

BUOSO'S GHOST

Comic sequel to Puccini's GIANNI SCHICCHI
(1996)

Composer /Librettist Michael Ching

Performance History: BUOSO'S GHOST was co-commissioned and premiered by the Pittsburgh Opera Center at Duquesne and Opera Memphis. Subsequent performances have included Indianapolis Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Carnegie-Mellon University, New Jersey Opera Theatre, Lake George Opera Festival, Amarillo Opera, and Bayview Music Festival. BUOSO'S GHOST was originally developed at Chautauqua Opera.

Length: 45 minutes

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Lauretta	soprano
Rinuccio	tenor
Schicchi	baritone
Frair I*	tenor (comprimario)
Friar II*	baritone (comprimario)
Nella	soprano
La Ciesca	mezzo soprano
Zita	mezzo soprano or contralto
Gherardo	tenor
Marco	baritone
Betto	baritone
Simone	bass or bass baritone
The Magistrate*	baritone (supporting)

Supernumeraries

The Magistrates guards/retainers, Gherardino (Child)

The Late Uncle Buoso

* *character not in Gianni Schicchi*

Orchestration:

Orchestration: 2/1/2/1 2/2/1/0 Harp, keyboard (piano and synthesizer), Percussion, Timpani, Strings.

Synopsis

As the sequel begins, we see Lauretta and Rinuccio, arm in arm, planning their future. Feeling the proud father, Schicchi, looks on. The couple go off to buy their wedding ring. Alone, Schicchi straightens up the house. He sees some food and wine that the relatives have brought and sits down for a snack. But he discovers that the food and drink have all been poisoned by the relations.



Stephen Eisenhard in
Opera New Jersey production

He is interrupted by a knock at the door. Two brothers have come to collect on Buoso Donati's will. Schicchi shows them the "revised" document and they leave in shock. Alone, Schicchi imagines the relatives making their plans to poison old Uncle Buoso.

We hear the relatives approaching. Quickly Schicchi scribbles a note and tucks it into Buoso's nightshirt. They have come screaming for blood. Just as they are about to beat Schicchi senseless, a magistrate arrives to try the case.

The relatives immediately assume an air of mourning. Then they angrily accuse Schicchi of murdering uncle Buoso. Schicchi beseeches them for mercy. He sneaks up to each one and tells them that he knows that they have poisoned Buoso's food and drink. They are stunned and worried. They quickly switch gears. Each group of relatives offers Schicchi a bribe if he will blame somebody else, but Schicchi makes no promises.

The magistrate brings everyone back to order. When Old Simone refuses to accuse Schicchi, then the magistrate does it himself. Schicchi defends himself, keeping the relatives on pins and needles. Finally, sobbing he goes over to Uncle Buoso's body and falls on the corpse. He pulls out the note and reads it: UNcle Buoso has committed suicide. All are shocked at this horrible sin. The magistrate is miffed that he can't condemn Schicchi and leaves.

Alone, the relatives realize that Schicchi has outwitted them again. Jokingly, Betto says that they will get the money back in the long run cause Rinnuccio and Lauretta are getting married. They realize they can just kill Schicchi now and inherit everything. Overhearing this, Schicchi prepares. He hides behind the body and blows out the candles. He summons the ghost of Buoso Donati and scares the family from the house.

In an echo of the end of the Puccini, Schicchi comes downstage and asks the audience to forgive the upstart composer for writing the sequel.

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Buoso's Ghost

Pittsburgh Opera Center (1996)
Opera Memphis (1997)
Indianapolis Opera (1999)
Chicago Opera Theater (2000)
Carnegie Mellon University (2002)
New Jersey Opera Theatre (2005)
Lake George Opera at Saratoga (2008)
Amarillo Opera (2010)
Bayview Music Festival (2011)

...I think Ching may have it--the "it" that opera composers need... This multiple "it" is made up of a gift for lyricism...and a knowledge of how to write for voices and how to tap the resources of an orchestra...And that's not all. He also has a sense of what works in the theater, along with a sense of humor.

--*Charles Staff, Indianapolis Star*

However, Much to my surprise, "Buoso's Ghost," the continuation, was fantastic. The music was rich and flowed like the Puccini of old. But this was not Puccini's music. it was the creation of Michael Ching..."Buoso's Ghost" was more than exciting. It was thrilling, funny, and thoroughly entertaining.

--*Charles Epstein, Ind 6*

...borrows snatches of Puccini tunes and weaves them into his own conservative-eclectic idiom, tossing in bits of American pop...for merry measure. The vocal writing is expert, the orchestration light enough to allow the singers to project the text clearly. "Buoso" is charming and unpretentious..

--*John von Rhein, Chicago Tribune*

"Buoso's Ghost" soared... [it] offered highly charged acting atop a deft, tuneful score...Ching, General/Artistic Director of Opera Memphis, studied with Robert Ward and Carlisle Floyd, and the unashamed flow of natural, singing melody... reflects the profile of his teachers.

--*Wynne Delacoma, Chicago Sun-Times*

...wonderfully entertaining sequel... Written in a witty, Broadway-tinged idiom, Ching's score includes echoes of Puccini and affectionate parodies, including a sharp-eared gospel bit. The entire cast seemed to have as much fun performing Ching's work as the full house did watching.

--*Bradley Bambarger, New Jersey Star Ledger*

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