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University Opera with University Symphony Orchestra - Gianni Schicchi and Buoso's Ghost

John J. Cali School of Music

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA

PRESENTS

A PROGRAM OF TWO ONE-ACT OPERAS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28 AT 8PM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29 AT 3PM

ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

GIANNI SCHICCHI

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Premiere: New York, Metropolitan Opera, December 14, 1918

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

BUOSO'S GHOST

Music & Libretto by Michael Ching

Based on Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*

Premiere: Pittsburgh, 1996

Sung in English with English supertitles

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA

Anna Rebek, *Director and Staging*

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer, *Conductor*

Jonathan Koppell

President

Junius J. Gonzales

Provost and Senior Vice President
for Academic Affairs

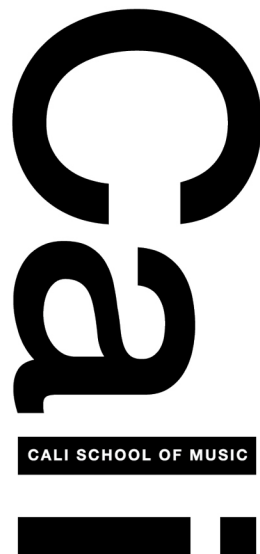
Daniel Gurskis

Dean, College of the Arts

Anthony Mazzocchi

Director

John J. Cali School of Music



MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
OPERA GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES

Co-Sponsors

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**MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY**

John J. Cali School of Music

MUSICAL PREPARATION

Victoria Schwartzman, Music Director and Répétiteur

William Hobbs, Assistant Conductor and Répétiteur

ROLE COACHES

William Hobbs

Mory Ortman

LeAnn Overton

Victoria Schwartzman

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Concept and Director: Anna Rebek

Head of Artistic Operations/Opera: Karen Driscoll

Production Manager: Phil Clifford

Scenic Design: Maamoun Tobbo

Technical Director: Jeffrey Rosolen

Lighting Design: Benjamin Weill

Costume Design: Heather Freedman

Costume Production Assistant: Maggie Raywood

Props & Mask Design: Anna Rebek and Yvonne Campos

Production Stage Manager: Mitchell Hildebrand

Assistant Stage Manager: Eponine Myles

Surtitled Caller/Designer: LeAnn Overton

Title Writer (*Gianni Schicchi*): Jeffrey Gall

Opera Graduate Assistant: Olivia Gasper

PROGRAM

Total running time: 2 hours, with one intermission

CHARACTER	SATURDAY CAST	SUNDAY CAST
Gianni Schicchi <i>(cover)</i>	Seungchan Hong <i>Steven Condy</i>	Seungchan Hong <i>Steven Condy</i>
Lauretta <i>(cover)</i>	Clara Luz Hernandez Iranzo <i>So Yeon Kim</i>	Yun Xie <i>So Yeon Kim</i>
Zita	Weiyu Zhang	Inhye Choi
Rinuccio	Eric Sebek	Doohyun Yoon
Gherardo	Christos Harakas	Mitchell Hernandez
Nella	GaDa Lambert	Taylor Amato
Gherardino	Runyu Feng	Jenna Halvorsen
Betto	William Amory	Matt Delavan
Simone	Chisom Maduakor	Omar Abdallah
Marco	Jairo Santana-Figueroa	Jairo Santana-Figueroa
La Ciesca <i>(cover)</i>	Helena Waterous <i>Churan Qiu</i>	Olivia Gasper <i>Churan Qiu</i>
Maestro Spinelloccio/ Amantio di Nicolao	Gabrielle Guida	Churan Qiu
Pinellino	Diogo Ramirez	Rashaun Ashley
Buoso's Corpo Morto	Rashaun Ashley	Diogo Ramirez
Buoso's Ghost: Additional cast		
Magistrate	Gabrielle Guida	Churan Qiu
Nun 1	Mackenzie McCarthy	Mackenzie McCarthy
Nun 2	Mia Grizzuti	Mia Grizzuti

