ABOUT VCU OPERA

Founded in 1950 by L. Wayne Batty, VCU Opera has been directed by Melaine Kohn Day since 1983. In 2008, Dr. Kenneth Wood joined the VCU Voice faculty and additionally assumed the position of Stage Director for VCU Opera. Between November 2011 and November 2015, VCU Opera was the recipient of four national awards from the NOA-National Opera Association: 2nd Place for Humperdinck's HANSEL & GRETEL, 1st Place for Menotti's THE OLD MAID & THE THIEF, 3rd place for the opera scenes competition for Bizet's CARMEN quintet and 1st Place for Gilbert & Sullivan's THE GONDOLIERS.

VCU Opera has the longest-running tradition of annual full-scale productions in the state of Virginia and is proud of its outstanding reputation as an opera training program. Each year there is a fully-staged production of opera scenes and arias as well as a full-scale production featuring scenery and costumes and presented in collaboration with the VCU Symphony. VCU Opera's mission is to cast undergraduate students in appropriate roles from the mainstream repertoire. We specialize in traditionally styled productions utilizing where possible our extensive collection of costumes, wigs and props.

With a significant emphasis on the holistic training of the complete "singer-actor," VCU Opera has prepared numerous students for scholarships to the nation's finest conservatories and university graduate programs, as well as for prestigious summer festivals in the USA and abroad. Many VCU Opera alumni have gone on to enjoy highly successful careers performing in the world's greatest opera houses.

VCU OPERA & VCU SYMPHONY
PRESENT
Puccini's
Suor Angelica
&
Gianni Schicchi

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2017 AT 7 P.M.
SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017 AT 4 P.M.

WE. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts • 922 Park Ave, Richmond VA 23284

VCU OPERA & VCU SYMPHONY
PRESENT
Puccini's
Suor Angelica
&
Gianni Schicchi

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2017 AT 7 P.M.
SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017 AT 4 P.M.

WE. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts • 922 Park Ave, Richmond VA 23284
"GRAZIE MILLE!" for their generous financial support of VCU OPERA 2016-2017: Emerson and Kathy Hughes, Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic, Dr. Velimir Luketic, Mrs. Francile Bilyeu, Mr. Perry Nelson of St. Louis, MO, Prof. Cynthia Donnell, Mr. Jesse Beville. We are profoundly grateful!

OUR HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO OUR AMAZING PRODUCTION TEAM:
Daniel Myssyk; Curt Blankenship; Roland Karnatz; Mercedes Schaum; Ivy Austin & Leslie Winn; Sarah Grady & Marcia Hailey. None of this would be possible without you!

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Dr. Darryl Harper (Chair, Department of Music); Linda Johnston; Anne Marie Dumain; Karmalita Bawar; Operafestival di Roma Costume Collection and Dr. William Welty; Becky Harper, Miranda Wisnerowicz and family; Cypress Dodd and Birgitte Dodd Tingley; Theatre VCU; Ric Withers and Wythken Printing; and WCVE Public Radio for their media sponsorship.

VCU OPERA & VCU OPERA ORCHESTRA PRESENT
GIACOMO PUCCINI'S
BELOVED ONE-ACT OPERAS

SUOR ANGELICA
&
GIANNI SCHICCHI

Friday, April 28, 2017 • 7 p.m.
Sunday, April 30, 2017 • 4 p.m.

Co-Directors
MELANIE KOHN DAY & KENNETH WOOD
Conductor
DANIEL MYSSYK
Set Designer
MERCEDES SCHAUM
Costume Coordinators/Designers
IVY AUSTIN, LESLIE WINN, SARAH GRADY, MARCIA HAILEY
Lighting Designer
CURT BLANKENSHIP

VCU Opera is grateful to WCVE Public Radio for their media sponsorship of this production.

This production has been generously underwritten in part by long-term sponsors Emerson & Kathy Hughes, Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic, Dr. Velimir Luketic and Mr. Jay Beville.

