumption, and Gherardino gets a spanking from his father, Gherardo. Simone and Zita strongly object to a marriage between a Donati and the daughter of an upstart like Schicchi. But Rinuccio points out that clever men like Schicchi (and Arnolfo and Giotto and the Medici), "new people" from the outskirts of the city, are and will continue to be the making of Florence ("Firenze è come un albero fiorito"). Schicchi arrives, Lauretta in tow. He cynically comments under this breath on how downcast the Donatis look as Lauretta and Rinuccio whisper together lovingly. Schicchi, in best undertaker tone, expresses his sorrow for the family's great loss. Gherardo retorts that the loss is great indeed. Schicchi points out that they'll have the comfort of the inheritance, prompting Zita to bitterly inform him that they've been disinherited, and will he please remove himself and his daughter, as she will not have her nephew marry a girl without a dowry. Lauretta and Rinuccio plaintively cry out that they love each other, but neither Schicchi nor Zita will hear it. A shouting match ensues between Schicchi and Zita as they attempt to pull the lovers apart. The relatives urge them to think of the will instead. Rinuccio begs Schicchi to help them find a way to save the inheritance, but he absolutely refuses. Lauretta then pleads with her father, threatening to throw herself in the Arno if she cannot marry the man she loves ("O mio babbino caro"). The doting Schicchi cannot resist her. He studies the will and pronounces that there's nothing to be done. But then an idea comes to him. He sends Lauretta out of the room (alone), and then questions the relatives: Does anyone else know that Buoso is dead? No one. He then orders Gherardo and another of Buoso's nephews, Marco, to remove Buoso's body to another room, and orders the women to re-make the bed. As they comply, still confused as to Schicchi's intentions, there is a knock at the door. He warns them to make sure no one comes in, and to tell whoever it is that Buoso is better and is resting. Schicchi hides behind the bed. Maestro Spinelloccio, the doctor, has arrived. The relatives hastily inform him that Buoso is better. They stop him from coming in, saying that Buoso is resting. Suddenly a strange voice issues from the bed, asking the doctor to come back later. The doctor agrees and asks if he's feeling better. "I've risen from the dead," says the fake Buoso, and the doctor goes away satisfied and pluming himself on his medical ability, acquired from the Bologna Medical School. Schicchi asks them how the voice sounded — great, they say. Schicchi is triumphant, but they still don't understand. He explains what they must do: run to the notary, tell him Buoso is dying and wants to make his will, bring the parchment and come quickly. The notary arrives, the room is dark, and in the bed he sees the figure of Buoso, complete with cap and chin strap — except that the figure will be Schicchi, impersonating Buoso, and making the will. It is the greatest deception he has ever conjured up. The relatives rush to kiss and embrace him and each other. Zita sends Rinuccio for the notary. Then they get down to the business of dividing up the spoils. The cash will be split equally. Simone wants the farms at Fucechcio; Zita, those at Figline; Betto, those at Prato. Gherardo and his wife, Nella, want the lands at Empoli; Marco and his wife, La Ciesca, those at Quintole. Zita points out that what's left are the mule, the house, and the mills at Signa — the most valuable things. Simone pretends to understand that, because he's the eldest and was Mayor of Fucechcio, they want to give them to him. This prompts more bickering among the relatives as Schicchi mocks them. The quarrel comes to a halt when a funeral bell tolls. They immediately conclude that the news of Buoso's death has somehow gotten out. Gherardo rushes out to see, and soon returns with the happy news that the captain's servant has had an accident. They gaily pray that he may rest in peace.
Simone suggests that they leave the matter of the house, the mule, and the mills to Schicchi's discretion. As Zita, Nella, and La Ciesca begin to dress him in Buoso's nightclothes, the bribery begins. Each of them secretly offers Schicchi increasingly large sums if he will leave the goodbyes to him or her. He agrees every time. The women laud Schicchi as their savior. His disguise is pronounced perfect, and now it's off to bed. First, however, Schicchi gives them warning: the law in Florence is that whoever forges a will gets his hand cut off and is exiled ("Addio Firenze"). Another knock interrupts this sobering moment. Schicchi scrambles into bed. Rinuccio announces the arrival of the notary, Ser Amantino di Nicolaio, and the witnesses, Guccio the dyer and Pinellino the cobbler. "Buoso" greets them gratefully, prompting Pinellino to weep. "Buoso" explains that he would have written out the will himself, but he suffers from palsy, which he demonstrates by wildly shaking his hands. The relatives and the notary pity him. The notary pompously reads the Latin preamble, "Buoso" interrupting to revoke all prior wills (which the relatives consider quite prudent). The notary asks about funeral expenses; "Buoso" wants them to spend no more than two florins, prompting the relatives to praise his modesty. Now "Buoso" pronounces his legacy to the monks and to Santa Reparata: only five lire. The relatives are beside themselves with joy, but the notary is a bit skeptical. "Buoso" explains that if he left too much to charity, people would say that it was dirty money. "Buoso" now keeps his promises as to the cash in hand and the various farms and lands. Now it comes down to the mule, the house, and the mills — each of which he leaves to his dear friend Gianni Schicchi. The horrified relatives cannot fully express their fury (keeping in mind the penalty for forging a will), but their grumbling forces the outraged notary to silence them. "Buoso" orders Zita to pay the fees for the notary and the witnesses, who depart in sorrow, urging the fuming relatives to take courage. The relatives turn on Schicchi in a rage and begin to loot the place before he chases them out. Meanwhile, Rinuccio and Lauretta enter and tenderly recall how they shared their first kiss at Fiesole, with Florence seeming like a paradise in the distance. Schicchi returns, carrying some of the loot he managed to grab back from the Donatis. Moved at the sight of the happy lovers, he turns to the audience and asks, "Tell me, ladies and gentlemen, if Buoso's money could end up better than this? For this bit of fun, they stuck me in hell.... and so be it. But with the permission of the great father Dante, if this evening you've been amused, grant me" — he claps — "extenuating circumstances." He bows gracefully as the curtain comes down.
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