

= Gianni Schicchi =

Gianni Schicchi ( Italian pronunciation : [ ʒdʒanni ʃkikki ] ) is a comic opera in one act by Giacomo Puccini to an Italian libretto by Giovacchino Forzano , composed in 1917 ? 18 . The libretto is based on an incident mentioned in Dante 's Divine Comedy . The work is the third and final part of Puccini 's *Il trittico* ( The Triptych ) ? three one @-@ act operas with contrasting themes , originally written to be presented together . Although it continues to be performed with one or both of the other *trittico* operas , Gianni Schicchi is now more frequently staged either alone or with short operas by other composers . The aria " O mio babbino caro " is one of Puccini 's best known , and one of the most popular arias in opera .

Puccini had long considered writing a set of one @-@ act operas which would be performed together in a single evening , but faced with a lack of suitable subjects and opposition from his publisher , he repeatedly put the project aside . However , by 1916 Puccini had completed the one @-@ act tragedy *Il tabarro* and , after considering various ideas , he began work the following year on the solemn , religious , all @-@ female opera *Suor Angelica* . Gianni Schicchi , a comedy , completes the triptych with a further contrast of mood . The score combines elements of Puccini 's modern style of harmonic dissonance with lyrical passages reminiscent of Rossini , and it has been praised for its inventiveness and imagination .

When *Il trittico* premiered at New York 's Metropolitan Opera in December 1918 , Gianni Schicchi became an immediate hit , whereas the other two operas were received with less enthusiasm . This pattern was broadly repeated at the Rome and London premieres and led to commercial pressures to abandon the less successful elements . Although on artistic grounds Puccini opposed performing the three operas except as the original triptych , by 1920 he had given his reluctant consent to separate performances . Gianni Schicchi has subsequently become the most @-@ performed part of *Il trittico* and has been widely recorded .

= = Historical background = =

A man named Gianni Schicchi is only briefly referred to in Dante 's *Inferno* Canto XXX . In that canto , Dante visits the Circle of Impersonators and sees a man savagely attacking another . Dante is told that the attacker is Schicchi , condemned to Hell for impersonating Buoso Donati and making his will highly favorable to Schicchi .

The plot used in the opera derives from an 1866 edition of *The Divine Comedy* by philologist Pietro Fanfani , which contained an appendix with commentary attributed to an anonymous Florentine of the 14th century . In this version , Buoso wishes to make a will , but is put off doing so by his son , Simone . Once it is too late , Simone fears that Buoso , before his illness , may have made a will unfavourable to him . Simone calls on Schicchi for advice , and Schicchi has the idea of impersonating Buoso and making a new will . Simone promises Schicchi he will be well rewarded , but Schicchi takes no chances , " leaving " a considerable sum and Buoso 's mule to himself ( though most goes to Simone ) , and makes the bequests conditional on Simone 's distributing the estate within fifteen days , otherwise everything will go to charity .

Both Schicchi and Buoso Donati were historical characters . Dante 's verses , and the opera , are based on an actual incident that took place in 13th century Florence . Dante had several reasons for his harsh treatment of Schicchi : Dante 's wife , Gemma , was of the Donati family ; the poet himself was of pure Florentine descent . He despised members of the peasant class such as Schicchi . Dante 's class prejudice displays itself in several episodes in the *Inferno* : in one , three noble Florentines , who have died and gone to Hell , ask Dante for news of their home city . A disgusted Dante tells them that the city is now dominated by the nouveau riche .

According to Burton Fisher , Puccini and Forzano borrowed heavily from the *commedia dell 'arte* tradition in Gianni Schicchi . Schicchi himself recalls the roguish Harlequin , while his daughter Lauretta , whose romance is nearly foiled by Buoso 's relatives , resembles Columbina . Simone is drawn from Pantalone , while the poverty @-@ stricken Betto recalls the buffoonish valet Zany . Doctor Spinelloccio recalls the classic doctor from the *commedia dell 'arte* , Balanzone even to his

Bolognese origin . The Moor whose death momentarily scares the relatives , and his captain , are stock characters from commedia dell 'arte .

= = Roles = =

= = Synopsis = =

Place : Florence

Time : 1299 .