VCU Opera is deeply appreciative of their support!
SUOR ANGELICA

Opera in one act - sung in Italian with English supertitles
Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Setting: A convent in the late seventeenth century

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Sister Angelica
The Princess, SISTER ANGELICA'S AUNT
The Abbess
The Mistress of the Novices
Sister Genevieve
Sister Osmina
Sister Dolcina
The Nursing (Infirmary) Sister
Cercatrice I
Cercatrice II
Novice I
Novice II
Lay Sister I
Lay Sister II
Sister Lucilla
Sister Adina
The Blessed Virgin Mary
Sister Angelica’s Son

Ella Mort (cover: Brenna Miller)
Jaylin Brown
Emily Nesbitt
Taylor DaCosta
Tess Ottinger
Colleen Christman
Kristen Melzer
Samantha Garcia
Brenna Miller**
Tiun Duong
Paige Melton
Savannah Whittenburg
Hailey Broyles
Alyse Coleman
Tylahr Dawes*
Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic◊
Cypress Tingley

Total running time: 58 minutes

*Guest Artist
+Alumnae
◊VCU Music Faculty

Puccini found the inspiration for his tragic element in 1912 when he attended a Paris performance of Le Houppelande (The Cloak) by Didier Gold. Puccini immediately realized its operatic potential and secured the libretto for the first opera of his trilogy, which he completed in 1916. After other failed attempts at finding suitable librettos to complement Il Tabarro, Giovacchino Forzano showed Puccini a sketch of a one-act play set in a convent and with all female cast he had written for a touring company. Puccini, whose older sister Iginia was Mother Superior of the Convent of Vicopelago, recognized what an effective contrast it could be for Tabarro. Thus Suor Angelica was conceived and eventually, by his own admission, became Puccini’s favorite of the trilogy. While Puccini was busy with what he called his “nun opera,” Forzano suggested an opera based on the Florentine rogue, Gianni Schicchi, who—very briefly—appears in the 30th Canto of Dante’s Inferno. At first Puccini was cool, but as the librettist further developed the story, Puccini became so enthusiastic about it that he put aside Suor Angelica, and began working on the comedy. As it turned out, Suor Angelica was completed on September 14, 1917; Schicchi not until April 20, 1918. The completed set of operas was titled Il Trittico (The Triptych) and though scheduled to premiere in Rome (cancelled due to the war), was first produced at the Metropolitan Opera on December 14, 1918.

The critical reviews were mixed, though most agreed that Gianni Schicchi was the best of the three operas. While Tabarro is fairly typical of Puccini’s style, he was more adventurous in Suor Angelica; employing a musical language that at times even flirts with polytonality. Gianni Schicchi has been praised for its inventiveness and imagination; combining elements of Puccini’s modern style of harmonic dissonance with lyrical passages reminiscent of Rossini. It is unclear if Puccini himself had any common theme in mind tying the operas together, but some musicologists have noted that each of the works deals with the concealment of a death. Though Puccini’s intention was that the three be performed as a set, it is now quite common to see only one or two of the trittico offered in an evening. Ultimately, his publisher’s belief regarding production costs was well founded.

Compiled from sources on Wikipedia, notes in the Metropolitan Opera Playbill of May 2007 by Paul Thomason, and Notes by Rovi Staff on allmusic.com

VCU
Department of Music | School of the Arts | Virginia Commonwealth University
922 Park Avenue, Room 132 | P.O. Box 842004 | Richmond, VA 23284-2004
(804) 828-1166 | music@vcu.edu | arts.vcu.edu/music
to mourn; but their avariciousness soon gets the better of their manners, and they start to search for the will. It is [his nephew] Rinuccio who finds it and Zita who first reads it. Their worst fears are realized: Buoso has left everything to the [friars] of a monastery.

Now it happens that young Rinuccio is in love with Lauretta, the daughter of [the ‘villainous’] Gianni Schicchi, ... a shrewd peasant of infinite resourcefulness. Secretly, Rinuccio has sent for Gianni Schicchi, and the artful young fellow urges his relatives to consult his prospective father-in-law. He ends his argument with an eloquent paean in praise of Florence, but they protest right up to the arrival of Schicchi himself.

