



FEBRUARY 15, 20, 23 MATINEE, 26,
MARCH 1 MATINEE, 7, 11, 19 MATINEE , 22, 29 MATINEE

Backdrop by Vittorio Rota (1864-1945) for the opera *Pagliacci*, held at the Metropolitan in New York, 1915, 20th century. © A. Dagli Orti / © NPL - DeA Picture Library / Bridgeman Images

Pagliacci

Drama in two acts, sung in Italian

Words and Music by Ruggero Leoncavallo

First performed by Sarasota Opera on February 17, 1967

2005 production created by Sarasota Opera

Conductor

Stage Director

Scenic Designer

Costume Designer

Lighting Designer

Hair and Makeup Designer

Chorus Master

Youth Opera Chorus Master

Assistant Conductors

Surtitle Supplier

Surtitle Translator

Victor DeRenzi

Martha Collins

David P. Gordon

Howard Tsvi Kaplan

Ken Yunker

Sue Schaefer

Arthur Bosarge

Jessé Martins

Stefano Teani, Fabio Gentili, Curtis Serafin

Words for Music

Stephanie Sundine

CAST

Nedda, a traveling actress, Canio's wife
(Colombina in the play)

Canio, the head of the company (Pagliaccio in the play)

Tonio, an actor, hunchback (Taddeo in the play)

Peppe, an actor (Arlecchino in the play)

Silvio, a rustic

Ashley Milanese

Rafael Dávila⁺

Jean Carlos Rodríguez

Alejandro Luévanos^{*}

Benjamin Dickerson^{*}

Sarasota Opera Orchestra

**Chorus: Sarasota Opera Apprentice and Studio Artists,
Sarasota Youth Opera**

**Studio Artist*

+The David and Edith Chaifetz Endowed Artist

**Production sponsored by Paul and Sharon Steinwachs
in memory of Ernie Kretzmer.**

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

The action takes place in a Sicilian village on Easter morning.

The town stirs as the men return from the fields and the women prepare for Easter. Santuzza, who has been abandoned by her lover Turiddu, asks his mother, Lucia, where she can find him. Alfio, a carriage driver, arrives. He boasts about his faithful wife and the joys of his work.

A religious procession enters the town square and the villagers follow it into the church for mass. Left alone, Santuzza tells Lucia that Turiddu is now seeing Lola, his former lover and Alfio's wife. After Lucia has gone to mass, Turiddu arrives and Santuzza confronts him. He denies being unfaithful, but she continues to accuse him. Lola then passes on her way to church and Turiddu eventually follows her. Enraged by his betrayal, Santuzza tells Alfio of Lola's infidelity. Alfio swears he will exact vengeance.

After mass, Turiddu invites the villagers for a drink. When Alfio returns, Turiddu offers him a glass of wine. Alfio refuses, saying it might poison him. Understanding his meaning, Turiddu challenges him to a duel.

In a farewell to his mother, Turiddu asks her to take care of Santuzza. As he goes off, Lucia calls after him. Noise is heard in the distance and a woman cries out that Turiddu has been killed.

INTERMISSION

PAGLIACCI

The scene takes place in Calabria near Montalto, on the Feast of the Assumption, between 1865 and 1870.

In the prologue, the character Tonio speaks directly to the audience, telling them that the author has written a true story about real people who share the same joys and sorrows the performers do.

ACT I

The villagers celebrate the feast day as a theatrical company arrives on the outskirts of town. Canio, head of the troupe, announces that a performance will take place that evening. When Tonio, another member of the troupe, attempts to help Nedda, Canio's wife, down from the cart, the villagers tease Canio that Tonio is courting her behind his back. Sternly, Canio warns that he will not tolerate joking about his relationship with Nedda. Canio then joins a group of villagers as they go off to drink. At the sound of a bagpipe and church bells, the remaining villagers go off to church, leaving Nedda alone.



Scene from *Cavalleria rusticana*, Anonymous

Disturbed by her husband's reaction, Nedda notices the birds overhead and sings about how she desires their freedom. Having overheard her song, Tonio declares his love for Nedda but she rebuffs him. Enraged, he tries to grab her, but she strikes him with a whip. As he leaves, Tonio swears vengeance.

A moment later Silvio, a peasant, appears and tells Nedda how much he loves her. He persuades her to run away with him that night. Tonio, who has seen them, hurries off to tell Canio. Canio discovers the lovers and attempts to overtake Silvio who manages to escape. When confronted, Nedda refuses to divulge her lover's name. Tonio advises Canio it would be better to wait until that evening to learn who Nedda's lover is. Left alone, Canio laments that he must go on with the performance despite his pain.

ACT II

The villagers assemble for the performance. In the absence of her husband, Pagliaccio (played by Canio), Colombina (Nedda) is serenaded by her lover Arlecchino (Peppe). Colombina and Arlecchino drive away her servant, the buffoon Taddeo (Tonio). Hearing the two lovers declare their intention to run off, Canio is stricken with the similarity to his life, but goes on with the play. Taddeo assures Pagliaccio (Canio) of his wife's innocence, which fires Canio's jealousy. Forgetting he is performing, he demands that Nedda reveal her lover's name. She tries to continue the play. Growing more enraged by her defiance, Canio stabs Nedda and then Silvio, who has rushed forward from the crowd to help her.