As Buoso Donati lies dead in his curtained four @-@ poster bed , his relatives gather round to mourn his passing , but are really more interested in learning the contents of his will . Among those present are his cousins Zita and Simone , his poor @-@ relation brother @-@ in @-@ law Betto , and Zita 's nephew Rinuccio . Betto mentions a rumour he has heard that Buoso has left everything to a monastery ; this disturbs the others and precipitates a frantic search for the will . The document is found by Rinuccio , who is confident that his uncle has left him plenty of money . He withholds the will momentarily and asks Zita to allow him to marry Lauretta , daughter of Gianni Schicchi , a newcomer to Florence . Zita replies that if Buoso has left them rich , he can marry whom he pleases ; she and the other relatives are anxious to begin reading the will . A happy Rinuccio sends little Gherardino to fetch Schicchi and Lauretta .

As they read , the relatives ' worst fears are soon realised ; Buoso has indeed bequeathed his fortune to the monastery . They break out in woe and indignation and turn to Simone , the oldest present and a former mayor of Fucecchio , but he can offer no help . Rinuccio suggests that only Gianni Schicchi can advise them what to do , but this is scorned by Zita and the rest , who sneer at Schicchi 's humble origins and now say that marriage to the daughter of such a peasant is out of the question . Rinuccio defends Schicchi in an aria " Avete torto " ( You 're mistaken ) , after which Schicchi and Lauretta arrive . Schicchi quickly grasps the situation , and Rinuccio begs him for help , but Schicchi is rudely told by Zita to " be off " and take his daughter with him . Rinuccio and Lauretta listen in despair as Schicchi announces that he will have nothing to do with such people . Lauretta makes a final plea to him with " O mio babbino caro " ( Oh , my dear papa ) , and he agrees to look at the will . After twice scrutinizing it and concluding that nothing can be done , an idea occurs to him . He sends his daughter outside so that she will be innocent of what is to follow .

First , Schicchi establishes that no one other than those present knows that Buoso is dead . He then orders the body removed to another room . A knock announces the arrival of the doctor , Spinelloccio . Schicchi conceals himself behind the bed curtains , mimics Buoso 's voice and declares that he 's feeling better ; he asks the doctor to return that evening . Boasting that he has never lost a patient , Spinelloccio departs . Schicchi then unveils his plan in the aria " Si corre dal notaio " ( Run to the notary ) ; having established in the doctor 's mind that Buoso is still alive , Schicchi will disguise himself as Buoso and dictate a new will . All are delighted with the scheme , and importune Schicchi with personal requests for Buoso 's various possessions , the most treasured of which are " the mule , the house and the mills at Signa " . A funeral bell rings , and everyone fears that the news of Buoso 's death has emerged , but it turns out that the bell is tolling for the death of a neighbour 's Moorish servant . The relatives agree to leave the disposition of the mule , the house and the mills to Schicchi , though each in turn offers him a bribe . The women help him to change into Buoso 's clothes as they sing the lyrical trio " Spogliati , bambolino " ( Undress , little boy ) . Before taking his place in the bed , Schicchi warns the company of the grave punishment for those found to have falsified a will : exile from Florence together with the loss of a hand .

The notary arrives , and Schicchi starts to dictate the new will , declaring any prior will null and void . To general satisfaction he allocates the minor bequests , but when it comes to the mule , the house and the mills , he orders that these be left to " my devoted friend Gianni Schicchi " . Incredulous , the family can do nothing while the lawyer is present , especially when Schicchi slyly reminds them of the penalties that discovery of the ruse will bring . Their outburst of rage when the notary leaves is

countered by a love duet from Lauretta and Rinuccio , " Lauretta mia " ; there is now no bar to their marriage , since Schicchi can provide a full dowry . Schicchi chases the relatives out of what is now his house , and when he returns stands moved at the sight of the two lovers . He turns to the audience and asks them to agree that no better use could be found for Buoso 's wealth . Although the poet Dante has condemned him to hell for this trick , Schicchi asks the audience to forgive him in light of " extenuating circumstances . "

= = Composition history = =

The one @-@ act opera genre had become increasingly popular in Italy following the 1890 competition sponsored by publisher Edoardo Sonzogno for the best such work , which was won by the young Pietro Mascagni 's *Cavalleria rusticana* . With *Tosca* essentially completed by November 1899 , Puccini sought a new project . Among sources he considered , before proceeding with *Madama Butterfly* , were three works by French dramatist Alphonse Daudet that Puccini thought might be made into a trilogy of one @-@ act operas .

