

## Staff for MSU Opera Theatre

Conductor/Music Director	Raphael Jimenez♦/ Nathaniel Parker*
Producer/Stage Director	Melanie Helton♦
Assistant Conductor	Nathaniel Parker
Set Design	Jeremy Hunt
Lighting Design	Brent Wrobel
Choreographer/Assistant Director	Laura Nanes
Costume Design/Construction	A.T. Jones/Marla Fogderud
Production Stage Manager	Jeremy Hunt
Technical Director	Brent Wrobel
Projection Animator	Steen Wichmann
Projection Operator	Noble Thomas
Musical Preparation	Alan Nathan♦
Chorus Master	Andrew Kreckmann
Assistant Stage Manager	Corey Rivera
Assistant to the Producer	Joshua Baum
Shop Foreman	Bradley Walker
Surtitles Creation and Operation	Roger Pan and Mary Turcotte
Concert Auditorium Stage Manager	Ron Fenger
Rehearsal Accompanists	Sangmi Lim, Rudolfs Ozolins, Roger Pan, Trent Patterson, Justine Sasanfar, Mary Turcotte

♦MSU faculty/staff      \*Sunday performance of *Gianni Schicchi*

### *Grateful Acknowledgments*

MSU Vocal Arts Area Faculty: Richard Fracker (chair), Margaret Brand, Molly Fillmore, Melanie Helton, Harlan Jennings, Alan Nathan, Rod Nelman, Anne Nispel, David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Sandra Snow  
James Forger, Dean, College of Music  
Leon Gregorian, Director of Orchestral Activities, College of Music  
Deborah Moriarty, Chair, Keyboard Area  
MSU Department of Theater, George Peters (chair), Kirk Domer  
MSU Department of Telecommunications  
Wharton Center, Sandy Thomley, Production Manager  
Rebecca Surian, Director of Development, College of Music  
Kathleen Adams, Debra Galehouse, Jennifer Shangraw, College of Music  
Christine Kaye, Charlene Wagner, Karen DeFord, College of Music

A special thank you to Devon Self Storage, 708 East Grand River, Lansing, for promotional consideration in the rental of our scene shop.



## *Opera Theatre: Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi" Withem's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"*



*Friday, March 27, 2009, 8:00 p.m.*  
*Saturday, March 28, 2009, 8:00 p.m.*  
*Sunday, March 29, 2009, 3:00 p.m.*  
Concert Auditorium

## A Note from the Director:

The genesis for this production of two one-act operas came when doctoral student William (Bill) Withem approached our maestro Raphael Jimenez with an idea for an opera based on Washington Irving's classic American story, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Always open to new experiences, I was happy to be asked to jump on the bandwagon as librettist. Although I have written singing translations before, I had never done an original libretto. With Bill already having composed some primary themes for the main characters, we got to work.

The piece was originally conceived as an outreach vehicle, with just five singers and a small chamber orchestra of nine or ten pieces. However, as the piece came together and Raphael and I realized that this was really wonderful, evocative music, we decided to program it on our main stage. This served two purposes: giving a composition student a unique opportunity to have a full production of a new work, and continuing our commitment to programming new works. As we looked for a companion piece to *Sleepy Hollow*, we had to think about our obligation to our very deep pool of talented singers and find a one-act opera with a lot of parts. Who better to call upon than Puccini and his comic masterpiece, *Gianni Schicchi*.

Once we had chosen *Schicchi*, it gave Bill an opportunity to orchestrate his opera for a Puccini-sized symphony orchestra, and I think you'll hear that he has been like a kid in a candy store. We first heard the orchestrations last week and were blown away by the excitement generated, and the amount of color and texture.

Although the two pieces are very different, they do showcase the depth and quality of both the vocal arts area and our wonderful symphony orchestra. Over 30 singers have solo roles in either or both of the shows. We continue to have a great mix of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as both performance and music education majors.

Enjoy!

The deception works, and the family is entranced by the possibilities. Schicchi explains his scheme to them, and they endorse it heartily. The ladies dress him in Buoso's nightclothes, and he takes his place in the bed. Schicchi warns that if they are caught, they are liable to have their hands cut off as thieves, and to be banished forever from their beloved Firenze. The notary and his witnesses enter and put a new will in effect. Schicchi at first gives small bequests to the family, for which they are grateful. But the big bequests (the house, the mules, and the mill at the town at Signa), Schicchi gives to himself, to "his dear friend Gianni Schicchi!" The family is appalled, but also terrified because they are criminally liable as well. The notary finalizes the will and departs with the witnesses. The family begins to scream at Schicchi, that he is a thief and a cheat. They loot the home of as much as they can, finally exiting as Schicchi chases them off.

