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LA Opera Opens 2008/09 Season With New Production of Giacomo Puccini's *Il Trittico*

**Trio of One-Act Operas to be Directed by Academy Award Winners:
Woody Allen to Make Operatic Debut Staging *Gianni Schicchi*
William Friedkin Will Stage *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica***

Music Director James Conlon to Conduct

Saturday, September 6 – Friday, September 26

(Los Angeles, CA) July 24, 2008 – “I am delighted to announce that LA Opera will open its 2008/09 Season with a new production of Giacomo Puccini’s *Il Trittico*, to be staged by two Academy Award-winning film directors,” announced Plácido Domingo, who holds the title of Eli and Edythe Broad General Director of LA Opera. “The three operas that make up Puccini’s unique ‘triptych’ will be split between **Woody Allen**, who will make his operatic debut directing *Gianni Schicchi*, and **William Friedkin**, who will return to LA Opera to direct *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*. Music Director **James Conlon** will conduct, and the production will be designed by Tony Award-winner **Santo Loquasto**, with lighting designed by **Mark Jonathan**. *Il Trittico* is one of several LA Opera productions of Puccini operas in 2008 that commemorate the 150th anniversary of the composer’s birth, a celebration that we began with *Tosca* in May and *La Rondine* in June, and which will continue with *Madama Butterfly* in October.” *Il Trittico* opens LA Opera’s 2008/09 Season on Saturday, September 6 at 6:00pm, followed by the U.S. premiere of Howard Shore’s *The Fly*, directed by David Cronenberg and conducted by Plácido Domingo, on September 7. *Il Trittico* continues for six additional performances through Friday, September 26 at 7:30pm. Performances take place at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 North Grand Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90012.

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“I have enticed many filmmakers into directing for the opera stage,” Mr. Domingo continued. “My pursuit of Woody Allen takes the prize as the longest, however, because Chairman and CEO Marc Stern and I first started talking to him some four years ago. He will make his long awaited operatic debut with *Gianni Schicchi*, the delightful conclusion of *Il Trittico*. I am especially thrilled that this new production will also have the collaboration of the great Hollywood director William Friedkin for *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*.”

Il Trittico, which received its world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1918, opens with the brooding *Il Tabarro* (*The Cloak*), a masterpiece of the *verismo* style of opera that focuses on the harsh realities of working class people. LA Opera’s production of *Il Tabarro* features a high profile international cast that includes American baritone **Mark Delavan** as Michele, a Parisian barge owner who suspects his younger wife of infidelity; Italian tenor **Salvatore Licitra** as Luigi, a young stevedore who makes a fatal error in judgment; and German soprano **Anja Kampe** as Giorgetta, the young wife who has fallen out of love. **William Friedkin** directs. *Il Tabarro* is a tightly constructed psychological thriller set on the banks of the Seine, with highly innovative orchestrations that create an ominous atmosphere.

Il Trittico continues with *Suor Angelica* (*Sister Angelica*), an unabashedly sentimental work set in an Italian convent, directed by **William Friedkin**. Forced by her noble family to take the veil after bearing an illegitimate child, Angelica learns from her aunt that the child has died. In despair, she drinks poison, realizing too late that her mortal sin will condemn her to eternal separation from the child she so desperately loves. In a vision of redemption, the Holy Virgin appears with the child, welcoming Angelica into heaven. *Suor Angelica* features an all-female cast led by American soprano **Sondra Radvanovsky** in the title role, with Russian mezzo-soprano **Larissa Diadkova** in her Company debut as the Princess, Angelica’s aunt. Notable for its numerous sharply defined characters and emotional conflicts, *Suor Angelica* also features one of Puccini’s great soprano arias, Angelica’s “Senza Mamma,” and one of the most intense final scenes in all opera.

The final opera in *Il Trittico* is Puccini’s only comedy, the delightful *Gianni Schicchi*. This is the only part of *Il Trittico* that has been previously staged by LA Opera, in a 2002 double bill with Bartók’s *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* directed by William Friedkin. This time, an all-new production of *Gianni Schicchi* will be staged by **Woody Allen**, who makes his operatic debut. The opera depicts a farcical family squabble, as the survivors of a wealthy gentleman persuade Gianni Schicchi to pose as the deceased and rewrite his will in their favor. The great British baritone **Thomas Allen** returns as the clever Gianni Schicchi, who has no scruples about including himself as a beneficiary in the will. Two fast-rising young singers, the American/Romanian soprano **Laura Tatuлесcu** and Albanian tenor **Saimir Pirgu**, make their Company debuts as Lauretta and Rinuccio, young lovers who hope that the rich man’s fortune will lead to their marriage.