World Premiere - Cavalleria rusticana: Teatro Costanzi, Rome, Italy, May 17, 1890

World Premiere - Pagliacci: Teatro Dal Verme, Milan, Italy, May 21, 1892

Alive with passion and vivid with local color, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* burst on the opera scene in the early 1890s and changed it forever. As a result, their composers – Pietro Mascagni and Ruggero Leoncavallo – were transformed into celebrities overnight.

Cavalleria rusticana

Mascagni was a true revolutionary, because he wrote this simple work in an era when opera was still “grand”, and its characters were often kings, queens, or nobility. Verdi’s *Aida*, the grandest of all, was the most popular spectacle in the repertory. Mascagni, however, turned his back on all that in *Cavalleria rusticana* and depicted poor Sicilian peasants and a brutal slice of village life instead.

Born in 1863 in the Tuscan port city of Livorno, Mascagni had to fight hard for music lessons, because his father, a baker, wanted him to take over the family business. Defiant and helped by friends and relatives, he studied briefly at the venerable Royal Conservatory in Milan, where he roomed with another young musician: Giacomo Puccini. Bleak poverty was their order of the day; and finally the desperate Mascagni left school to conduct for minor operetta troupes. His next jobs were teaching music in a small town in southern Italy and composing a long, traditional opera that almost no one remembers today.

Pure chance led him to enter a competition for a one-act opera, but his musical genius won him the prize. The source of *Cavalleria rusticana* is a famous Sicilian writer’s drama about adultery, jealousy, and violent, brutal vengeance. It is laden with irony, because the title means “Rustic Chivalry” and the opera is set on Easter Day. Woven into the raw story is a depiction of simple people and religious faith. Almost miraculously Mascagni managed to turn this strange mix into a tight, effective theatrical piece.

Cavalleria rusticana had its world premiere in Rome’s historic Teatro Costanzi on May 17, 1890. Still an unknown, Mascagni was lucky in having a respected conductor in the pit and two famous singers in leading roles. Soprano Gemma Bellincioni, praised for her beauty and dramatic gifts, was Santuzza; her husband, the tenor Roberto Stagno, had the clarion voice needed for Turiddu’s music.



Pietro Mascagni, c. 1890.



Ruggero Leoncavallo, 1910

It is certainly no exaggeration to say that *Cavalleria rusticana* stands as a milestone in the history of opera, for it opened the door to Italian opera known as *verismo*. Within months Mascagni’s little opera was wildly popular and was being given everywhere, often with him conducting it. Respected in Europe and in the Americas, he went on to affect many composers who followed him and earned an enduring reputation. He died in Rome in 1945.

Pagliacci

Born in Naples in 1857, Leoncavallo came from a distinguished family that even boasted some noblemen in its ranks. After study in a great conservatory in his native city, he moved on, first to Bologna, then to Egypt, Paris, and, finally, Milan. Unlike Mascagni, Leoncavallo was profoundly influenced by international styles. Under Wagner’s spell he planned a grand Italian operatic trilogy that would follow the outlines of the German master’s *Ring of the Nibelungen*, but he wrote only one of its three operas. Like Mascagni, he composed many works that few remember.

Leoncavallo was the librettist of his own operas and even worked with Puccini on the text for *Manon Lescaut*. Later the two battled in bitter rivalry after both wrote operas called *La bohème*. Puccini’s, of course, was successful while Leoncavallo’s was not. They were also rivals for the attention of Giulio Ricordi, Italy’s most powerful music publisher; but Leoncavallo’s effort on that front was wasted, because Ricordi had backed Puccini.

Desperate for fame after 1890, Leoncavallo composed *Pagliacci*, deliberately creating a short, intense *verismo* work modeled on *Cavalleria rusticana*. He may even have dreamed of a success similar to Mascagni’s, and he was not to be disappointed. *Pagliacci* had its world premiere on May 21, 1892 at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, with the great French baritone Victor Maurel in the role of Tonio and young Arturo Toscanini conducting.

Pagliacci is set in Southern Italy, and it is claimed to be based in part on reality, for the composer said he remembered his father – a judge – presiding over the trial of a murderer not unlike Canio. Another source was a French play about a poor, itinerant theatrical troupe. Like *Cavalleria*, *Pagliacci* is about adultery and murder, but it is much bloodier than Mascagni’s opera, with Canio killing his wife and her lover onstage.

Leoncavallo’s success with *Pagliacci* surpassed his every expectation, for it scored a real triumph and made him rich. By 1893 it had swept across Europe and was on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, paired in a double bill with *Cavalleria*. The composer even made an American tour in 1906. In later years he wrote more operas, operettas, and short works, but he never had another big success. He died in Montecatini, a Tuscan spa town, in 1919.

Mary Jane Phillips-Matz (1926-2013) was the author of several books on opera including “Verdi, A Biography” (1993) and “Puccini, A Biography” (2002). She was co-founder and executive board member of the American Institute for Verdi Studies at New York University.