Rinuccio and Lauretta now know that they can marry, and they sing a final love duet. Schicchi reenters and speaks to the audience. He says that if he has entertained you at all, he asks only for ... a little applause!

## *Gianni Schicchi*

The relatives of Buoso Donati have gathered in his house in Firenze (Florence), where he has recently died. They are apparently terribly sad about his demise, although soon we find out that they have basically been waiting for his death, hoping for word of the will and its provisions. Betto, Buoso's impoverished friend, tells the family that it's very possible that Buoso has left all of his money to the friars of Santa Reparata. The family is dismayed, as they know that there is lots of wealth and possessions to be divided among them.

Simone, the most elderly member of the family, tells the family that if they can find the will in Buoso's house, they can at least find out what's in it, and perhaps change it. They frantically search the house for the will. When Rinuccio, the great-nephew of Buoso, finds the will, he explains that he is in love with Lauretta, the daughter of a Florentine named Gianni Schicchi. He has been forbidden to marry her, both by his family and she by her father. Rinuccio desperately needs the inheritance in order to marry. His great-aunt Zita (the most elderly woman in the family) tells him that he can marry whomever he wants if the will benefits all of them. The family gathers to read the will.

As they read the will, the family realizes that they have essentially been disinherited in favor of the friars. They decry the friars, declaring that the padres will get fat on the spoils of the bequest. They sigh that if it only were possible to change the will. Rinuccio explains to them that only the wise and wily Gianni Schicchi is capable of helping them. They scoff, but Rinuccio extols the wonders of Florence in his support of Gianni Schicchi. Their adoration of their hometown makes them understand Rinuccio's plea, and they acquiesce.

Schicchi enters with his lovely daughter Lauretta, who immediately goes to her Rinuccio. Schicchi sizes up the situation in one glance, and figures that they have been disinherited. He still doesn't want Lauretta to marry Rinuccio, and challenges the old woman Zita to try to cross him. They keep the lovers apart as they argue about what to do. As Schicchi denies Lauretta, she manipulates him into helping the Donati family. Schicchi, wound around the little finger of his daughter, agrees to look at the will.

At first he can't find a loophole. But then, a plan comes to him. He himself will masquerade as the dead Buoso, and rewrite the will for a notary. There

is a knock at the door and the doctor appears, making Schicchi do his first impersonation of the deceased.

## The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

*The Narrator* Matthew Scollin/  
Brandon Manson \*  
*Ichabod Crane, a schoolteacher* David Theis/  
Bryson Beaver \*  
*Katrina van Tassel, daughter of the richest man in town* Elizabeth Toy/  
Emily Muscoe \*  
*Brom von Brunt (aka Brom Bones), the local big guy/bully* Brad  
Walker/  
Daniel Ewart \*  
*Mother van Tassel, Katrina's mother* Lauren Glinke/  
Samantha Dalman \*  
*Father van Tassel, the richest man in town* Maolin Zhang

*Townspeople:* Jillian Baker, Sarah Bauer, Michael Begale,  
Jeffery Branch, Jennifer Cook, Emily Fox, Hayley Frey, Juliana  
Kartsimas, Kenneth Keel,  
Jennifer Morgan, Erin Sandberg-Reed, Jordan Sparks, Michael  
Woodward

## Gianni Schicchi

*Gianni Schicchi, a man of doubtful virtue* Joseph Baunoch/  
Jonathan Kirkland \*  
*Lauretta, his daughter, beloved of Rinuccio* Li Qianru/  
Youjin Na \*  
*Zita, Buoso Donati's cousin* Lauren Auge/  
Jackie King \*  
*Rinuccio, his nephew, beloved of Lauretta* Joshua Baum/  
Stephen Martin \*  
*Gherardo, his nephew* Dale Powell/  
Griffin Candey \*  
*Nella, Gherardo's wife* Heather Patterson/  
Marissa Keep \*  
*Gherardino, their son* Jillian Baker/  
Emily Fox \*  
*Betto di Signa, Buoso's brother-in-law* Matthew Begale/  
Erik Love \*  
*Marco, Simone's son* Kyle Ivester/  
Johnathan Riesen \*  
*La Ciesca, Marco's wife* Jessie Neilson/  
Leigh Goyings \*  
*Maestro Spinelloccio, a doctor* Brandon Manson  
*Amantio di Nicolao, a notary* Brandon Manson  
*Pinellino, a witness* Michael Begale/  
Michael Woodward \*