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Gianni Schicchi will be the first opera directed by Woody Allen, a three-time Academy Award-winning film director, writer and actor. He began his career as a comedy writer and stand-up comic. He began writing for television in New York and was hired in 1964 to write the screenplay for *What's New, Pussycat?* Since then, he has written, directed and starred in dozens of films, including *Bananas* (1971); *Sleeper* (1973); *Annie Hall* (1977), for which he won Academy Awards for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay; *Interiors* (1978); *Manhattan* (1979), *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984); *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985); *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986), for which he won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay; *Radio Days* (1987); *Husbands and Wives* (1992); *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994); *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995); *Deconstructing Harry* (1997); *Match Point* (2005); *Scoop* (2006) and the upcoming *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. He has written such plays as *Play It Again, Sam*, which he later adapted for film and in which he starred.

William Friedkin, who returns to LA Opera to stage *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*, the first two parts of *Il Trittico*, may be best known for his film *The Exorcist* (1973). It received ten Academy Award nominations including Best Director and Best Picture. Prior to that, he directed *The French Connection* (1971), for which he received the Director's Guild of America Award and the Academy Award for Best Director. The film also won for Best Actor, Best Editing, Best Screenplay and Best Picture. Other films include *Sorcerer* (1977), *The Brinks Job* (1979), *Cruising* (1981), *To Live and Die in L.A.* (1985) and *Blue Chips* (1994). In 1997, he directed a Showtime/MGM television remake of *Twelve Angry Men* with Jack Lemmon and George C. Scott. The DGA nominated him for Outstanding Directorial Achievement for Best Dramatic Special. He made his operatic debut in 1998 with a widely acclaimed *Wozzeck* in Florence and his LA Opera debut in 2002 with a double bill of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and *Gianni Schicchi*. He returned to LA Opera in 2004 to direct *Ariadne auf Naxos*. His latest films include *Rules of Engagement* (2000), *The Hunted* (2003) and *Bug* (2006).

Il Trittico opens on Saturday, September 6, 2008 at 6:00pm with additional evening performances on September 11, 17, 23 and 26 at 7:30pm; and matinee performances on September 14 and 21 at 2:00pm. Performances will be held at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 North Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Tickets to *Il Trittico* range from \$20 to \$250, and are on sale at the LA Opera Box Office, by phone at (213) 972-8001 or online at www.laopera.com. For disability access, call (213) 972-0777 or e-mail wehelpyou@laopera.com.

**New production of *Il Trittico* made possible by major gifts from
Eva and Marc Stern and
Milena and Milan Panic**

Generous underwriting support for *Il Tabarro* and *Gianni Schicchi* from Eva and Marc Stern.
Generous underwriting support for *Suor Angelica* from Carla and Fred Sands.

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Pre-performance conversation with James Conlon, hosted by Alan Chapman, will take place before each performance except September 6. Pre-performance lectures are generously sponsored by the Flora L. Thornton Foundation and the Opera League of Los Angeles.

Il Trittico Opera Talks

Members of LA Opera's Speakers' Bureau will be giving free 50-minute talks on *Il Trittico* at libraries throughout Los Angeles County. These lively and engaging talks will explore the various aspects of Puccini's three one-act operas. *Il Trittico* opera talks will be held on:

Tuesday, September 9	6:45 PM	Platt Library
Tuesday, September 9	7:00 PM	Redondo Beach Library
Saturday, September 13	3:00 PM	Oxnard Public Library

Artist headshots can be found on the LA Opera Press Gallery:

<http://media.laopera.com/photo/?level=album&id=16>

Synopsis can be found on the LA Opera website:

<http://www.laopera.com/productions/0809/iltrittico/index.htm>

Il Trittico will be sung in Italian with English supertitles projected above the stage.

This is an LA Opera original production

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