



DOMENICO PUCCINI IL CIARLATANO

Libretto by: L. G. Buonavoglia
First performance: Lucca, 1815

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1 - A village square decked out for a fair. Among the several shops there is a coffee house at the rear. On the right stands the Palace of the Magistrate, across from which is an inn called "The Scorpion."

The townsfolk move back and forth entering and leaving the shops and the coffee house. A number of them stop to listen to Astrolobio who is standing on a raised platform, flanked by two servants in rich livery. Astrolobio, a mountebank, sings the virtues of his bottled balsam; which he offers at a cheap price. The townsfolk buy eagerly. Having sold his wares Astrolobio goes into the coffee house as the crowd disperses.

Ernesto and Marina (Adele) enter, dressed as persons from Savoy. He is carrying a little chest containing a fortune teller's magic box, while she carries a tin horn in her hand. They sing of their love and the joy of being together despite the fact that they have been forced to flee from their own city because they married against the wishes of Adele's father.

Astrolobio comes out of the coffee house and is immediately infatuated with Marina. He introduces himself to the fortune teller and her assistant. Telling them that he exercises a profession similar to theirs, he suggests that they become a team and invites them into the inn to discuss the matter.

Count Lasca (once a peasant, who has acquired enough money to purchase a title) enters. He reveals that he has travelled far and wide in search of the woman he loves and that he would go to the end of the world for her, even if it meant spending all his fortune in the endeavour. The object of his affections is the fortune teller Marina.

Coming out of the inn with her husband, Adele (Marina) sees Lasca and recognizes him as the man who recently tried to court her in Venice. At first startled in seeing Marina and then overjoyed, Lasca professes his passion. (Side 2) A jealous Ernesto storms off. Lasca expresses his indignation at the thought that Marina can resist him. Marina mocks him, calling him a madman. Although he threatens to kill himself, she continues to taunt him until he leaves in a fury. Marina exits.

Enter Marcellina and Count Filiberto who have met in a coach while travelling. Marcellina is in search of her husband Astrolobio, who has deserted her. The Count is in search of his daughter Adele and Ernesto, whom he says he is willing to forgive if he could but find them. Marcellina tells him she feels he will find his daughter even as she has caught up with her husband. Alone she sings in a rage that soon she

will be avenged upon the unfaithful Astrolobio.

Scene 2 - The hall of the inn. Several room doors line the hall.

Astrolobio enters looking for the Savoyard damsel Marina, who has utterly conquered his heart. If he were but eloquent, he says, he could persuasively woo her. To demonstrate to himself how he would win her, he pretends she is seated there in a chair. He sings ardently to "her" while "she" demurs (Astrolobio in falsetto). Carried away by his own fiction, the charlatan ends up embracing the empty chair; he leaves.

Marina and Ernesto enter the hall. She succeeds in allaying Ernesto's jealous suspicions. Asking for pardon, he sings tenderly of his love and constancy. He tells her that if he, however, again becomes jealous she must understand that it is because of the too great affection he has for her. (Side 3) Left alone, she speaks of her own devotion to him.

Astrolobio enters as Marina leaves. Lasca enters and asks the mountebank to assist him in winning Marina's love. The two men quarrel, Astrolobio calling Lasca a madman and a buffoon and Lasca swearing that he will have revenge. Marina enters and scolds them. They do not notice Ernesto who is surprised at seeing his wife with two men who are declaring their love for her. In a passion he intervenes and sarcastically tells them to continue, for his wife, he says, must surely enjoy such attention. The four sing an ensemble - Marina trying to placate Ernesto's jealous wrath and protesting that he wrongs her; Ernesto accusing her of fickleness; Lasca and Astrolobio pretending to be calm and innocent. All retire to their respective rooms.

Ernesto and Adele (Marina) reenter the hall. Forgetting his jealousy, Ernesto tells his wife that he has seen her father, Count Filiberto, in the inn. Tenderly they avow their undying love for each other. She suggests that they will be able to flee at midnight under the cover of darkness and then go wherever love leads them. Having peeped out from their rooms, Astrolobio and Lasca overhear the couple's plans, each of them saying he too will be there at midnight. Adele tenderly states her faithfulness to Ernesto and she leaves.

(Side 4) Ernesto invokes the darkness of night. Astrolobio

and Lasca enter, pretending to know nothing. Ernesto bids them goodnight and enters his room. Astrolobio and Lasca bid each other goodnight but hesitate, each being suspicious of the other. They finally go to their rooms.

After a brief orchestral prelude, Ernesto and Adele come into the hall where it is now totally dark and silent. Hearing a noise they reenter their rooms. Astrolobio and Lasca come into the hall, singing of how they will lie in wait for the couple. Ernesto and Adele reenter the hall. As the four move gropingly in the dark, they bump into one another. In the ensuing fright and commotion, Marcellina and Filiberto come from their rooms, lighted candles in hand. The six sing of their surprise. An overjoyed Filiberto then forgivingly embraces his daughter and Ernesto. The furious Marcellina is persuaded to forgive her wayward husband, Astrolobio, who swears he will henceforth remain true. Lasca, holding the fortune teller's magic box, notes that it all seems like a good joke and resigns himself to the situation. The six join in a song of general rejoicing, declaring that everything has turned out well.

Synopsis by: Professor Nicolas Perella