

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR *ENCHANTED CHILD*

The free-spirited French author Colette wrote *Enchanted Child* (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*) in eight days as a gift for her daughter. When Ravel set it to music, Colette was allegedly stunned by the beauty of what she had created. The story line is relatively simple—and fantastic. A young child has a temper tantrum at home in his bedroom, only to have all the objects and animals he has mistreated turn on him. After a series of weird adventures, he eventually is able to feel empathy, and his achievement is acclaimed by the animals who surround him and return him to his mother.

Even from its inception, *L'enfant* has provided rich material for interpretation as something other than a simple child's tale, particularly to Melanie Klein, the “founder” of child psychoanalysis, who wrote an article interpreting *L'enfant* as a re-enactment of the Oedipal crisis. (This concept underlies Maurice Sendak's famous production of the opera.) What you will see today, however, departs from that line of thinking radically. Although I find many points of view intellectually interesting in this fabulously rich work, I am continually drawn to what I think will make sense and will be theatrically viable. I have never been particularly drawn to the “dancing furniture” style of most *L'enfant* productions, and in any case, we simply do not have the budget to make such an approach feasible.

In thinking about this piece over many years, the one thing that continuously strikes me as important is the drama of growing up, no matter the age of the child in question. All children must eventually lose their narcissistic, egocentric view of the world in order to become part of a larger community of family, friends, peers, and the world at large. Empathy is only possible with interaction.

Sadly, in our Internet age, it has become all too easy to seal oneself off from the outside world and avoid any substantive interaction with others. Many prefer to buy from catalogs or to order on the Web so as to avoid troublesome interactions with sales personnel. Whether we are commuting in cars, or using public transportation, we try to limit our contact with others to what we deem necessary and desirable. We avoid direct glances, we try to look like we're not eavesdropping, and we strive to keep to ourselves for our own protection.

This production takes as its premise the idea that no matter what, we are and will always be connected, and we forget that at our peril. We all grow up from childhood, and we all continue to grow, time and again. The acknowledgement of how much of us remains childlike (in both good and bad senses) is a constant source of amazement and amusement—and also the ultimate acknowledgement of our shared humanity.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR *GIANNI SCHICCHI*

A few words on how this production came about: In the summer of 2003, I was in Italy attending the wedding of my best friend. Since I had been asked to be the best man, my partner and I arrived a few days early to enjoy the quiet and serenity of the area around Lago di Garda. On our first day, after landing at Malpensa Airport in Milan, we drove to a beautiful *albergo* just past Bergamo, the birthplace of Gaetano Donizetti. We arrived in time for a late-ish lunch, which was served to us on a patio just outside the library, overlooking acres and acres of rolling hills covered with olive trees and cypresses. Idyllic. We ordered an *insalata caprese*, having been assured that their particular *mozzarella di bufala* was unsurpassed.

We waited. We waited a bit longer. We waited approximately one hour. The time crawled by pleasantly, but we were puzzled. What could take so long with cheese and tomatoes? And then, from deep within the bowels of the establishment, came a horrific roar, a scream that sounded like a chorus of furies each trying out for the chance to deliver that famous last line in *Cavalleria Rusticana*: “Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu!” But this was not a scream of shock. This was fury, horrifying, intense, palpable. About one minute later, as we sat frozen trying to fit the pieces together, the communal shriek redoubled.

Just as we thought it might be a good idea to leave, our Swedish hostess arrived. She apologized for the delay and proceeded to serve us each with what did indeed turn out to be the *insalate caprese* of our dreams. But before we began our lunch, we couldn't resist asking if everything was all right. “What do you mean?” she asked. We told her we couldn't help noticing the two terrifying shrieks that seemed to come from the mouths of howling wolves. “Oh that,” she said. “It is the World Cup, you know. The Turkish judge refused to allow two penalty kicks for the Italians. The people here were rather upset.”

Well, then it all made sense. Later in the week we would hear that if the Italians were *not* going to advance to the quarterfinals, then the scheduled wedding photographer would *officially* be so upset as to be unable to photograph the wedding. But on this day, all we could do was to sit in wonder. I ventured that if it took this long to get cheese and tomatoes from the kitchen, it would probably be extremely dicey to be in a hospital during the World Cup. “Oh sir,” replied our wise hostess, “no one in Italy goes into the hospital during the World Cup.” “But what if they get sick?” I asked. “They just...don't!” she replied.

And so was born the idea for the opening scene of this production of *Gianni Schicchi*. We all hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together for you.