

Rinuccio announces arrival of the notary, Amantio di Nicolao, the witnesses, Guccio and Pinellino. Schicchi (as Buoso) greets them and explains that he cannot write his will himself because he suffers from palsy. As the notary reads the Latin preamble, "Buoso" revokes all previous wills, requests that his funeral expenses be modest, and pronounces his legacy to the monks--five lire. The family is overjoyed, but the notary is skeptical so "Buoso" explains that if he left too much to charity, people would think it was dirty money. He now keeps his promises as to the cash and land, but when it comes to the mule, the house, and the mills, he leaves each to his dear friend, Gianni Schicchi. The family is horrified, but remembers the penalty for forgery, so they only grumble. After silencing the relatives, the notary and witnesses leave in sorrow.

After the notary departs, the family turns on Schicchi and begin to loot the house before he can chase them out. Meanwhile, Lauretta and Rinuccio recall their first kiss. When Schicchi returns with the loot he took back from the Donatis, he is moved by 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 extenuating circumstances." He bows gracefully as the curtain drops.

East Carolina University *School of Music Opera Theatre*
presents

Gian Carlo Menotti's
**The Old Maid
and the Thief**

and

Giacomo Puccini's
Gianni Schicchi



March 29, 30 and April 1 at 7:00 p.m.
April 1, 2007 at 2:00 p.m.
A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall

The Old Maid and the Thief

A Grotesque Opera in 14 scenes

By Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

The Cast

Miss Todd, mezzo-soprano, a middle aged spinster	Jennifer Vickers, Deborah Nansteel
Laetitia, soprano, her maid	Allison Jones, Sarah Davis
Miss Pinkerton, soprano, neighbor of Miss Todd	Melissa Dull, Lauren Mazzola
Bob, baritone, a free-thinking vagabond	Fred Rice, Matthew Gillette
An Italian Immigrant Liquor Store Owner	Ali Cleland

The action takes place in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Time: 1939

The Old Maid and the Thief was originally conceived as a Radio-Opera and broadcast as World Premiere by the National Broadcasting Company, April 22, 1939. The first stage performance was by the Philadelphia Opera Company, February 11, 1941.

Production Team

Music Director/Conductor	John O'Brien
Stage Director	John Kramar
Costume Design	Jeff Phipps
Lighting	Michael LaRoche
Assistant to the Director	Shelley Maddox
Set Design	John Kramar
Publicity	Michael Crane

The Orchestra

VIOLIN I	CELLO
Gayane Grigoryan, concertmaster	Hovhannes Alanakyan
Elizabeth Upson	Marina Moran
Laura Eis	Kathryn York
VIOLIN II	BASS
Elizabeth Devereux	Ryan Shoaf, principal
Joy Schaub	Shawn Simon
Andrew Mínguez	HORN
VIOLA	David Lewis, principal
Myra Yeung, principal	Tremayne Smith
Anna Stainback	TRUMPET
FLUTE	James Old, principal
Jessica Lim, principal	Christopher Neverve
PICCOLO	TROMBONE
Rachael Arnold	Jesse Rackley, principal

stifled rage, “we will see the friars fattening themselves on the wealth of the Donati’s!” The other relatives are outraged that the friars will feast while they go hungry. Rinuccio’s hope of happiness is now crushed, and the family moves madly around the room cursing and breaking into fits of sardonic laughter. After the climax of their frenzy, they sink from exhaustion, some begin to cry. “Who would have thought that when Buoso went to the cemetery we would be crying real tears?” comments Zita bitterly.

Then they have a thought: what if they were able to suppress the will? The family turns to Simone for advice, but he gestures that it is hopeless. Suddenly, another idea comes to them. They want to find a way to get around the will. Once again, they ask Simone’s advice, but before he can answer Rinuccio suggests that Gianni Schicchi might be able to help them. However, Zita will not hear of it. When Gherardino returns with news that Schicchi is coming, he gets a spanking from his father and the whole family attacks Rinuccio for his presumptuous behavior. Simone and Zita strongly disapprove of a marriage between a Donati and the daughter of a mignon like Schicchi. Schicchi arrives with Lauretta and he cynically comments about the Donati family’s reaction to the loving words between Lauretta and Rinuccio. Schicchi expresses his sorrow for the family’s loss and points out the comfort they will have in the inheritance. Zita then informs him of their dis-inheritance and asks him to take Lauretta and leave since he has no dowry for them. Lauretta and Rinuccio are devastated and their outcries prompt a shouting match between Schicchi and Zita. Rinuccio begs Schicchi to help them find a way to save the inheritance, but he is not moved to do so until Lauretta pleads with him, threatening to throw herself in the Arno if she cannot marry the man she loves. (“O mio babbino caro”)