*Guccio, a witness*

\* Saturday, March 28 performance

Ken Keel/  
Jordan Sparks

## *The Story*

### *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

1. **The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.** The Narrator tells the story of a small, sleepy town not too far from the Hudson River in New York State, circa 1780s. He tells of the wonders of nature that surround the town, and also the darker tales of superstition and legend. In particular, the village is obsessed by the legend of a Revolutionary War soldier whose head was blown away by a cannon shot. The tale says that the Headless Horseman rides through the woods, always seeking his head. Is he real? What do you think?

2. **Ichabod Crane.** Our protagonist enters, singing his version of a familiar hymn tune. Every day he walks through the forest on his way to teach school. He is a familiar figure in the town of Sleepy Hollow. He entertains and amuses the ladies of the town, not realizing what a figure of fun he is to them. He talks of his fear sometimes in the forest, and that his only solace is to sing. We are introduced to his unrequited love, Katrina van Tassel, the daughter of the richest man in town, as well as the prettiest girl. She sings of her desire for a husband, especially one who actually deserves her. We then meet Brom van Brunt, whose nickname is Brom Bones. He is the strongest, most popular man in town, who expects to be able to win Katrina's hand because he is so superior. Ichabod wants to woo Katrina with music, while Brom wants both the hand of the pretty girl and the land her father owns.

3. **The Invitation.** Ichabod prepares for school. The unruly children recite their multiplication tables when a mysterious note arrives. It is an invitation for a party at the van Tassels, and is personally from Katrina. Ichabod is overwhelmed by being included, and by his chance to perhaps dance with the object of his affections.

4. **Preparations.** The van Tassels are preparing for their party. Mother van Tassel gently chides Katrina to help her get ready, while Katrina dreams of singing, laughing, and dancing. Father van Tassel requests that Katrina aid her mother. The parents are concerned that either of the suitors (Ichabod and Brom) may propose that night, and assure Katrina that they will help her make the right decision. The servants finish the chores and arrange the tables laden with food for the guests. They are ready!

5. **The Party.** The townspeople arrive for the grand festivities. They are stunned and overjoyed at the elaborate feast and the variety of foods entailed. Katrina chooses to dance first with Ichabod, all the while teasing Brom. Brom is angered and wants to get back at Ichabod. The party continues with a spirited folk dance that breaks into a fight between Brom and Ichabod. The guests restore order and finish the dance.

6. **Ichabod's Rejection.** Brom takes Father van Tassel aside and asks for Katrina's hand in marriage. Father assents, and Brom proposes. Katrina accepts his proposal. Ichabod observes the surprising event, and wonders how this could have happened. He had such plans for them. How could he have known? He is heartbroken.

7. **Tales of the Horseman.** Brom takes the attention back, and tells the guests the story of the Headless Horseman, and the scary nature of the tales surrounding the little town in which they live. The guests love the grotesque tales, and they particularly like scaring Ichabod. Brom spins an elaborate story, and preys upon Ichabod's fears. Ichabod decides it is time for him to leave, and the crowd jeers at him.

8. **Ichabod and Gunpowder.** Ichabod rides his faithful nag Gunpowder through the forest on his way home. His nerves are already stretched by his rejection and by Brom's scary tale. He hears things ... or does he? The woods seem to echo with strange voices and sounds. Gunpowder bolts, and the chase begins.

9. **The Chase.** Ichabod is completely spooked, and spurs his horse on through the forest. He sees bats, spiders, scarecrows. He gallops through the woods, through the branches and over the creeks. Brom and his friends, wanting to further torment the hapless schoolteacher, make plans to ambush Ichabod in the woods. Ichabod sees the church where he might find sanctuary ... only to be confronted by an image of the Headless Horseman. He falls off Gunpowder and runs away, never to be seen again.

10. **The Next Day.** The townspeople have searched for Ichabod through the night after finding out he never returned back to his rented room. In the foggy dawn, they discuss the fact that he is nowhere to be found. They have looked everywhere, but only found remnants of a pumpkin. They conclude that he was taken by the Headless Horseman. Brom smirks, saying, you never know. The Narrator takes the stage, agreeing with Brom, you never know. He again reiterates that the Headless Horseman can be seen in the valley at night, seeking his head. Is he real? What do YOU think?