After *Butterfly* premiered in 1904 , Puccini again had difficulty finding a new subject . He further considered the idea of composing three one @-@ act operas to be performed together , but found his publisher , Giulio Ricordi , firmly opposed to such a project , convinced that it would be expensive to cast and produce . The composer then planned to work with his longtime librettist , Giuseppe Giacosa , on an opera about Marie Antoinette , a project frustrated by the librettist 's illness . Puccini wrote in November 1905 , " Will we go back to it ? [ Maria Antonietta ] If I find three one @-@ act works that suit me , I 'll put off M.A. " Puccini pursued neither project , as Giacosa 's illness led to his death in September 1906 .

In March 1907 , Puccini wrote to Carlo Clausetti , Ricordi 's representative in Naples , proposing three one @-@ act operas based on scenes from stories by Russian novelist Maxim Gorky . By May the composer had set aside this proposal to concentrate on the project which became *La fanciulla del West* , although he did not wholly abandon the idea of a multiple @-@ opera evening . 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 . By November 1916 Puccini had completed the " tragic " element , which became *Il tabarro* , but he still lacked ideas for the other two works . He considered staging *Il tabarro* in combination with his own early work *Le Villi* , or with other two @-@ act operas which might be used to round out the evening 's entertainment . Finally , librettist Giovacchino Forzano presented the composer with two works of his own , which became *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* . The latter would be Puccini 's first setting of a comic text ; although his earlier operas , for example *La bohème* , contain comic episodes , these are merely ancillary to the drama to provide contrast .

Forzano wrote to Tito Ricordi , Giulio 's son , on 3 March 1917 :

I sent the libretto of *Suor Angelica* to Maestro Puccini some days ago . He has declared himself ? kind as he is ? very satisfied ... I have also finished a brief outline of a plot based on Gianni Schicchi . You know the Maestro 's opinion of this subject , which is rich in possibilities and whose comic nature is quite out of the ordinary .

In fact , Puccini was at first less than enthusiastic about the idea for this comic opera ? Florence as a setting did not appeal to him , and he feared the public would have little interest in the subject . However , he soon became interested , and did some work on the piece even while composing *Suor Angelica* . The religious @-@ themed opera was completed in September 1917 , and Puccini turned his full attention to *Gianni Schicchi* , although the war news and the 1918 influenza pandemic , in which Puccini lost a sister , distracted him from his work . The first draft was completed on 20 April 1918 , and Puccini continued to refine and orchestrate it through the summer of 1918 .

With the trilogy complete , Puccini had to decide on a place for the premiere . In 1918 , travel was risky and uncertain . Puccini received an offer from Buenos Aires which he refused , unwilling to have so complex a work first performed overseas in his absence . He finally agreed that the premiere could take place at the Metropolitan Opera in New York , without his being there , on the basis of performing instructions which he supplied to the conductor . Gianni Schicchi proved to be

the last opera completed by Puccini .

= = Performance history = =

= = = Early performances = = =

Gianni Schicchi was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera on 14 December 1918 , with Roberto Moranzoni conducting , as the final part of *Il trittico* . While the sold @-@ out house showed polite enthusiasm for *Il tabarro* and *Suor Angelica* , Gianni Schicchi was , in the words of the New @-@ York Tribune 's critic , " received with uproarious delight " . In the Evening Sun , W.J. Henderson called it " one of the most delightful bits ever put upon the Met stage " . The undoubted " pearl of the evening " , he said , was Laretta 's aria " O mio babbino caro " which , despite a public notice forbidding encores , was repeated through popular insistence . The only singer to appear in all three works was American soprano Marie Tiffany , who played one of the lovers in *Il tabarro* , a lay sister in *Suor Angelica* , and Nella in *Gianni Schicchi* . *Il trittico* was performed at the Met 's Philadelphia opera house on 17 December with the same cast , before returning to New York for five more performances during the 1918 / 19 season .