Schicchi cannot resist his daughter’s request, so he formulates an idea. He sends Lauretta away and then questions the relatives as to who knows of Buoso’s death. When he finds that no one does, he orders the men to take Buoso’s body to another room and the women to remake the bed. Though they comply, the family is quite confused. When there is a knock at the door, Buoso warns not to allow anyone in. He then hides behind the bed as the family talks with Doctor Spinelloccio. They tell him that Buoso is feeling better, but is resting. A strange voice comes from the bed asking the doctor to return later. He agrees, and asks Buoso if he is feeling better. The fake Buoso answers, “I’ve risen from the dead.” Schicchi then explains his plan to the befuddled family. He explains what they must do: run to the notary, tell him that Buoso is dying and wants to make his will so to bring the parchment and come quickly. When 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 will be his greatest deception. Zita sends Rinuccio for the notary. Then the family begins to decide how the riches will be divided which prompts a squabble. It ends at the sound of the funeral bell. They all assume that the news of Buoso’s death has been leaked. Gherardo runs to see who has died and returns with news that it is the captain’s servant. They happily pray that he will rest in peace as they wait for the notary to arrive. At this point, the bribery begins. Each relative secretly offers Schicchi large sums to leave everything to him or her. Every time, he agrees and warns them that the laws in Florence state that forgers will have their hand cut off and be exiled as a way to make sure they all keep the secret. At the next knock of the door, Schicchi scrambles into the bed and

The Orchestra

VIOLIN I

Leonardo Perez, concertmaster
Elizabeth York
Alicia Arnold
Ashley Dyer
Amanda Krauss

Joshua Doggett

VIOLIN II

Rachel Harmatuk, principal
Raoul Mata
Micaela Fruend
Christina Haake

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Erin Munnely, principal
Kristen Shaheen

CLARINET

Tracy Jones, principal
Rissa Young

HORN

Keyondra Price, principal
Jason Pulley

TIMPANI/PERCUSSION

Grayson Woodcock principal
Alex Smith

CELESTE

Alex Smith

VIOLA

Szee-won Lee, principal
Byron Watkins
Carolyn Dunn
Joseph Walker

CELLO

Weipeng Liu, principal
Laura Booth

Deborah Ramos

Stephen Duran

BASS

Richard Jordon, principal
Adrea Reavis

OBOE/ENGLISH HORN

Kelly Longmire, principal

BASSOON/CONTRABASSOON

Shrieka Gilliard, principal

TRUMPET

Alex Jackson, principal

Keith Phillips

TROMBONE

Adam Fussell, principal

HARP

John O'Brien

OBOE/ENGLISH HORN

James Clark

CLARINET

Andy Paolantonio, principal

BASSOON/CONTRABASSOON

Cathryn Gaylord, principal

TIMPANI/PERCUSSION

Matthew Landon, principal

PIANO

Catherine Garner

A note from the Director

I vividly remember one morning in early September 1987, when I arrived for my first day of classes at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. After bounding up its marble staircase, I struggled with a massive set of iron doors only to be verbally accosted by the acid tongue of Curtis' receptionist – the meddling Mrs. Schactel. “You have an audition for Gian Carlo Menotti at 11:00! Sing an Italian aria, a song in English, and look presentable!” Having just arrived in Philadelphia from Rochester, NY, I literally flew up Walnut Street to my new apartment, threw on my only suit, ripped open boxes of scores to find Puccini's *Edgar* and a tattered volume of songs by Charles Ives. In less than an hour I was back in Curtis' grotesque lobby, struggling to compose myself for my first-ever meeting with a long-time idol – the Pulitzer Prize winning composer Gian Carlo Menotti! As it turned out, Curtis was mounting a special production of his opera *The Medium* to celebrate his 75th birthday. Menotti was in town to cast the production, and he would later return to direct it. *The Medium* was the first opera I ever saw. It remains one of my favorite stage works to this day. To say I was nervous would be a gross understatement. Mr. Menotti greeted me curtly, and I sang the *Edgar* aria for him. “What do you have in English, young man?” “West London, by Ives” was my reply. I sang my heart out, and Mr. Menotti responded with “Curious. I don't like Ives. Do you have something of mine?” As luck would have it, I had tucked *The Old Maid and the Thief* score under my arm, and I sang Bob's famous bedroom aria for him. “That will be fine. Thank you for not using a Xerox copy, and owning the score.” I was dismissed, only to discover later that day (much to the chagrin of my rival baritones) that I had been cast in the single baritone role in *The Medium*. I was ecstatic. To discuss the production process would take far more space than I am allotted here, so I will save that bizarre story for my eventual memoirs. I must comment on Mr. Menotti's utter brilliance as a stage director. He was able, at any moment, to completely become any character on stage. He knew exactly how to pull the appropriate emotion out of every singer. “Just listen to the music!” would pour out of his mouth at the drop of a hat. Following the final rehearsal before our opening at Philadelphia's Academy of Music, Mr. Menotti turned to me and said, “You are perfect. You always do everything right.” I have carried his rare compliment in my heart for my entire career. An artist can wish for no higher reward than to please a composer and to honor his work.