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer, *conductor*

Violin I

Jonathan Frelix
Dana Ryan
Adrianna Sewell

Violin II

Daniella Renteria
Jaiden Mahone
Etleva Vatoci

Viola

Jacob Seabrook
Rachel O'Connor
Noah Stevens

Cello

Randy León
Alonso J Restrepo Cardozo

Bass

JP Bernabe
Ryan Chamberlain

Flute

Michelle Zarco
Nava Payandeh

Oboe

Olivia Dorschel

Clarinet

Colin Merkovsky
Matthew Rosen

Bassoon

Ben Adelberg

Horn

Annika Ross
Sheldon Senek

Trumpet

Bryce Grier
Emmanuel Reyes

Trombone

Matthew Veal

Percussion

Max Tripodi
Angela Gibilisco
Alejandro Arbelaez

Harp

Esther Chung

Piano/Celesta

Victoria Schwartzman

SYNOPSSES

GIANNI SCHICCHI

The elite Donati family of medieval Florence eagerly gather around their rich patriarch, Buoso Donati, as he takes his final breath. When a rumor is shared that Buoso might have left his fortune to the church, suddenly the tears run dry. The Donati tear the room apart looking for the will- only to discover that they are indeed to inherit nothing. The young Rinuccio suggests they ask the father of his beloved Lauretta for help, since he is a man of many talents (not all of them legal), Gianni Schicchi.

The Donati family scoff at the idea of a lowly merchant being of any use, until Gianni Schicchi reveals a secret talent for impersonating the voice of the freshly dead Buoso Donati. A devious plan is set in motion. Schicchi, disguised as Buoso, will call the notary back and change the will to favor the grateful Donati. In exchange, both parties agree to the marriage between his daughter Lauretta, and their own Rinuccio. But when it comes down to the three finest possessions- Gianni Schicchi has one last trick up his borrowed sleeve. The Donati leave furious, but the young lovers happily have each other.

BUOSO'S GHOST

Picking up moments after we left off, the young lovers Lauretta and Rinuccio exchange vows of commitment. When Schicchi urges them off to go buy a ring, we see him alone for the first time in his new home. While making friends with a little pet finch, he discovers a dark secret behind the death of Buoso. Schicchi's imagination runs wild, picturing the evil Donati enacting their ugly deed. If the Donati are capable of such deception, they will come back for revenge on Schicchi too.

As night falls an ominous storm brews, and in the dark the Donati steal into the house, ready to accuse Schicchi of their own treachery. They invite the imposing Magistrate to hold court, but when proof of their treachery is made known, the Donati change their tune. Desperate to avoid their own demise, they

beg Schicchi to find a quick solution to satisfy the Magistrate. Schicchi ingeniously manages to do their bidding and also invokes the ghost of Buoso to terrify them from ever coming back.

DIRECTOR'S PROGRAM NOTES

Giacomo Puccini

Puccini is an icon in the opera world. Along with Mozart and Verdi, Puccini's operas are most widely performed around the world today including *La Bohème*, *Turandot* and *Tosca*.

Born in 1858, Puccini's life wrapped over the turn of the last century and spanned major shifts in war, technology, and national identity. He lived a life of dramatic extremes: he was pressured to carry the musical torch of his family at a young age, he was a starving artist as a music student in Milan, he was a master of practical jokes, and enjoyed extreme success from his works later in life. But one of the most relatable features of his oeuvre was his earthy sense of humanity; he loved to expose our flaws and darker impulses, and reveled in the great embarrassment of being human.

A buffet of our inanity is on display in his works: we order expensively even with a dry wallet (*La Bohème*), we rage against our lovers when we're scared we don't deserve them (*Tosca*), we lie and cheat for money (*Gianni Schicchi*), we look down on others (*Turandot*), we're ridiculous when in love (most), and we're messy and driven by base desires (*La Fanciulla del West*). Puccini was unreserved about setting to music the unfiltered emotional excesses we experience, and his music draws broad, bold strokes to match.

While many of his contemporary composers insisted on writing their own libretti, Puccini always employed a librettist and demanded many drafts of them, seeking a perfect marriage between the rhythms of spoken words and the flow of music. Many composers secluded themselves to write their

masterpieces, but Puccini famously worked late at night and held card games in the same room with his piano. The merry company, the rhythm of speech and tones of friends gathering - this was the kind of musical truth he was after. His stories and music were influenced by the “verismo” style at the time, which aimed to show people, and life, as they really are.

