

## Synopsis of Puccini's opera, *Gianni Schicchi*

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano based on an incident mentioned in Dante's *Divine Comedy*  
Set in Florence, 1299

As Buoso Donati lies dead in his curtained four-poster bed, his relatives gather round to mourn his passing but more particularly to learn 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 will have 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 states 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. There is an outbreak of woe and indignation. They 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 first saying that nothing can be done, he has an idea—and 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 has died. He then orders the body removed to another room. A knock announces the arrival of Doctor Spinelloccio; Schicchi goes behind the curtains,

imitates Buoso's voice and announces that he is feeling better, and will the doctor return that evening? Praising his own skills, Spinelloccio departs. Schicchi then unveils his plan in an 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 will dictate a new will. All are delighted with the scheme, and begin making their 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. However, it turns out that the bell is tolling for the death of the neighbouring Captain'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—banishment, and the loss of a hand.

The notary arrives and Schicchi begins dictating. 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—and are slyly reminded by Schicchi 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 Laretta and Rinuccio, "Laretta 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 concur that no better use could be found for Buoso's wealth. Though Dante condemned him to Hell for this trick, Schicchi asks that the audience find extenuating circumstances.

*-From Wikipedia*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gianni\\_schicchi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gianni_schicchi)