

IL TRITTICO

Il Trittico is the name given to three one-act Puccini operas, captured here in performance at La Scala. The first, *Il Tabarro* is set in Paris at the turn of the 20th century, is concerned with Michele, a barge owner, and his wife Giorgetta. Michele suspects that Giorgetta is being unfaithful to him with one of the stevedores who work nearby. On the barge one night, he speaks tenderly to her of their past, begging her to help him recapture their past happiness, but she spurns him and goes inside the barge. Michele's suspicions are then confirmed when Luigi, his wife's lover, appears. Michele kills Luigi, then forces his wife to confront the dead body. The second, *Suor Angelica*, is set at a convent in 17th-century Italy. Sister Angelica was placed into the convent by her family seven years ago, as punishment for having a child out of wedlock. Her aunt pays a rare visit to her and coldly tells her that the child is now dead. Filled with despair, Angelica takes poison, realizing too late that by doing so she risks eternal damnation -- and eternal separation from her beloved child. She feverishly prays to the Madonna, and as the opera ends, Angelica's child appears to usher her into heaven. *Gianni Schicchi* is set in Florence in the late 1200s and concerns a group of greedy relatives awaiting the death of the enormously wealthy Buoso Donati. Afraid that the old man has left his fortune to a monastery, a plan is concocted whereby the cunning but lowly Gianni Schicchi will impersonate the dying man and create a new will that solidly favors the gathered relatives. Schicchi tricks the relatives and arranges for all the money to come to him instead, leaving the way free for Donati's young and honorable relative Rinuccio to marry Schicchi's daughter. ~

SUOR ANGELICA

Angelica lives the convent life of a pious nun, banished there seven years before by her noble family for the disgrace she brought upon them with the birth of her illegitimate son. Since then, she has lived a completely closeted life, without contact with the outside world. Unexpectedly one day, her aunt, a cold and austere woman, arrives in order to make sure Angelica signs away her rights to the family fortune because of her fall from grace. In passing, she mentions that Angelica's son, about whom the nun has thought every day for seven years, had died two years before. In her grief, Angelica drinks a poisoned potion, and realizing her sin of self-destruction, calls to the Virgin Mary to deliver her into salvation. As the other sisters look on, the Madonna appears with a small child, bathed in radiant light, and together they lead Angelica to Paradise.

GIANNI SCHICCHI

Buoso Donati, a rich Florentine, has died. As his body, still warm, lies on his bed, his relatives fret about the contents of his will, fearing that he left nothing to them. They scramble around the house, looking for the precious document. Young Rinuccio is the one to find it, and before he hands it over to his Aunt Zita, begs her permission to marry his sweetheart, Lauretta, daughter of Gianni Schicchi. His aunt replies that if they all receive their inheritance, he can marry whomever he likes. The contents of the will confirm their suspicions: Donati has left everything to a monastery. Rinuccio suggests calling for Schicchi, whose inventive ideas can always be counted upon to avert a crisis. Schicchi arrives with Lauretta, who pleads with her father to find a way to help the family claim the inheritance so that she and Rinuccio can marry. Schicchi agrees, and dreams up a scheme: he will impersonate Donati on his deathbed, call for the Notary and dictate a new will leaving the dead man's estate to his family. The relatives are thrilled, and set about to prepare the scene. The Notary arrives, and Schicchi, alias Donati, dictates the new will, bequeathing everything to himself! The mortified family are forced to remain silent as they are implicated in a grave crime. As soon as the Notary leaves, an outrage ensues, and Schicchi chases the family out of what is now his own house. The young lovers, Lauretta and Rinuccio remain, dreaming of their future happiness together, while Gianni Schicchi turns to the audience to justify his actions and beg their indulgence.

IL TABARRO

Setting: Paris, 1910

The barge owner Michele and his wife, Giorgetta, watch workmen unload their craft as it is moored to a dock on the Seine. She suggests Michele offer the men drinks but rebuffs his affections. Luigi, Tinca and Talpa accept the drinks and encourage an organ grinder to play. Tinca dances with Giorgetta but is so clumsy that Luigi pushes her away to dance with her himself. When Michele returns, the dancing immediately ends. Giorgetta asks Michele about tomorrow's schedule and he tells her that they will be leaving for Rouen with Luigi, Tinca and Talpa.

Frugola, Talpa's wife, appears with a bag of rags and a morsel for her cat. The stevedores have finished their work and Tinca goes off to drown his sorrows. Luigi sings of the miserable life of a stevedore. Frugola and Talpa dream of a cottage in the country and Giorgetta dreams of returning to the Parisian suburb where she grew up. Eventually, Giorgetta and Luigi are left alone and reveal they are lovers. Michele reappears and Luigi asks to be left at Rouen, but Michele persuades him to stay. Michele retires and Giorgetta and Luigi arrange to meet later. Their signal is a lighted match.

Michele comes on deck and tries to rekindle his wife's affections, reminding her of their now-dead child and how he used to keep them all warm in his cloak. He asks Giorgetta why she never sleeps and she says the air in the cabin is stifling. Michele tries again to embrace her, but she pushes him away.

Michele suspects Giorgetta is unfaithful but wonders with whom. As he ponders, he takes out his pipe and lights it. Seeing the signal, Luigi comes aboard. Michele grabs him by the throat and forces a confession, then strangles Luigi, wrapping the body in his cloak. Giorgetta returns to the deck and spots Michele's cloak. He opens it to reveal Luigi's body.