Gianni Schicchi is Puccini’s only comic opera, and was originally written as the third opera in a series of 3 one acts called “Il Trittico”. Both Gianni Schicchi and Buoso Donati were historical figures, and this opera is based on some verses in Dante’s *Inferno*. Dante himself was married to a descendant of the Donati family, and in his exploration of hell he sees Schicchi wrestling on a level of hell reserved for those who commit illegal impersonation.

Things to listen for in Gianni Schicchi

Gianni Schicchi has carved its place in opera repertoire as a comedic jewel. Puccini borrowed from many sources-and used a more “through-composed” style that was influenced by French and German opera. You’ll notice that there’s only 3 arias in the entire hour of music; each of the young lovers have their own aria, and Schicchi himself also has one. The rest is a bouncy feast of ensemble-driven themes woven together like a medieval tapestry.

Lament Theme

Moments after the death of their patriarch, Buoso Donati, the rest of the Donati gather around his bed. Puccini writes an exaggerated theme of moaning lament, but the short, stilted chords indicate a superficial performance of grief, instead of a genuine one. This theme will twist, curve and transform over the course of the evening, and its development continually adds new layers of meaning.

Rinuccio’s Aria - “Firenze è come un albero fiorito”

Rinuccio tries to convince the prejudiced Donati family that it is the immigrant country folk like Schicchi that

have enriched Florence into a culturally “blossoming tree”. He hails this group for establishing a merchant class, having street smarts, and building the impressive skyline. Puccini borrows a swinging rhythm of a peasant song to give Rinuccio’s aria a sweetness and optimism that match his inclusive spirit.

Lauretta’s Aria - “O mio babbino caro”

Arguably one of the most recognizable arias of all time, this melody has made its way into our collective consciousness. The young Lauretta, Gianni Schicchi’s daughter, has been thwarted in her wish to marry Rinuccio, and in desperation begs her father to try anything to save her dream. Arias are born of emotional outpouring, and with its lyrical simplicity, cuts right to our core as only a begging daughter can. The sweet musical theme that begins the piece in her voice ends up restated in a thunderous orchestral version, which pulls on even the stiffest heartstrings. Puccini used this aria form throughout his career with great mastery and success.

Ladies Trio- “Spogliati bambolino”

As quick as they were to spurn Schicchi at the beginning, the three Donati ladies, Zita, Nella and La Ciesca transform into a dulcet trio of sirens when Schicchi has their inheritance in his hands. While helping Schicchi change into the dead Buoso’s nightclothes, this lady trio lulls him into bed with seductive and beguiling harmonies.

Michael Ching

Michael Ching is a composer, songwriter, conductor, and former arts administrator. From 1992 through 2010, Mr. Ching served as Artistic Director of Opera Memphis, and frequently as General Director, too. He has served as guest conductor with a variety of companies including the Hawaii Opera Theater, Nashville Opera, and Amarillo Opera and is currently the Music Director of Nickel City Opera in greater Buffalo, New York. Ching began his career as a National Opera Institute apprentice 1980-1981 at the Houston Grand Opera Studio, where he was involved in the company’s productions and continued his composition studies with composer

Carlisle Floyd. From 1981–1985 he held increasingly responsible positions at the Greater Miami Opera/ Florida Grand Opera. He subsequently held conductor and executive director positions at venues including Texas Opera Theatre, Chautauqua Opera, and Triangle Music Theater.

Things to Listen for in Buoso's Ghost

Ching's studies with Carlisle Floyd clearly influenced his operatic compositions, as Floyd is commonly regarded as the "Father of American opera". If Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* relates to a Medieval tapestry, Ching's *Buoso's Ghost* musically resembles an American quilt. Drawing from influences from musical forms as wide ranging as gospel, western, Sondheim, while also paying homage to the main threads in Puccini's score. Including allusions to Mozart, Shostakovich, and even an Italian line from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, Ching creates a rhythmically hypnotic and charming sequel.

Lover's Duet "We are free to be married"

Lullaby "Rockaby Buoso"

Western "Addio Firenze"

BIOGRAPHIES BY QR CODE



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