Lauretta, whom her father loves very much, urges [Schicchi] to find a solution to the troubles of the Donati, so that she may marry Rinuccio, and, thus inspired, Schicchi contrives a plot. He has the body of old Buoso removed and he himself takes its place in the bed. He fools the doctor when he comes by imitating Buoso's voice and saying he is better. Then he listens to what each relative wishes to have of Buoso's riches, and he promises to dictate a new will accordingly.

A notary is summoned, and Schicchi dictates the new will. However, in this will he leaves everything to himself! The relatives are wild when the notary leaves, but there is nothing they can do. For Schicchi has pointed out to them that whoever helps falsify a will must, according to the laws of Florence, [suffer amputation of the fingers] and be forever banished. The maddened flock steal whatever they can, and Schicchi chases them out of the house. Only the lovers remain to sing a happy duet.

Then, as the opera closes, Schicchi addresses the audience in spoken words: he asks whether Buoso's money could serve a better purpose and suggests that though Dante consigned him to Hell, perhaps the amusement he has afforded the audience will make them reach a verdict of Extenuating Circumstances..."

From Henry W. Simon's 100 Great Operas

A Brief History of Il Trittico

After Madama Butterfly premiered in 1904, Puccini first began planning three one-act operas to be performed as a set, largely because of the success of Cavalleria Rusticana. But faced with a lack of suitable subjects and opposition from his publisher over the cost to produce and cast such a project, he repeatedly put the endeavor aside. Originally, he planned to write each opera to reflect one of the parts of Dante's Divine Comedy. For unknown reasons this notion was abandoned and once again left Puccini's plan floundering. His next idea in this vein, some years later, was for a two-opera bill, one tragic and one comic; he later expanded this to include a third opera with a mystic or religious tone.
Suor Angelica Synopsis

Composed by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) – Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Suor Angelica is the second opera in Puccini’s Il Trittico (The Trilogy), which was commissioned by The Metropolitan Opera, where it premiered on December 14, 1918. Of the three operas contained in the trilogy, Suor Angelica was the composer’s personal favorite. The story takes place in a convent in the late 1600’s.

“The librettist Forzano’s story is simple: a young woman of noble birth has been placed in a convent to expiate her illicit love, which has resulted in the birth of a baby boy. The action of the opera begins seven years after this. During this time, Sister Angelica has yearned for a visit or for news of her family, but has heard nothing. One particular day, however, a visitor is announced. It is Angelica’s aunt, the Princess – a formidable and unforgiving woman. She informs Angelica that her sister is to be married and requires her to sign away her portion of the family inheritance.

Angelica reminds her aunt that it is seven years since they have met and tries to gain from her some sign of affection, but her plea meets only coldness. In an outburst, Angelica begs for news of her son, the knowledge of whose existence has given her strength to go on. Untouched, her aunt tells her that two years previously the child became ill and died. Angelica falls down in despair. After her aunt’s departure, Angelica sings [an aria] in which she prays to her child, now in heaven, and looks forward to joining him.

She prepares a poisonous draught from some herbs and drinks it. Suddenly she is struck by the terrible realization that in ending her own life she is committing a mortal sin, and she cries out to the Virgin to save her for the sake of her son. Here occurs the famous miracle, presented by composer and librettist as a literal happening: the church fills with light, the door opens, and to the sound of heavenly voices the Virgin herself appears with a child who takes slow steps towards the dying nun.”

Notes by George Hall (1973 The Decca Record Company)

Gianni Schicchi Synopsis

Forzano’s libretto is based on an incident that actually happened in 1299 in Florence, more or less as it is put forth in the libretto. Dante, who is said to have personally known the “jolly swindler” Schicchi, put him into the 30th canto of his Inferno.

“When the opera opens, the wealthy Buoso Donati has just died, and a gang of his relatives is hanging vulturously about his bed. Ostensibly, they are there...