At the time of the New York premiere , *Il trittico* was in rehearsal in Rome in preparation for an Italian premiere at the Teatro Costanzi . Puccini wrote Tito Ricordi that the rehearsals were going slowly , but that the orchestra sounded fine , at least in *Gianni Schicchi* . The Italian premiere , more important to Puccini than the New York world premiere , took place on 11 January 1919 . Gianni Schicchi was again warmly received , more so than the first two operas of *Il trittico* . Among those dissatisfied by the triptych was Puccini 's friend , the conductor Arturo Toscanini , who was in the audience for the Rome premiere . Toscanini was disgusted by the verismo of *Il tabarro* , and left the performance after the first curtain . This caused a rift in his relationship with Puccini , who stated that he would not allow " this god " to conduct the London premiere , though the two were later reconciled . At the Rome premiere , the part of Rinuccio was sung by the Canadian tenor Edward Johnson , a future general manager of the Met . Johnson later recalled that , at the composer 's request , he had dragged a mock @-@ reluctant Puccini from the wings to acknowledge the house 's applause .

In 1919 , Puccini visited London to discuss plans for the following year 's Covent Garden premiere of *Il trittico* . This took place on 18 June 1920 ; King George V and Queen Mary were present , and called Puccini to their box to give him their congratulations . With Toscanini not considered , Puccini hoped that Sir Thomas Beecham would conduct the premiere , but he declined and Gaetano Bavagnoli conducted . Once again , only Gianni Schicchi was received with real warmth .

Other early performances included the October 1920 production of *Il trittico* in German , at the Vienna State Opera . In the years following the premiere , Puccini made modifications to the three operas , but Gianni Schicchi required few . The principal change was to Rinuccio 's arioso , " Avete torto " , which was set in a higher pitch to take better advantage of the tenor voice .

By 1920 Puccini was facing increasing pressure , not only from impresarios but also from his publishing firm , Casa Ricordi , to allow *Il trittico* to be broken up and presented separately . Opera houses first wanted to omit *Suor Angelica* , which had proven the least popular of the three , but some wished to omit *Il tabarro* as well . Puccini had left London confident that *Il trittico* would gain a place in the Covent Garden repertoire , but soon learned that the opera house 's director , Henry V. Higgins , had removed *Suor Angelica* , feeling that the audience disliked it . In fact , Higgins would never stage it again . Puccini vociferously objected , as did his longtime London friend , Sybil Seligman , to no avail . Higgins then decided to remove *Il tabarro* , and stage Gianni Schicchi together with a Russian ballet presentation . Puccini retorted , " This is a real betrayal " , but in the end gave in and permitted the performance . Puccini , however , was still convinced that the three works should be performed together , and that his original conception was being " brutally torn to pieces " . The Metropolitan Opera joined in the dismemberment : after 1920 , it would not again present the three operas together until 1975 .

= = = Later performances = = =

Gianni Schicchi returned to the Met in 1926 , after Puccini 's death , shorn of the other two parts of its operatic triptych , but instead mated to Ruggero Leoncavallo 's two @-@ act opera Pagliacci . The 1926 production , by Wilhelm von Wymetal , featured sets by Joseph Novak . In the following years at the Met , Gianni Schicchi would form part of a bill with such diverse works as Engelbert Humperdinck 's Hänsel und Gretel , Italo Montemezzi 's L 'amore dei tre re , and even be incestuously mated with Puccini 's own La bohème . In 1952 , Novak 's sets were revised by Wilhelm von Wymetal in a production which remained in service until 1958 .

Among the leading singers associated with the opera , Tito Gobbi was particularly prominent in the 1950s and 1960s . He first sang the role of Schicchi in the Rome production in 1951 ; in subsequent years he appeared in further Rome seasons , in Bologna , and at La Scala , Milan , where Renata Scotto sang Lauretta in Carlo Maestrini 's production . Gobbi directed and sang in the 1969 production at the Teatro Comunale di Firenze , and later that year performed in and directed the same version at the August 1969 Edinburgh Festival .

In 1974 , the Met gave Gianni Schicchi its first new production since 1926 . The production , by Fabrizio Melano , was paired with the Met debut of Bartók 's Bluebeard 's Castle . The following year , the Met revived Il trittico in the original form , combining the Melano production with new productions for the other two operas by the same director . The 1975 Schicchi featured Renata Scotto as Lauretta . Scotto also played the two other Il trittico heroines , a feat she repeated later that season , on tour , and when the three operas were again presented by the Met in 1981 . When the production was revived again by the Met in 1989 , Teresa Stratas sang the " trittico hat @-@ trick " . Lili Chookasian sang the mezzo @-@ soprano leads in all three operas ( Zita in Gianni Schicchi ) and Cornell MacNeil played Schicchi .