The Old Maid and the Thief was Menotti's first opera written in the English language. His only previous opera, *Amelia al Ballo* (Amelia goes to the ball), was composed while he was still a student at the Curtis Institute of Music. Its immediate and enormous success led to subsequent performances at no less than the Metropolitan Opera. Menotti had a knack for attracting attention and publicity throughout his career. When NBC Radio approached the young composer with the idea of writing an opera specifically for

Synopsis

The story begins just after Buoso Donati's death. His relatives have come to his house to express their grief when one of the poor relatives, Betto, tells the family that Buoso has left his entire estate to the monks. Upon hearing this news, the tears subside and the family turns to Simone, Buoso's brother-in-law, who advises them that if they find the will, there is still some hope. The family frantically searches until Buoso's nephew, Rinuccio, announces that he has the will, but will not give it up until his aunt Zita, Buoso's cousin, allows him to marry Lauretta, daughter of Gianni Schicchi. Zita says if everything turns out the way they want, she does not care who he marries. Rinuccio then sends Gherardino to bring Gianni Schicchi and Lauretta to Buoso's house. Rinuccio gives Zita the will which she quickly opens. The family begins to read. There are a few tokens left to Buoso's cousins, but the bulk of the estate, the house in Florence, the mills of Signa, and his prize mule, have all been left to the monks. Their faces gradually assume a genuinely tragic expression. They are all frozen in a state of shock. Simone is the first to move. He lowers the curtains and snuffs the candles. Slowly, with eyes wide, other relatives sit down. “So it was true”, Simone suddenly exclaims, with

performance on the radio, Menotti was only too happy to embrace the novel project. (He would later be the first important composer to write an opera specifically for television – the now cherished Christmas opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.) For his new subject matter, Menotti drew upon personal experiences from his student days. As one of the first students at Curtis, he immediately befriended the composer Samuel Barber. Both young men were handsome, elegant, well read, and immensely talented. As Menotti was now thousands of miles away from his Italian family, he often spent weekends and holidays with the Barber family in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The quiet, small-town American life was strangely exotic to Menotti. He became fascinated with the drawing room gossip, the repressed behavior of West Chester’s citizens, and what he imagined to be secret intrigues that were taking place over cups of tea and finger sandwiches. The plot of *The Old Maid and the Thief* is rooted in actual events. At the time of its conception, Menotti viewed the work light-heartedly – with Miss Todd being the object of ridicule and jokes. As he matured, he changed his sympathies. No longer did Bob and Laetitia occupy a fond place in his heart. When Menotti accepted middle age in his own life, Miss Todd became sympathetic to him.

My own views on this work are similar. I found myself emphasizing the “cartoon-like” aspects of this frothy piece when I began working on the current production. During our rehearsal period, Mr. Menotti passed away. I was deeply saddened by his death. Suddenly, my cartoon vision began to have elements of truth, beauty, and pain creeping into it. Perhaps Mr. Menotti’s creative genius had this odd juxtaposition at its core all along. I fear that my work on this production has been neither perfect, nor always right. That being said, perhaps Mr. Menotti would still be pleased with it. I can only hope so. --JK

Acknowledgments

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ECU Department of Vocal Studies Faculty

Gianni Schicchi

An Opera in One Act by Giacomo Puccini

The Cast

Gianni Schicchi —A resourceful and cunning man	Oliver Henderson, Jermaine Smith
Lauretta.- His daughter who is in love with Rinuccio	Allison Jones, Janelle Gladney
Buoso Donati – An extremely wealthy man who dies	Allison Clelland

BUOSO DONATI’S RELATIVES

Zita – A money-grubbing cousin of Buoso Donati	Deborah Nansteel
Rinuccio – Zita’s nephew who is in love with Lauretta	Kevin Carswell, Quentin Powell *
Gherardo – Nephew of Buoso	Tim Messina, Aaron Carlyle *
Nella –	Monika Vrabel, Alyssa Howell
Gherardino – Gherardo and Nella’s son	Carlos Richter
Betto di Signa – Buoso’s poor brother-in-law	Gary Harwell
Simone – Money-grubbing, wise old mayor of Fucecchio and cousin of Buoso Donati	Fredric Rice
Marco – Simone’s son	Bryan Pollock
La Ciesca – Marco’s wife	Rochelle Rice
Spinelloccio – gullible doctor of Buoso Donati	Joshua Allen
Amantio Di Nicolao — Buoso Donati’s lawyer	Stephen Howell
Pinellino – the cobbler	Randy Toler
Guccio – the dyer	Jason Kossel

* denotes understudy

The action takes place in Florence, Italy, circa 1939

Production Team

Conductor	Jorge Richter
Music Director	Catherine Garner
Stage Directors	Sharon Munden, Oliver Henderson
Italian Coach	Francesco Izzo
Costume Design	Jeff Phipps
Lighting	Michael LaRoche
Assistants to the Director	Shelley Maddox, Quentin Powell
Set Design	John Kramar
Publicity	Michael Crane
Super Title Design	Sasha Gerritson