In the great Florentine palace of Buoso Donati, family members gather round Buoso's bedside to cynically "lament" his passing. A rumor is circulated suggesting that the late Buoso had disinherited them all, giving all his wealth to an order of friars. A mad search of the bedroom is made where one of the family, Rinuccio, discovers the hidden will. The young lad is ecstatic, hoping that his inheritance will allow him to marry his beloved Lauretta, a dowerless girl. The will is read and the despondent family realize that their worst fears have come true. Rinuccio proposes that they seek the aid of Lauretta's father, a clever peasant named Gianni Schicchi.

Schicchi, arriving with Lauretta, is immediately snubbed by the snobbish and suspicious Donati family. Furious, Schicchi is about to storm out but is moved by the pleas of his daughter (the aria "O mio babbino caro"). After studying the will, the clever peasant determines that only the dictating of a "new" last will & testament will ensure the family of its inheritance. The sudden arrival of Buoso's physician serves to put Schicchi's plan to the test. Schicchi successfully imitates Buoso's voice, convincing the pompous doctor that his patient still lives. After the doctor leaves, Schicchi calls for a notary to be sent for, Buoso's body hidden, and Schicchi himself dressed in Buoso's night attire. All the Donatis praise his plan and go about preparing the room for the notary's arrival.

While the room is tidied, individual family members attempt to bribe Schicchi in order to have choice items willed to themselves. Schicchi agrees, but warns the family that their actions—if discovered—could lead to exile and amputation of the hand. The Notary arrives and all seems to go as planned, until Schicchi turns the tables on the greedy Donati, exacting a fitting revenge and ensuring the happiness of his beloved Lauretta.
MAHAGONNY SONGSPIEL
Music by Kurt Weill (30')
Libretto by Berthold Brecht

CAST

JESSIE.................................................Laura Broadhurst
BESSIE .................................................Meg Davis
CHARLIE ..............................................Andrew Childs
BILLY ....................................................Dan Yarr
BOBBY ..................................................Clifford Watson
JIMMY .................................................James Creswell
GUARDS ..............................................Brent Myers, Shane Rooks

GIANNI SCHICCHI
Music by Giacomo Puccini (50')
Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

CAST

GIANNI SCHICCHI.........................Julian Patrick (Senior Artist-in-Residence)
LAURETTA.................................Jennifer Brody
RINUCCIO......................Guy Bogar (November 10 and 13)
RINUCCIO..............................James Murphy (November 11 and 12)
ZITA..............................................Carolyn Gronlund
SIMONE............................................Kevin Helppie
LA CIESCA ........................................Leslie McEwen
MARCO...........................................Christian E. Jacob
NELLA............................................Karen Liisa Ingalls
GERARDO ...........................................Andrew Childs
GERARDO...............................Lucretia Fleury
BETTO.............................................Jeff Adams
PHYSICIAN ..........................James Creswell
NOTARY ..........................Philip Parke
PINELLO ...........................................Dan Yarr
GUCCIO ...........................................Clifford Watson

ORCHESTRA, MAHAGONNY
Laurent Philippe, conductor
Timothy Schwarz, assistant conductor

VIOLIN I
Xiao-po Fei
Wonsoo Chung
Kevin Kui He
Keh shu Shen
Kyung Chee
Coral Overman
Lea Wolfe
Maria Kim
Neil Bacon
Phil Nation

VIOLIN II
Dan Perry
Thane Lewis
Kjell Steipness
Andrew Tersigni
Anja Kluge
Sharon Kim
John Powelson
Eugene Chung
Kyu Nam Park
Chase Chang
Daniel Ellis
Deepti Babu
Susie Jung

CELLO
Zoltan Stefan
Cheryl Bushnell
Stacy Philpott
Loren Dempster
Joseph Kim
Lan-Jung Wang
Chris Ruthensteiner
Alina Hua
Karen Thomson
Leslie Hir
Ruth Edwards

BASS
Olav Hekala
Chien-pi Chen
Brad Hartman
Aron Taylor

PIECOLO
Megan Lyden

FLUTES
Libby Gray
Cindy Martin

OBES
Matthew Reek
Jennifer Baul linger

ENGLISH HORN
Paima Karr

CLARINET
Deborah Smith
Kathryn Labiak

TIMPANI
James Beck

PERCUSSION
Kris Kilian
Chris Carlson

CELESTA
Kevin Johnson

BASS CLARINET
BASSOON
TRUMPET
TROMBONE

Andrew Yeung
Jeff Yang

Jodi Orton
Julia Dickinson

Dan McDermot

Karen Thomson
Ruth Edwards

James Creswell

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

David Marriot

David Marriot

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee

Scott Higbee
Program Notes, MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY and GIANNI SCHICCHI

The pairing of Giacomo Puccini’s GIANNI SCHICCHI with Kurt Weill’s MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY provide fascinating and contrasting views on human cynicism and greed. Though the composers’ styles may seem a century apart, in fact the two pieces are separated by less than ten years. MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY produced toward the end of Italian romanticism, was originally part of Puccini’s trilogy of one act operas, Il trittico, which includes the grand guignol thriller Il tabarro and the saccharine miracle play Suor Angelica. Premiered at the New York Met in 1918, SCHICCHI was Puccini’s only comedy, and a black one at that.

MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY was composed for the famous Baden-Baden festival of 1927 that also saw the premiere of Hindemith’s Hin und Zurück. It was the first collaboration between Weill and Bertolt Brecht, the co-creators of the immensely popular Threepenny Opera. MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY represents a pioneering effort in combining German Expressionism and lyric theatre. Weill’s music combines the jazzy pungency of the German cabaret scene with the sharp Stravinskian harmonic overtones of contemporary music. Although two years later Brecht and Weill expanded the six poems into a full length opera (from which the spurious Das Kleine Mahagonny was derived) the original “songplay” is unquestionably the more audacious and compelling work.

For our production we have expanded the stark boxing ring of Brecht’s original production into a large interrogation pen into which representations of the deadly sins (Lust, Pride, Avarice, Sloth, Anger and Envy) are thrust together. For SCHICCHI, we have brought the action up to the mid-1800’s, an era in which the old aristocracies gave way to the more democratic ideals of the underclass. Here is the spirit of Garibaldi played out in an interior of stifling ostentation.

Synopsis for MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY.

There is no plot to the MAHAGONNY SONGPLAY, though its six short songs form something of a loose narrative. The Prologue consists of two songs in which six characters arrive at a place, Mahagonny, in which all their basest desires are realised (“Off to Mahagonny,” “Alabama Song”). Upon exploiting this world, the characters’ dream of paradise soon corrodes into cynical boredom and disillusionment (“Five Bucks a Day,” “Berneras Song”). God then comes to Mahagonny to condemn them to Hell only to find that the inhabitants of Mahagonny have succeeded in creating their own Hell (“God in Mahagonny”). Revolution ensues in which the characters assert their total cynicism about the world. But, as the Epilogue reassures the audience, Mahagonny is only a made up word.