Glyndebourne Festival Opera put on a 2004 double bill of Gianni Schicchi and Rachmaninoff 's The Miserly Knight , in which the sets for the two operas ( designed by Vicki Mortimer ) are back @-@ to @-@ back on a turntable . In 2007 Los Angeles Opera announced that it would be staging Il trittico in the 2008 / 2009 season , with Woody Allen making his operatic directing debut in Gianni Schicchi . The production starred baritone Sir Thomas Allen , soprano Laura T?ulescu , and tenor Saimir Pirgu . The 2007 Royal Opera House production by Richard Jones updated the action to a shabby 1940s Italy of " unemptied chamber pots , garish floral wallpaper and damp ceilings " , with Bryn Terfel in the title role " a masterpiece of monstrous vulgarity " . In the 2009 revival of this production , Schicchi was sung by Thomas Allen , while Gwynne Howell , as Simone , celebrated 40 years with the Royal Opera .

= = = Critical reception = = =

In reviewing the New York premiere , the critics greeted Gianni Schicchi warmly ; most reviewers found it to be the best of the three operas . New York Herald Tribune critic Henry Krehbiel described it as " so uproariously funny ... so full of life , humor , and ingenious devices " . The New York Times reviewer James Huneker considered the opera to be " a rollicking , madcap scherzo , overflowing with merry deviltries ... And the last shall be first . " Huneker praised De Luca as " a most engaging rascal , fit for a minor niche in Moliere 's gallery " . The Times critic also was amused by Marto Malatesta as " The ' Kid ' Gherardino , who is spanked by the irate family " .

Rome 's critics gave Il trittico as a whole a warmer reception , but still saw Gianni Schicchi as the best of the three . Alberto Gasco in La tribuna noted , " In terms of harmonic technique , Il tabarro and Schicchi advance quite startling elements of novelty . Nothing that contemporary art has produced escapes the studious and astute Giacomo Puccini . " Gasco also stated that while many critics were waiting for the first two operas with their fists drawn , Gianni Schicchi disarmed these " hired assassins " with a " single glance " . An anonymous reviewer in L 'idea nazionale felt that the three works comprised a unified whole , but feared that Puccini was becoming less inventive . L 'idea nazionale was a nationalist newspaper , and praised Puccini for returning to an Italian subject "

after so many useless Japanese , American , Parisian digressions " .

Modern productions , including those in an updated context , have been generally well received . Describing the 2004 Glyndebourne pairing with *The Miserly Knight* as " flip sides of the same coin " , reviewer Edward Seckerson in *The Independent* found the Schicchi performance " a triumph of ensemble directing and playing , ... wickedly observed , sharp , focussed and funny " . The *New York Times* gave a positive review to the Woody Allen 2008 production , which is set in a crowded tenement in which the boy Gherardino is practising knife thrusts . However , the critic questioned Allen 's altered ending , in which Schicchi is stabbed by Zita as he addresses the audience . Los Angeles Times critic Mark Swed deemed Allen 's production one of the top ten moments in classical music for 2008 , and applauded it for " hilarious wit and engaging musicality " . Allen Rich of *Variety* praised the piece , though he disliked Allen 's idea of beginning the opera with a montage of old film clips , with credits featuring mock @-@ Italian names .

= = Music = =

Verdi said of Puccini , early in the latter 's career , that " the symphonic element dominates in him " , and Gianni Schicchi has been compared by later analysts to that of the final presto movement of a three @-@ movement symphony . With the fast @-@ moving pace of the work , the set pieces are given a simpler melodic structure than those in the other two parts of the triptych . On stage , with the *commedia dell 'arte* references , a humorous atmosphere is established from the very beginning . However , the music itself is of the 20th century ; Edward Greenfield refers to its " dissonant modernity " , with simultaneous clashing chords suggesting that " Puccini was beginning to think in bi @-@ tonal terms " . Alongside these dissonant passages are others which opera scholar Julian Budden calls " bland , schoolroom diatonism " .

Puccini 's score is built around a series of motifs which recur through the opera , generally representing characters , situations and moods though sometimes without specific associations . The opening motif is a rapid burst of rhythmic music , described by Greenfield as of " almost Stravinskian sharpness " , which quickly transforms into a mock @-@ solemn dirge depicting the hypocritical grief of the Donati relatives . This juxtaposition of the humorous and the solemn pervades the opera ; critic Ernest Newman suggests that it " keeps us perpetually suspended between the comic and the tragic " . Other principal motifs include the theme associated with the lovers Rinuccio and Lauretta , introduced in Rinuccio 's first solo " *Salvati ! Salvati !* " , and a short , formal woodwind statement which represents Donati 's will . Rinuccio sings the name " Gianni Schicchi " to a jaunty four @-@ note phrase which becomes Schicchi 's personal motif , and it is heard again as Schicchi knocks on the door before his first appearance . The best @-@ known theme in the opera , that associated with Lauretta , is introduced in the second part of Rinuccio 's aria " *Avete torto* " . The theme is briefly played on clarinet and violin as Lauretta enters with Schicchi , before its full expression in *O mio babbino caro* .

Budden dismisses the view that Lauretta 's aria , at the midpoint of the opera , was a concession to popular taste ; rather , " its position at the turning point of the action is precisely calculated to provide a welcome moment of lyrical repose " . Andrew Davis , in his book on Puccini 's late style , notes that Lauretta 's aria , and the two interruptions by the young lovers ( " *Addio , speranza bella* " ) as Schicchi mulls over the will , constitute interruptions in the Romantic style , delivered during a lengthy sequence of non @-@ Romantic music . Another interruption , both dramatically and musically , is that provided by the appearance of Doctor Spinelloccio . The doctor 's dissonant harmonies contrast sharply with the scena music for Schicchi and symbolise Spinelloccio 's place as an outsider to the dramatic action of the opera .

The music historian Donald Jay Grout has written that in this opera Puccini 's comic skill is " seen at its most spontaneous , incorporating smoothly all the characteristic harmonic devices of his later period . " Greenfield remarks on the score 's inventiveness , imagination and flawless timing . Several critics have likened Gianni Schicchi to Verdi 's Falstaff , as both are masterpieces of operatic comedy from composers more usually associated with tragedy . Both composers took the conventions of comic opera into consideration , choosing a baritone for the principal role , setting the

tenor @-@ soprano love story against family opposition to the marriage , and constructing a hoax which permits the happy ending . Charles Osborne cites in particular the trio for three female voices , Spogliati , bambolino , as equal to anything in Falstaff , " its exquisite harmonies almost turning the unprepossessing women into Wagnerian Rhine maidens " , and its lilting melody reminiscent of Rossini .

= = Arias and musical numbers = =

Although the score is through @-@ composed , within the general structure of the opera there are several identifiable numbers : four solos given to the three main characters , a trio and a brief love duet . Only Lauretta 's O mio babbino caro , the best @-@ known of the solos , is separable from its context and can be sung as a concert piece .

= = Recordings = =

Despite its popularity as a stage work , Gianni Schicchi was not available as a recording until after the Second World War , a neglect described by a Gramophone reviewer as " extraordinary " . One of the earliest recordings , a Turin Radio 1950 broadcast performance conducted by Alfredo Simonetto , was praised for its lively presentation but was considered by the critic Philip Hope @-@ Wallace to be " too rough a piece of recording to be warmly recommended " . By contrast , the 1958 recording under Gabriele Santini , with a cast including Tito Gobbi and Victoria de los Angeles , was still being discussed nearly 50 years later as the classic performance , with Gobbi 's singing at a standard rarely equalled . Among more recent recordings , that of the complete Trittico with the London Symphony Orchestra under Antonio Pappano ( 1998 ) has been generally recommended . There are numerous video recordings now available .

= = English @-@ language sequel = =

American composer Michael Ching wrote a one @-@ act English @-@ language sequel , Buoso 's Ghost , which had its first full staging with the Pittsburgh Opera in 1996 , and its official premiere at Opera Memphis in 1997 . Starting where Gianni Schicchi ends , the new opera , with a libretto by the composer , opens with Schicchi 's final chords and carries the plot forward by following the sinister dealings of Buoso Donati 's family , who apparently had poisoned Buoso , and the continued machinations of Schicchi , who tries to exploit this growing suspicion on his part . Opera News noted that Ching uses " a more modern musical mode , yet avoiding excessive atonality . The score subtly introduces brief tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek quotations from other works , ranging from Mozart to Sondheim , plus one unmistakable interjection of Shostakovich . " It has been performed throughout the U.S. as an ideal pairing with Gianni Schicchi .